The Church's Response to Secularization

Odpowiedź Kościoła na sekularyzację

Editor of the issue
Redaktor tematyczny numeru
Paweł Mąkosa

Verbum Vitae

Table of Contens/Spis treści

EDITORIAL/OD REDAKCJI

Przemiany religijności w społeczeństwie polskim

Transformations of Religiosity in Polish Society

TOMASZ ADAMCZYK (iD)
Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, tomasz.adamczyk@kul.pl

PAWEŁ MĄKOSA (iD)
Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, pawel.makosa@kul.pl

Streszczenie: Przedmiotem analiz w niniejszym artykule są przemiany religijności polskiego społeczeństwa w odniesieniu do autodeklaracji wyznaniowych, praktyk religijnych, zasad moralnych ukazanych w kontekście procesu sekularyzacji. Artykuł prezentuje analizy empiryczne oparte na danych pozyskanych z instytucji badawczych i projektów indywidualnych, ukazując różnice między ogółem społeczeństwa a środowiskiem młodzieży. Wyniki badań potwierdzają, że przyspieszona sekularyzacja dotyczy przede wszystkim młodzieży. Przedmiotem refleksji jest również pytanie o możliwość wypracowania adekwatnej odpowiedzi Kościoła na zdiagnozowane wyzwania sekularyzacyjne. Kwestia ta pozostaje jednak otwarta.

Słowa kluczowe: religijność, sekularyzacja, młodzież, Kościół katolicki, nowa ewangelizacja

Abstract: This article focuses on the transformations of religiosity within Polish society concerning self-declared affiliations, religious practices and moral principles, all framed within the context of Church activities. The study presents empirical analyses based on data obtained from research institutions and individual projects, highlighting differences between the general population and the youth demographic. The research findings confirm that dynamic secularisation predominantly affects the youth. The article also reflects on the possibility of the Church formulating an appropriate response to the identified challenges, although this issue remains open for further discussion.

Keywords: religiosity, secularisation, youth, Catholic Church, new evangelisation

Zjawisko sekularyzacji nie jest nowe. Obserwowane jest od wielu lat, zwłaszcza w Europie, ale także w Ameryce Północnej i innych rejonach świata. Aktualnie jednak sekularyzacja staje się bardzo dynamiczna, przede wszystkim w krajach tradycyjnie chrześcijańskich. W refleksji nad tymi problemami bardzo ważne są badania socjologiczne, które pozwalają lepiej opisać i zrozumieć zachodzące przemiany. Perspektywa teologicznopastoralna – bazująca w tym przypadku na badaniach empirycznych – stara się udzielić odpowiedzi na wyzwania sekularyzacyjne z perspektywy Kościoła katolickiego.

W zamyśle autorów niniejszy artykuł ma stanowić punkt wyjścia do dalszych refleksji zamieszczonych w tym numerze czasopisma. Z tego względu zawiera analizę przemian religijności w społeczeństwie polskim. Nie tylko ich kierunek jest swoistym *novum*, ale także ich skala i charakter. Jeszcze w pierwszej dekadzie XXI wieku niektórzy z socjologów pisali o „fenomenie" polskiej religijności,

ukazując elementy wpływające na jej stabilizację. Dzisiaj natomiast formułowane są tezy mówiące o „przyspieszonej", „gwałtownej" czy „galopującej" sekularyzacji obserwowanej w środowisku młodzieży. Rzeczywistość „przemian religijnych" jest jednak bardziej złożona, a przy tym uwarunkowana wieloma czynnikami, których ukazanie pozwoli na ich zniuansowanie. Przedstawione poniżej analizy empiryczne będą próbą zweryfikowania powyższej tezy w oparciu o cztery parametry: autodeklaracje wyznaniowe i religijne, praktyki religijne, moralność oraz element wspólnotowy. Analizowane dane empiryczne pochodzą zarówno z badań realizowanych przez instytucje badawcze, takie jak CBOS, jak i z indywidualnych projektów socjologicznych. Dane badawcze zostaną przedstawione dla ogółu polskiego społeczeństwa oraz dla środowisk młodzieżowych. To różnicowanie wydaje się być ważnym czynnikiem pozwalającym w większym stopniu zrozumieć zachodzące współcześnie przemiany religijne w społeczeństwie polskim. Analiza przemian religijności przeprowadzona zostanie przede wszystkim w celu ukazania wyzwań, przed jakimi aktualnie stoi Kościół katolicki w Polsce.

1. Autodeklaracje wyznaniowe

Punktem wyjścia prezentacji wyników empirycznych będzie autoidentyfikacja wyznaniowa. Pozwala ona ukazać sytuację religijno-kościelną społeczeństwa polskiego. Był to przez wiele lat jeden z najbardziej trwałych składników polskiej religijności. Wiele badań socjologicznych potwierdzało, że w Polsce relatywnie rzadko następowały konwersje religijne, a bezdomność wyznaniowa była stosunkowo rzadkim zjawiskiem (Mariański 2011, 151). Przynależność do Kościoła katolickiego była oczywistością kulturową, a wiara miała charakter dziedziczony, przekazywany w ramach socjalizacji pierwotnej w rodzinach. Jeszcze pod koniec XX wieku Władysław Piwowarski uważał „że ateizm, nie mieści się w kulturze narodowej Polaków" (Piwowarski 1999, 14–15). Warto podkreślić, że w pierwszej dekadzie XXI wieku badania socjologiczne potwierdzały przywiązanie Polaków do tradycji religijnej swoich ojców i nie dostrzegano większych przemieszczeń pomiędzy wyznaniami czy w kierunku całkowitej utraty identyfikacji z katolicyzmem.

Pewien wgląd w obecny pejzaż religijny społeczeństwa polskiego można uzyskać, analizując wyniki dwóch ostatnich Narodowych Spisów Powszechnych z 2011 oraz 2021 roku. Wzięło w nich udział odpowiednio: 38 mln 511,8 tys. i 38 mln 36 tys. 118 osób, a odpowiedzi na pytanie o przynależność do wyznania religijnego udzieliło 35 151,4 tys. (91,27%) i 30 212 506 (79,43%); odmówiło udzielenia informacji o swoim wyznaniu – 2 733,8 tys. (7,10%) i 7 807 553 (20,53%), a brak przynależności do jakiegokolwiek wyznania zadeklarowało – 2733,8 tys. (2,41%) i 2 611 506 osób (6,87%). Przynależność do Kościoła katolickiego w 2011

zadeklarowało 33 mln 728,7 tys. (87,58%), a w 2021 – 27 mln 121 tys. 331 osób (71,30%), do Kościoła prawosławnego – 156,3 tys. (0,41%) i 151 tys. 648 (0,40%), Świadków Jehowy – 137,3 tys. (0,36%) i 108 tys. 754 (0,29%), Kościoła Ewangelic- ko-Augsburskiego – 70,8 tys. (0,18%) i 65,4 tys. (0,17%), Kościół katolicki, obrządek bizantyjsko-ukraiński (Kościół greckokatolicki) 33,3 tys. (0,09%) i 33,2 tys. (0,11%), Kościół Zielonoświątkowy – 26,4 tys. (0,07) i 30,1 tys. (0,08%), Kościół Starokatolicki Mariawitów – 10,0 tys. (0,02%) i 12,2 tys. (0,03%), Kościół Polskokatolicki – 8,8 tys. (0,02%) i 6,9 tys. (0,02%), Kościół Chrześcijan Baptystów – 6,0 tys. (0,02%) i 5,1 tys. (0,01%) (GUS 2022, 58; 2013, 35–112). Przedstawione dane wskazują, że największy spadek w deklarowanej przynależności – 16 punktów procentowych – odnotował Kościół katolicki obrządku łacińskiego. Pojawia się pytanie o osoby, które odmówiły odpowiedzi na pytanie o identyfikację religijną, gdyż nie wybrały one ani odpowie- dzi „nienależący do żadnego wyznania", ani nie wskazały żadnego innego wyznania.
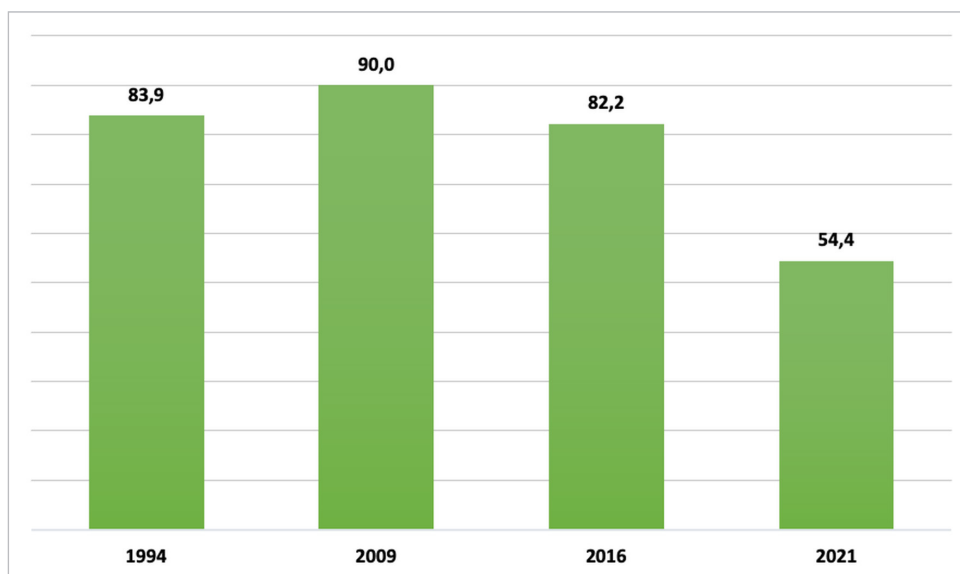
Wykres 1. Deklaracje przynależności wyznaniowej młodzieży w Puławach (dane w %)

Opracowanie na podstawie badań własnych.

Zmiany w omawianym obszarze pokazują również badania socjologiczne prze- prowadzane czterokrotnie wśród maturzystów miasta Puławy w województwie lu- belskim. Pozwalają one na ukazanie dynamiki zmian zachodzących w autodeklaracji wyznaniowej w środowiskach młodzieżowych. W pierwszym badaniu (1994) zde- cydowana większość badanej młodzieży identyfikowała się z Kościołem katolickim (83,9%), natomiast w 2021 roku była to połowa respondentów (54,4%). Różnica

pomiędzy 1994 a 2021 rokiem wyniosła 29,5 punktów procentowych, co wskazuje na gwałtowny spadek w autodeklaracji wyznaniowej. Trzeba jednak dostrzec, że w ostatnim badaniu socjologicznym, pozostali respondenci albo nie identyfikowali się z katolicyzmem (22,4%), albo zaznaczyli odpowiedź „trudno powiedzieć" (22,1%). Kategoria „trudno powiedzieć" może oznaczać młodzież z tzw. płynną tożsamością wyznaniową (Adamczyk 2023, 9–11). Może się ona sytuować pomiędzy osłabionym katolicyzmem a całkowitym zerwaniem z katolicyzmem, które jeszcze w ich przypadku nie nastąpiło. Dane szczegółowe zawiera wykres 1.

Zarówno w Narodowym Spisie Powszechnym, jaki i w omawianych badaniach wśród maturzystów puławskich dostrzega się wzrastający odsetek osób z brakiem identyfikacji z Kościołem katolickim oraz płynną tożsamością wyznaniową. Badania autodeklaracji wyznaniowych wskazują, że proces sekularyzacji zdecydowanie szybciej zachodzi w środowiskach młodzieżowych niż wśród dorosłych Polaków, a bezdomność wyznaniowa u pewnej części społeczeństwa staje się faktem.

2. Autodeklaracje religijne

Kolejnym przedstawianym zagadnieniem będzie autodeklaracja religijna. Jest to subiektywna samoocena własnej religijności dokonana przez respondenta. Pozwala ona ukazać w przybliżeniu stopień religijności oraz utożsamiania się ze zbiorowością osób wierzących lub niewierzących. W badaniach przeprowadzonych przez Pew Research Center w 108 krajach religijność Polaków jest na względnie wysokim poziomie. Kiedy jednak rozróżni się w tym badaniu dwie kategorie wiekowe (osoby poniżej czterdziestego roku życia i powyżej), to okazuje się, że młodzi ludzie w Polsce szybciej się sekularyzują niż w innych krajach europejskich, a ich religijność jest na poziomie średniej europejskiej (Pew Research Center 2018).

Wyniki raportów CBOS z 2021 wskazują, że zdecydowana większość społeczeństwa polskiego uważa się za osoby wierzące (88,7%), a co dziewiąta osoba za niewierzącą (11,3%). Dziesięć lat wcześniej odsetek osób wierzących był nieco wyższy (94%; głęboko wierzący – 9%, wierzący – 85%) i mniej było niewierzących (6%; raczej niewierzących – 3%, całkowicie niewierzących – 3%). Nastąpił więc spadek odsetka osób wierzących o ponad 4 punkty procentowe, co wskazuje na zjawisko powolnej sekularyzacji wśród ludności polskiej. Znacznie większe różnice dostrzega się w autodeklaracjach religijnych wśród młodzieży. W raporcie CBOS respondentów wierzących w wieku 18–24 lata jest 73%, a osób w różnym stopniu niewierzących jest 27% (Grabowska 2022b, 5). W tym przypadku dostrzega się zmiany, które mają charakter bardziej radykalny. Warto tutaj zaznaczyć, że wiele innych badań socjologicznych przedstawia przybliżone tendencje. Na wykresie 2 przedstawione zostało porównanie deklaracji wiary ogółu społeczeństwa (1) oraz młodzieży w wieku 18–24 lata (2).

Deklaracje wiary religijnej ogółu społeczeństwa i badanych
w wieku 18–24 lata (dane w %)
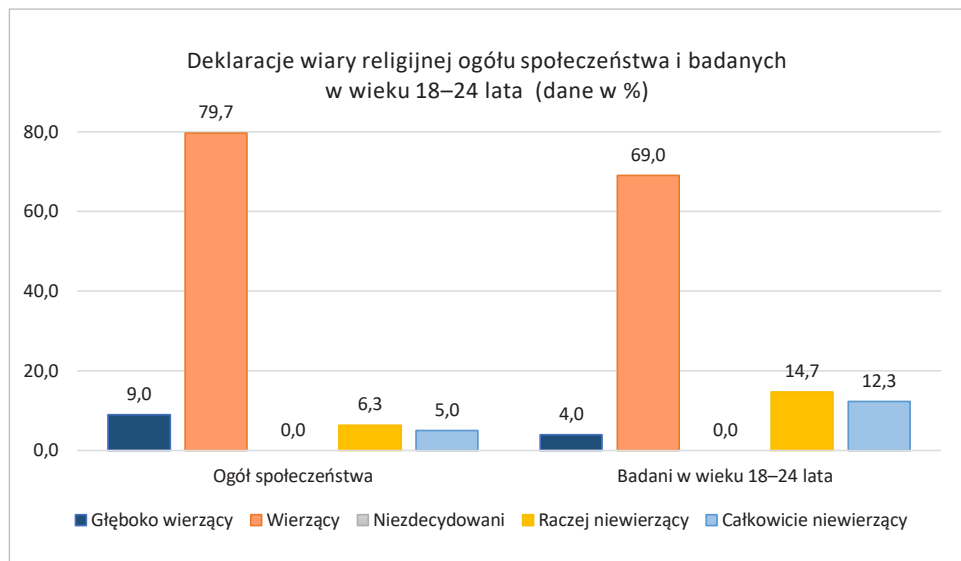
Wykres 2. Deklaracje wiary ogółu społeczeństwa i młodzieży w wieku 18–24 lata (dane w %)

Opracowanie na podstawie: Grabowska 2022b, 5.

W odniesieniu do ogólnego poziomu religijności polskiego społeczeństwa można stwierdzić, że wraz ze wzrostem wieku zwiększa się odsetek osób wierzących (18–24 lata – 75,2%, 25–35 lat – 81,8%, 35–44 lata – 87,5%, 45–54 lata – 92,1%, 55–64 lata – 91,6%, 65 lat i więcej – 93,7%), a mieszkańcy większych miast rzadziej deklarują wiarę niż mieszkańcy mniejszych miast i wsi (wieś – 93,5%, miasto do 19 999 – 93,5%, od 20 000 do 99 999 – 87,9%, od 100 000 do 499 999 – 83,1%, 500 000 i więcej – 65,1%). Ponadto raport CBOS ukazuje, że kobiety są bardziej religijne niż mężczyźni (Grabowska 2022b, 6–7).

3. Autodeklaracje praktyk religijnych

Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego od wielu lat gromadzi dane dotyczące osób uczęszczających na msze św., czyli tzw. *dominicantes*. W statystykach uwzględnia się tylko osoby ochrzczone i wyłącza się dzieci oraz osoby w podeszłym wieku. W roku 1990, na progu polskiej transformacji, wskaźnik *dominicantes* dla ogółu społeczeństwa wynosił 50,3%, a w 2022 – 29,5% (ISKK 2022, 9) (wykres 3). Na przestrzeni ponad trzydziestu lat odnotowuje się więc systematyczny spadek *dominicantes* w społeczeństwie polskim, który w ostatnich latach widocznie przyspieszał, jednak

ostatnie liczenie wiernych w kościołach uzyskało wskaźnik *dominicantes* wyższy od roku poprzedniego o 1 punkt procentowy. Spadek praktyk religijnych ma charakter systematyczny i – co pokazują różne badania socjologiczne – nie jest spowodowany pandemią koronawirusa. Na podstawie jednorocznego wzrostu *dominicantes* nie można zakładać stałej tendencji, zwłaszcza, gdy kolejne analizy pokażą radykalny spadek praktyk religijnych w środowiskach młodzieżowych.
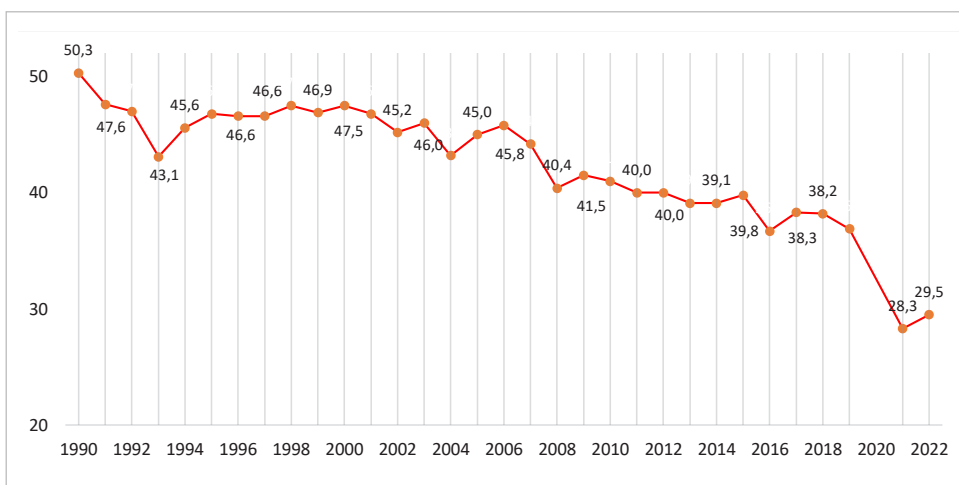
Wykres 3. Wskaźnik *dominicantes* w Polsce w latach 1990–2022 (dane w %)

Opracowanie na podstawie: ISKK 2022, 9.

Z kolei w przywoływanym wyżej raporcie CBOS praktyki religijne przynajmniej raz w tygodniu zadeklarowało 40,8% ogółu badanych, w kategorii 18–24 lata było to 23,3%, a w kategorii młodzieży szkół ponadpodstawowych 23,8%. Całkowity brak praktyk religijnych zadeklarowało odpowiednio: 22,7%, 36,2% i 49,1%. Wśród respondentów dwóch młodszych kategorii wiekowych relatywnie mało jest osób praktykujących. Połowa uczniów szkół ponadpodstawowych w ogóle nie praktykuje. Jeśli młodzież jest barometrem zapowiadającym zmiany w przyszłości, a tak często się o niej mówi, to w niedalekiej przyszłości można spodziewać się dalszego spadku frekwencji w kościołach. Jeśli dziś pytamy, ilu Polaków jest osobami praktykującymi, to przyjmując założenia socjologii religii, że osoba, która przynajmniej raz w miesiącu chodzi na mszę św. jest osobą praktykującą, otrzymujemy następujące wskaźniki: wśród całości społeczeństwa – 54,4%, 18–24 lata – 36,0%, młodzież szkół ponadpodstawowych – 31,4% (Grabowska 2022b, 5).
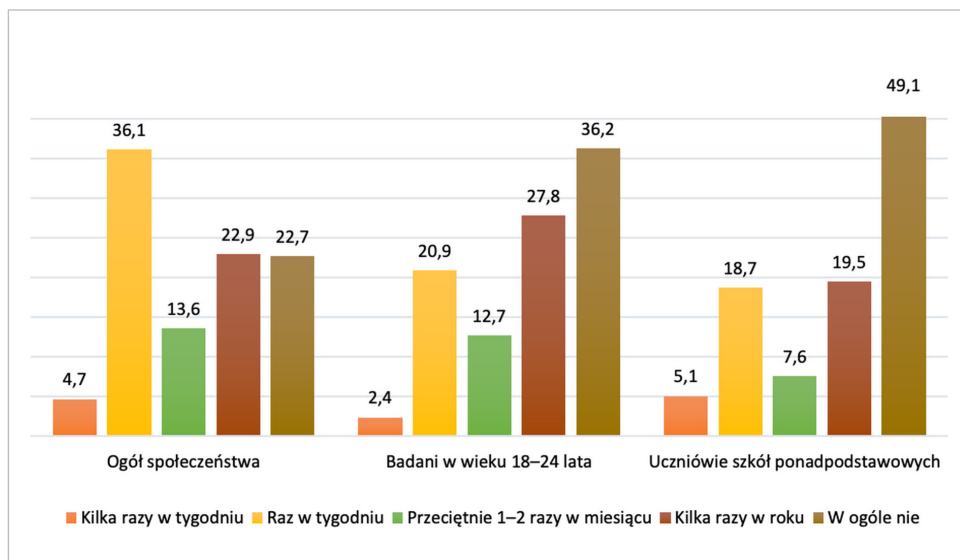
Wykres 4. Praktyki religijne w poszczególnych kategoriach wiekowych (dane w %)

Opracowanie na podstawie: Grabowska 2022b, 5.

W analizach zmiennych niezależnych – podobnie jak w autodeklaracjach wiary – zauważa się podobne tendencje do wcześniej występujących. Kobiety częściej praktykują niż mężczyźni, mieszkańcy wsi i małych miast systematyczniej niż większych, osoby z niższym wykształceniem regularniej niż z wyższym (Grabowska 2021, 6–8). Mirosława Grabowska, pisząc o religijności młodzieży na tle społeczeństwa, podkreśla:

> Z całą pewnością możemy stwierdzić, że następuje powolny spadek poziomu wiary religijnej i szybszy spadek poziomu praktykowania w społeczeństwie polskim. Proces ten przebiega nierównomiernie: w mniejszym stopniu dotyczy wiary, w większym – praktyk religijnych. Czy dlatego, że jeśli mamy do czynienia ze zinternalizowanymi postawami (a tak traktujemy religijność), to pod wpływem czynników zewnętrznych najłatwiej, najszybciej zmienia się „zachowaniowy" (behawioralny) komponent postawy, a więc praktyki, a nie wiara religijna (komponent „przekonaniowy")? Czy dlatego, że te wpływy zewnętrzne mają charakter raczej antykościelny niż antyreligijny? I jak należałoby sprawdzić taką hipotezę? (Grabowska 2021, 6–8).

Pytania postawione przez Mirosławę Grabowską są ciekawą perspektywą badawczą, wartą podjęcia w kolejnych analizach socjologicznych. Odpowiedzi na nie trzeba będzie szukać przede wszystkim w badaniach jakościowych. Wydaje się

jednak również, w kontekście zmian religijnych, że coraz częściej zanika potrzeba religijności, i to głównie wśród młodzieży. Ten element będzie również wspomniany w dalszych analizach. Ma on jednak charakter wewnętrzny, a nie zewnętrzny. On również prowokuje kolejne pytania badawcze: Czy jest on czymś bardziej stałym, czy charakterystycznym dla młodego pokolenia, które zaangażowane w „doczesność", odsuwa pytania dotyczące kwestii podstawowych i eschatologicznych? A może ten augustyński „niepokój serca" jest zaspokajany – na tym etapie życia – w inny sposób niż poprzez religię?

4. Moralność katolicka

Wybiórcze traktowanie moralności głoszonej przez Kościół katolicki czy nawet jej odrzucanie jest coraz bardziej charakterystyczne dla polskiego społeczeństwa. Potwierdzają to sondaże CBOS wskazujące na zmniejszanie się odsetka dorosłych Polaków uważających moralność katolicką za uniwersalną. Od 2006 do 2021 roku blisko dwukrotnie zmniejszył się odsetek Polaków uważających zasady moralne katolicyzmu za najlepsze i wystarczające (31% do 16%); o cztery punkty procentowe zmniejszył się wskaźnik osób, uważających wszystkie zasady katolicyzmu za słuszne, ale niewystarczające wobec skomplikowania życia i konieczne do uzupełnienia jakimiś innymi zasadami (26% do 22%). Zwiększyły się odsetki pozostałych odpowiedzi: „większość zasad moralnych katolicyzmu jest słuszna, lecz nie ze wszystkimi się zgadzam, a ponadto te, które są słuszne, na pewno nie wystarczają człowiekowi" (36% do 47%), „moralność religijna jest mi obca, ale niektóre zasady moralne katolicyzmu uważam za słuszne" (5% do 11%), „zasady moralne katolicyzmu są mi całkowicie obce" (1% do 4%) (Boguszewski 2022, 5). Pytanie to zadano także młodzieży maturalnej w Puławach, a wyniki kształtowały się następująco: w roku 2009 – 10,8%, 32,8%, 39,2%, 7,6%, a w roku 2021 – 5,7%, 16,7%, 43,4%, 16,4%, 13,5% (Mariański 2022, 73). Wskaźniki otrzymane w badaniu tylko wśród młodzieży mają zdecydowanie niższy odsetek aprobaty nauczania moralnego Kościoła w stosunku do ogółu dorosłych badanych. Jeśli więc zasady moralne katolicyzmu – co można zauważyć w wielu różnych badaniach socjologicznych – coraz częściej są akceptowane tylko częściowo w polskim społeczeństwie, to młodzież jest do nich nastawiona bardziej krytycznie i częściej je odrzuca.

Na tle innych krajów Polacy charakteryzują się stosunkowo wysokim wskaźnikiem akceptacji zasad moralnych, chociaż w porównaniu z poprzednimi europejskimi badaniami nad wartościami, parametr ten odnotował spadek. Wśród polskich respondentów dostrzec można było wzrost permisywności ocen moralnych. W ten sposób dostrzega się trendy przemian moralności charakterystyczne dla państw najbardziej rozwiniętych gospodarczo i poddanych procesom sekularyzacyjnym.

Jak zauważyła Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, wspomniane badania nie wskazują na kryzys czy erozję moralności, ale ukazują tendencję przemian moralnych w społeczeństwie polskim w pierwszej dekadzie XXI wieku (Jasińska-Kania 2012, 127).
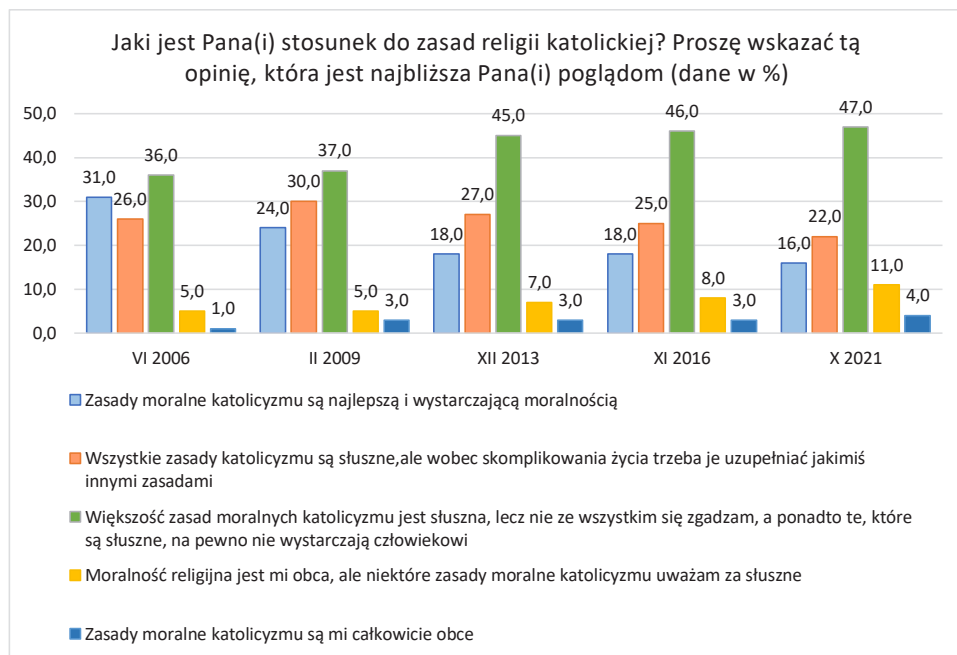
Wykres 5. Stosunek Polaków do katolickich zasad moralnych (dane w %)

Opracowanie własne na podstawie: Boguszewski 2022, 5.

Ważnym uzupełnieniem jest również analiza Janusza Mariańskiego, który pisząc o stosunku Polaków do zasad moralnych katolicyzmu, zauważa:

We współczesnych społeczeństwach nazywanych ponowoczesnymi, w tym i w społeczeństwie polskim, traktuje się wiele spraw życia codziennego o wiele poważniej niż religię. Praktyka życia codziennego odbiega znacznie od wskazań religii zinstytucjonalizowanych. Relacje między religią i moralnością ulegają osłabieniu, w konsekwencji wiara religijna wiąże się z różnymi wartościami i normami oraz praktykami życiowymi (pluralizm moralny). W sekularyzującym się świecie maleją wpływy religii na kulturę, moralność, politykę i w ogóle na życie publiczne. Niektórzy badacze społeczni wskazują na kres porządku moralnego opartego na przesłankach religijnych. Według innych Kościoły chrześcijańskie

odgrywają pewną rolę w kształtowaniu moralności publicznej, ale utraciły swój autorytet w sferze życia prywatnego (Mariański 2014, 84).

W tradycyjnej polskiej religijności religia była ważnym faktorem postaw moralnych. W świadomości wielu osób występował związek pomiędzy wiarą w Boga a moralnością, która miała swój fundament w elemencie nadprzyrodzonym. W latach dziewięćdziesiątych ubiegłego wieku w badaniach socjologicznych można było dostrzec proces odchodzenia od absolutyzmu moralnego w kierunku umiarkowanego relatywizmu, a następnie w kierunku indywidualizacji moralności. U pewnej części polskiego społeczeństwa występuje brak stałych orientacji moralnych. W Polsce coraz bardziej nasila się zjawisko uniezależniania się moralności od religii, zwłaszcza w środowiskach młodzieżowych.

5. Wspólnota kościelna

Omawiane powyżej poglądy na temat moralności Polaków mają swoje przełożenie również na stosunek Polaków do Kościoła katolickiego. Ważnym elementem jest tu, stanowiąca składową kapitału społecznego, kwestia zaufania, która jest kluczowym wymiarem życia indywidualnego i społecznego. Na zaufanie do Kościoła z perspektywy badawczej można spojrzeć w dwojaki sposób. W pierwszym ujęciu jest to zaufanie występujące wśród osób identyfikujących się z Kościołem i przynależących do niego. Druga perspektywa badawcza dotyczy Kościoła jako całości, obejmując swoim zasięgiem także poszczególne jego instytucje (Mariański 2005, 111). Kościół jest instytucją zarówno religijną, jak i społeczną, dlatego też można rozróżnić analogiczne typy zaufania: społeczny i religijny. Nie muszą one być na jednakowym poziomie. Warto jednak podkreślić, że obecnie wiele instytucji przeżywa kryzys społecznego zaufania, a zjawisko to nie omija również instytucji Kościoła katolickiego. W 2022 roku w sondażu IBRiS odsetek osób ufających Kościołowi katolickiemu w stosunku do nieufających był wyższy o 2,9 punktu procentowego (42,2% do 39,3%) (PAP 2023). W okresie choroby i śmierci Jana Pawła II – w świetle sondaży TNS OBOP – wskaźnik deklarowanego zaufania do Kościoła wynosił około 70%. Jeszcze w listopadzie 2010 roku zdecydowana większość Polaków ufała Kościołowi (zdecydowanie – 19%, raczej tak – 47%, raczej nie – 18%, zdecydowanie nie – 11%, trudno powiedzieć – 5%) (*Opinie Polaków o Kościele 2010* 2010, 2–8).

Celem ukazania stosunku Polaków do Kościoła katolickiego w raporcie CBOS *Zmiany religijności Polaków po pandemii* przedstawiono pytanie dotyczące obrazu Kościoła w opinii pełnoletnich mieszkańców kraju. W kafeterii dwie zaproponowane odpowiedzi miały charakter pozytywny dla instytucji Kościoła katolickiego, a kolejne dwie pejoratywny. Najczęściej dla badanych dorosłych Polaków „Kościół

jest wspólnotą, w której moja wiara się spełnia" – 27%, a nieco rzadziej „Kościół to księża i biskupi, którzy tym, co mówią i robią, zniechęcają mnie do siebie" – 26%. Kolejne dwie odpowiedzi: „Kościół to dla mnie przede wszystkim parafia, w której się dobrze czuję" oraz „Kościół jest niedostosowany do dzisiejszych czasów, dlatego mnie nie przyciąga do siebie", otrzymały identyczne odsetki – 20% (Bożewicz 2022, 4). Dwie pozytywne odpowiedzi uzyskały prawie identyczne wskaźniki jak dwa negatywne skojarzenia z obrazem Kościoła. Warto zauważyć, że w pozytywnym wymiarze Kościół częściej jest pojmowany jako wspólnota niż parafia, a w negatywnym kontekście – jako instytucja zhierarchizowana niż niekompatybilna z rzeczywistością i zarazem odpychająca.
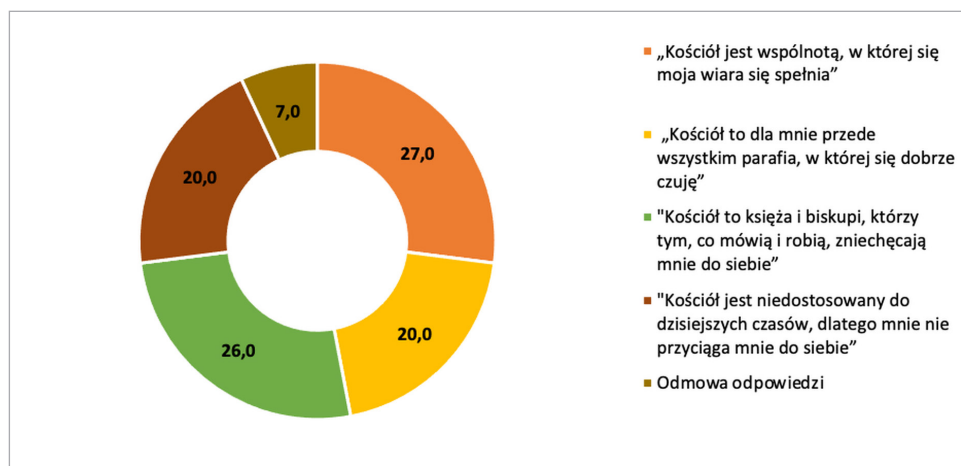
Wykres 6. Opinie Polaków na temat Kościoła katolickiego (dane w %)

Opracowanie na podstawie: Bożewicz 2022, 4.

Raport CBOS przedstawia również powody rezygnacji z praktyk religijnych. Respondenci, którzy przestali chodzić do kościoła, zostali w pytaniu otwartym poproszeni, aby podali przyczyny takiej decyzji. Wszystkie odpowiedzi zostały ujęte w kategorie, wśród których najczęstszą przyczyną był brak potrzeby pójścia do kościoła (17%), następnym w kolejności motywem było krytyczne nastawienie do Kościoła – 12%, brak wiary – 11% i krytyka księży – 10%. Dane szczegółowe wraz z opisami zostały zamieszczone w tabeli nr 1 (Grabowska 2022a, 4).

Tabela 1. Motywy rezygnacji z praktyk religijnych (dane w %, N=370)

Brak potrzeby (brak sensu; nie interesuje mnie to; obojętność; lenistwo; nie czułem się z tym dobrze)	17
Krytyka Kościoła (ogólna; Kościół jako instytucja zaczął mnie denerwować; nie podoba mi się to, co robi Kościół; zraziłem się do Kościoła; Kościół to patologia; Kościół to organizacja mafijna; dezaprobata hierarchów; krytycznie o podejściu Kościoła do wiernych i wtrącaniu się w życie prywatne ludzi)	12
Brak wiary (kryzys wiary; straciłem wiarę; dorosłem; zacząłem myśleć; nie trafia do mnie to przesłanie; brak przekonania; nie wierzę w istnienie bytów nadprzyrodzonych)	11
Krytyka księży, ich zachowania (podejście do ludzi; zachowanie wobec mnie; arogancja; nietolerancja; specyficzny proboszcz)	10
Polityka (Kościół miesza się do polityki; za dużo polityki etc.)	9
Brak zaufania do Kościoła i księży	7
Zdrowie, wiek	7
Brak czasu, strata czasu	6
Skandale pedofilskie (ich tuszowanie, nierozliczenie; Kościół ukrywa za swoimi murami przestępców-pedofilów; afery; gwałty, molestowania)	5
Pandemia	4
Pieniądze (Kościół jest nastawiony na pieniądze, garnie się do pieniędzy; chodzi im tylko o pieniądze; biznes; złodzieje)	4
Hipokryzja, fałsz, zakłamanie (nieprzestrzeganie prawd, które sami wyznają; rozbieżności tego, co mówią i co robią; co zakazują, to sami robią)	4
Indywidualna sytuacja (wyrzucenie z lekcji religii; niedopuszczenie do sakramentów; drugi związek; niesprawiedliwe traktowanie; powody osobiste; problemy rodzinne; traumatyczne wydarzenie – śmierć syna)	4
Rodzina (nie zachęcała lub przymuszała – bunt nastolatka)	3
Wiara bez praktyk (modlę się sam w domu; wierzę w Boga, ale nie w Kościół)	3
Ateizm	3
Przekaz Kościoła (nie przyciąga; archaiczny; nieaktualny; nieprzystosowany; nieatrakcyjny; nudny; głupi; bezmyślny; bezsensowny; księża różne bzdety opowiadają; Kościół opowiada głupoty)	3
Zmiana religii, światopoglądu, poglądów (miała kontakt ze świadkami Jehowy, poznała wiarę prawdziwą, do której się przekonała; inne poglądy religijne; zmieniły mi się poglądy; mam inne poglądy; nie zgadzam się z nauką Kościoła; różnica poglądów)	3
Agnostycyzm	1
Krytyka religii (bajki, bujda, zabobon, narzędzie kontroli, narzędzie manipulacji i ogłupiania społeczeństwa)	1
Wiara w naukę, racjonalizm	1
Inne (ksiądz w rodzinie; zwątpiłem w „łażenie" do kościoła, to było takie „narodowe" chodzenie do kościoła i na religię; homofobiczny stosunek hierarchów kościelnych do mniejszości; katolicyzm kojarzy mi się z ciągłym smutkiem, umartwianiem, poczuciem winy; to były czasy stalinowskie).	2

Opracowanie na podstawie: Grabowska 2022a, 4.

Można stwierdzić, że Polski katolicyzm jest w fazie przejściowej. U pewnej części polskiego społeczeństwa następuje przejście od religijności dziedziczonej, przyjętej w procesie socjalizacji od rodziców, do Kościoła wyboru. Nic nie zapowiada, aby powróciło masowe uczestnictwo w życiu Kościoła charakterystyczne jeszcze dla pierwszej dekady XXI wieku. U coraz większej części społeczeństwa Kościół traci na znaczeniu. Wskazuje to na coraz bardziej pluralistyczny i zróżnicowany kształt polskiej religijności, co ma znaczący wpływ na funkcjonowanie Kościoła.

Zakończenie

Przedstawiony wyżej aktualny poziom religijności Polaków i jej przemiany w ciągu ostatnich lat stanowią jedno z największych wyzwań dla Kościoła i jego działalności pastoralnej. Przeprowadzone analizy socjologiczne pokazują, że zmiany zachodzące w religijności Polaków są głębokie i trwałe. Ponadto wyniki badań pozwalają na sformułowanie tezy, że najbardziej dynamiczne procesy sekularyzacyjne dotyczą młodzieży. Z powyższych względów Kościół podejmuje różne działania będące reakcją na sekularyzację.

Najbardziej znaną ideą, która od kilku dekad wyznacza kierunki szczegółowych działań jest nowa ewangelizacja. Jest ona adresowana przede wszystkim do ludzi przeżywających kryzys wiary, a nawet odrzucających ją w całości (*EE* 46), oraz tych, którzy oddalili się od Kościoła (*EN* 54; *RMis* 33) i zaniechali praktyk religijnych (Ratzinger 2001, 35; Śmigiel 2013, 16; Jeżyna 2002, 34). Istotą nowej ewangelizacji jest głoszenie niezmiennej Ewangelii, ale z nową gorliwością oraz przy użyciu nowych metod i środków wyrazu (*VSpl* 106; por. *PDV* 54; KDEP 2000, 23). Innymi słowy, zakłada ona integralny przekaz depozytu wiary (*FC* 23), ale z zastosowaniem form i metod dostosowanych do współczesnej kultury i mentalności dzisiejszego człowieka (*VSpl* 106; por. *PDV* 54; *EG* 41; Mąkosa 2009, 379; Kochel 2013, 34–40). Jednak pomimo wielu inicjatyw wpisujących się w nową ewangelizację sekularyzacja nie tylko nie została powstrzymana, ale wręcz przyśpieszyła. Można więc stwierdzić, że wpływ procesów sekularyzacyjnych i indywidualizacyjnych jest silniejszy niż oddziaływania pastoralne. Kluczowe zatem pytanie, jakie rodzi się w tym kontekście brzmi: Jakie idee i praktyczne działania byłyby w stanie spowolnić te trendy? Zamieszczone w niniejszym numerze czasopisma *Verbum Vitae* opracowania, autorstwa specjalistów z różnych krajów, podejmują próbę udzielenia odpowiedzi na to pytanie. W swojej istocie pozostaje ono jednak otwarte.

Bibliografia

Adamczyk, Tomasz. 2020. *Autentyczność i duchowość: Księża w opinii polskiej młodzieży: Analiza socjologiczna*. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL.

Adamczyk, Tomasz. 2023. "Changes in the Religiosity of Secondary School Youth in Poland. A Sociological Analysis." *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL 66* (3): 5–25. https://doi.org/10.31743/znkul.16223.

Boguszewski, Rafał. 2022. *Źródła zasad moralnych*. Komunikat z Badań CBOS 1. https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K_001_22.PDF.

Bożewicz, Marta. 2022. *Zmiany religijności Polaków po pandemii*. Komunikat z Badań CBOS 85. https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K_085_22.PDF.

Franciszek. 2013. Adhortacja apostolska *Evangelii gaudium* (= EG).

Grabowska, Mirosława. 2021. *Religijność młodzieży na tle ogółu społeczeństwa*. Komunikat z Badań CBOS 144. https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2021/K_144_21.PDF.

Grabowska, Mirosława. 2022a. *Dlaczego Polacy odchodzą z Kościoła?* Komunikat z Badań CBOS 105. https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K_105_22.PDF.

Grabowska, Mirosława. 2022b. *Polski pejzaż religijny – z dalekiego planu*. Komunikat z Badań CBOS 89. https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K_089_22.PDF.

GUS (Główny Urząd Statystyczny). 2013. *Wyznania religijne, stowarzyszenia narodowościowe i etniczne w Polsce 2009–2011*. Warszawa: Główny Urząd Statystyczny.

GUS (Główny Urząd Statystyczny). 2022. *Wyznania religijne w Polsce w latach 2019–2021*. Główny Urząd Statystyczny.

ISKK (Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego SAC). 2022. *Kościół w liczbach. Annuarium Statisticum Ecclesiae in Polonia*. Edited by Marcin Jewdokimow, Luiza Organek, and Wojciech Sadłoń. Warszawa: Instytut Statystyki Kościoła Katolickiego SAC im. Witolda Zdaniewicza.

Jan Paweł II. 1981. Adhortacja apostolska *Familiaris consortio* (= FC).

Jan Paweł II. 1990. Encyklika *Redemptoris missio* (= RMis).

Jan Paweł II. 1992. Adhortacja apostolska *Pastores dabo vobis* (= PDV).

Jan Paweł II. 1993. Encyklika *Veritatis splendor* (= VSpl).

Jan Paweł II. 2003. Adhortacja apostolska *Ecclesia in Europa* (= EE).

Jasińska-Kania, Aleksandra. 2012. "Między rygoryzmem a permisywnością, przemiany moralności w Polsce i w Europie." In *Wartości i zmiany: Przemiany postaw Polaków w jednoczącej się Europie*, edited by Aleksandra Jasińska-Kania, 105–30. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar.

Jeżyna, Krzysztof. 2002. *Moralne przesłanie nowej ewangelizacji: Wezwanie do odnowy Kościoła i świata*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

KDEP (Komisja Duszpasterska Episkopatu Polski). 2000. *Nowa ewangelizacja u progu Trzeciego Tysiąclecia: Program duszpasterski na rok 2000/2001*. Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka.

Kochel, Jan. 2013. "Specyfika i zadania nowej ewangelizacji." In *Kerygmat jako treść nowej ewangelizacji*, edited by Paweł Mąkosa, 23–40. Rzeszów: Bonus Liber.

Mąkosa, Paweł. 2009. *Katecheza młodzieży gimnazjalnej w Polsce: Stan aktualny i perspektywy rozwoju*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Mariański, Janusz. 2005. *Kościół katolicki w Polsce a życie społeczne: Studium socjologiczno-pastoralne*. Lublin: Gaudium.

Mariański, Janusz. 2011. *Przemiany moralności polskich maturzystów w latach 1994–2009: Studium socjologiczne*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Mariański, Janusz. 2014. "Religia i moralność w świadomości Polaków – analiza socjologiczna." *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 57 (4): 67–91.

Mariański, Janusz. 2022. *Wartości moralne w świadomości maturzystów puławskich. Raport z badań socjologicznych zrealizowanych w latach 1994–2021*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Nauk Społecznych.

Opinie Polaków o Kościele 2010. 2010. Komunikat z badań TNS OBOP (grudzień, 2010). Warszawa: TNS OBOP.

Paweł VI. 1975. Adhortacja apostolska *Evangelii nuntiandi*.

Pew Research Center. 2018. "The Age Gap in Religion Around the World." https://www.pewforum.org/2018/06/13/the-age-gap-in-religion-around-the-world/.

Piwowarski, Władysław. 1999. "Postawy wobec wiary." In *Postawy społeczno-religijne mieszkańców archidiecezji katowickiej*, edited by Witold Zdaniewicz and Tadeusz Zembrzuski, 13–22. Katowice: Księgarnia św. Jacka.

PAP (Polska Agencja Prasowa). 2023. "Komu ufają Polacy: Unii, NATO, wojsku, a może Kościołowi?" Accessed January 12, 2024. https://www.pap.pl/aktualnosci/komu-ufaja-polacy-unii-nato-wojsku-moze-kosciolowi-sondaz.

Ratzinger, Joseph. 2001. "Nowa ewangelizacja. Przemówienie do katechetów i nauczycieli religii. Rzym, 9 grudnia 2000 r." *L'Osservatore Romano* 22 (6): 35–39. Accessed February 12, 2024. http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WR/inne/ratzinger_ewangelizacja.html.

Śmigiel, Wiesław. 2013. "Specyfika i zadania nowej ewangelizacji." In *Nowa ewangelizacja w nowej katechezie*, edited by Paweł Mąkosa, 13–22. Rzeszów: Bonus Liber.

ARTICLES/ARTYKUŁY

Philosophical Significance of the Way, Experience, and Silence in the Context of Camino de Santiago

INGA MIZDRAK iD
Krakow University of Economics, mizdraki@uek.krakow.pl

Abstract: The problem addressed in the article refers to an attempt to present the phenomenon of the way, experience, and silence in the context of pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela in modern times. The objective is to present what is popularly referred to as *Camino* as a dynamic and evolving perspective on human spirituality in relation to the challenges of modern times. The main thesis of the proposed study is that this type of pilgrimage offers an alternative to the phenomenon of increasing secularization. The key concepts related to the *Camino* were discussed and interpreted using the methods of analysis and synthesis in order to present the anthropological vision of the human being developed by Karol Wojtyła and Józef Tischner. An outline of their ideas reveals the deeper meaning of the way and experience. The main conclusion following from the analysis of the issue is that, by embarking on the *Camino* route, an individual is enabled to take a more in-depth look at his or her own condition, his or her perspective on relationships with others, contemplation, and new opportunities to organize and develop his or her own spirituality.

Keywords: the human being, way, experience, silence, secularization

The phenomena of the way, experience, and silence have a high significance in the debate about the human being. This is because they refer us back to some of the most fundamental questions about the human condition, the purpose of human life, and the human being's vocation. Philosophical anthropology, psychology, and theology do not cease to ask questions about the human being and the human being's mode of existing in the world, which, at the time of discussions about modernity, the shape of culture, and disputes over the understanding of civilization, keeps opening new research perspectives.

The attempt to describe the human being in the context of the categories listed in the title refers to traversing, directing, setting, and paving the way as a specific opportunity for the inner and spiritual development of an individual, especially in the era of a secularized culture, in which religious values are repressed, and an attempt is made to annihilate them (Mariański 2015, 41–43).

The aim of the article is to present the route, popularly called Camino de Santiago[1] in the perspective of contemporary philosophical questions concerning the human condition, the human being's spiritual development, and the purpose of human life. As contemporary authors dealing with the subject emphasize, *Camino* is not only a space of self-discovery for the individual in the psychological and social sense but it also creates a situation in which a person can explore the question of the ultimate purpose of his or her existence; "the modern routes of St. James can be perceived as a space of questions, explorations, doubts, and 'wanderings' between two poles of human life and activity: fides et ratio" (Plichta 2017, 19).

In reaching one's self and searching for answers to fundamental existential questions or finding a deep meaning of the relationship with Transcendence, entering the route to Santiago de Compostela turns out to be an inspiring Christian response to the phenomenon of secularization in its various dimensions and variants. On the way to Santiago, the human being himself becomes a question "that never ceases to be asked, an absolute amazement in the face of reality, an indestructible hope. The question, amazement, and hope make him a wanderer and a pilgrim who relentlessly pursues his destiny. The pilgrimage on the route of St. James is more than a mere external symbol. It is an expression of a particular conception of the human being and his relationship with God" (Barrio Barrio 2018, 15). On the *Camino*, the sacred and the profane intersect with one another, and at their junction, the human being-pilgrim takes the initiative not only to enter the external dimension of the world but also the internal one, which concerns the human being's own self. At the time of discussions on the shape of modern civilization, this reveals the perspective of looking at the human being as a process in which spiritual values play an important role next to various other values. Although nowadays we can observe a connection with the "desacralized sacrum of this Christian spiritual artery," pilgrims can feel the "pulse of faith" as they cover each kilometer of the Camino, as multiple external and internal, material, and spiritual roads intersect there" (Roszak 2013, 124–25).

It seems that in the multiple discussions on contemporary cultural trends and disputes over the understanding of modern civilization (Nierodka 2015, 237)

---

[1] In the last two decades, traveling on the route of St. James the Apostle to Santiago de Compostela became one of the most important cultural phenomena in Europe and has been experiencing revitalization not only due to its historical and religious character or tourist value but, above all, because it represents a rich human experience in terms of cultural contacts between the people of Western Europe and other continents. The phenomenon of this type of pilgrimage has gained popularity today not only among Christians but also among members of other religions or non-religious people, whose motivations to walk the *Camino* route reveal its cultural and spiritual potential. It is worth noting that the golden age of pilgrimage to Santiago was the period between the 12th and 14th centuries. Next to Rome and Jerusalem, Santiago was the third most popular destination among pilgrims and was important for spreading the cult of St. James the Apostle. In my text, I will use the commonly accepted term *Camino* both in the sense of walking on specific European routes to the tomb of St. James the Apostle and making a journey into oneself, as well as its spiritual, intellectual, sacral, and social dimensions.

the route to Santiago de Compostela occupies an increasingly prominent place, due to the dynamic development of an environment made up of people representing all nations, cultures, and races there (Seryczyńska 2019, 167). The scale of pilgrimages to Santiago clearly shows that this specific route is a place for various types of spirituality, even though it has its source in the Catholic tradition. This opens the possibility for the potential pilgrim to understand himself or herself in a broader context than before, and may even lead to a new perception of oneself in the horizon of one's own future. The pilgrimage itself becomes a field of challenges, a transition from what is known and comfortable to what is unknown, and even difficult. Thus, *Camino* can be presented as a place of discovering, developing, and even organizing of spirituality, since it appears as "an ecosystem of detachment from the noise of the post-modern world. It provides an enclave of silence, in which one can find what is truly important and significant" (Stefaniak 2018, 61–62). Not only is *Camino* currently perceived as a way open to everyone but also as a place for those who are seeking spiritual renewal in its various dimensions (Doburzyński 2021, 115). Through this, European culture, in the consolidation of its identity, has a chance to integrate as an alternative to post-modernism, nihilism, progressing secularization, laicization, and various ideological influences (Mendyk 2019, 159).

1. The Meaning-Making Character of the Way in a Secularized Culture

The various facets of the meaning of the way that function in everyday language also imply philosophical references, while the significant meanings of the way are located in the horizon of questions concerning the nature and condition of the human being. The thinking about the way and the human being crystallizes on the basis of multiple meanings and senses. They can have naturalistic, ethical, symbolic and metaphorical, philosophical, and even eschatological references. Their multiplicity reveals various meanings of the way itself and its multiple modes*,* which expands the directions of interpretation and deeper understanding of the human being himself. By this, we should understand a complex, non-selective, and heterogenous mix of associations, symbols, and references, which is probably inexhaustible.

The wide range of meanings of the concept of the way situates it in a problematized optic, where various contexts may overlap or exclude one another, converge in meaning, or gradually drift apart. This is due to the wide range of everyday, existential, ethical, and philosophical references, and allegorical meanings.[2] Their possible

---

[2] The topos of the way, the metaphor of travel, and the supra-individual character of the way are discussed in more detail by Anna Wieczorkiewicz in the article "Filozof w podróży: O dekonstrukcji pewnej metafory"

mixing, relationships, and subtle nuances emerging between them, do not necessarily have to cause a theoretical confusion. To the contrary, they may reveal its inexhaustible richness in ever new guises, without falling into interpretive traps.

> [The] topos of the way as an ever-present cultural theme, a site of mythical, religious, and philosophical metaphorization, is not related in any significant ways to any system or worldview. To the same extent, it can be a carrier of meaning in the works of writers and thinkers representing various times and cultures. Viewed from this perspective, it is a universal method of encoding and transmitting meaning, a model through which individual reflection is transferred to public discourse (Lubecki 2011, 25–26).

This demonstrates not only that the motive of the way itself eludes generalization, but perhaps also that there is no tool allowing for an ideal cognitive grasp of it. The way, with all its strengths and shortcomings, reveals the logic of moving "from" something "into" something else. This concerns i.a. the change of thinking about the physical journey into thinking about the role which it may play for a person in his or her being. This transition allows an individual to look at oneself, others, fate, or relations with Transcendence in a deeper perspective and enables inner and spiritual development, which, in the face of expanding secularization, may have the benefit of consolidating and preserving or reaching Christian values.

The sources of the topos of the *homo viator* (traveler, wanderer), both ancient, philosophical, religious, and related to art and rich fiction writing, refer to the concept of a human being traversing the road in a variety of references. The earthly destiny and the manner of choosing a particular path were associated with the understanding of an individual in the context of selecting, traversing, and existing on a particular road that often led to the ultimate goal which was the afterlife. The prospect of earthly wandering, pilgrimage, or journey, bore the hallmarks of ethical choices and taking responsibility for one's own fate. Thus, the way was associated not only with a spatio-temporal place but also with a range of existential values which were meant to lead to the interpretation of one's fate and fulfillment of one's humanity.

The symbolism of that way and its multiple meanings are highly contextualized. Nonetheless, it allows for a deeper reading and interpretation of the fate of the human being, who struggles and creates himself (or herself) on the way, learning, developing, experiencing, and living through things, sensing, feeling, and thinking. All that defines a person is accomplished on a certain journey on which that person travels; thus, it is necessary to constantly define that way too, though it is not always straight, and may be crisscrossed, uneven, ambiguous, and winding.

(Philosopher on a Journey. Deconstruction of a Metaphor) and in the book *Wędrowcy fikcyjnych światów: Pielgrzym, rycerz i włóczęga* (Travellers in Fictional Worlds: Pilgrim, Knight, and Vagabond).

The philosophical meaning of the human being's way and life emerges already at the level of colloquial and everyday references. The human being who is on a journey is situated in a specific space and time, and his (or her) individuality constitutes itself in free choices and taking responsibility for them. It is natural to combine the human being with a road. Men's homes are built by roads, men walk on roads, travel through life on roads, meet other people, move towards goals, and develop by traveling on their roads. An individual also can take a particular path in life as a unique opportunity to create his or her everyday life on it. However, a person may also walk off the set path, take a new direction, or completely change the course of events with the choices he or she makes. The option of returning to the chosen path or entering a new one is an important dimension too.

In a different sense, a person may complete a certain journey, or make it to the end, and thus reach a set goal in a specific time. One may look for the right road (in the ethical or topographical sense), direct someone to a wrong road (in the ethical or geographical sense), be on the right or wrong road (moral sense), get out of someone else's way or stand in someone else's way (in the psychological or physical sense), stop on one's way or set a new path (in the existential, social, and psychological sense), bar or block someone's way (in the physical sense). Finally, one may stray from one's way or take a roundabout way, be at a crossroads, go one's own way, get ready for the road, and take to the road.

The road defined as a journey can be understood in at least three ways.

The first one refers to the change of physical location, i.e. moving in space.

The second understanding of the journey can refer to the journey into oneself, analyzing one's own psyche, traveling through the meanders of one's self, and reaching the truth about oneself.

The third perspective on understanding the journey refers to the pilgrimage as a specific kind of the human being's existence on earth associated with freedom and responsibility for one's own fate and for the fate of others. Pilgrimage may be associated with a person's spiritual growth and a potential inner transformation, as well as the contemplation of beauty in relation to the Creator.

The formula "man on the journey" refers to the dynamic of the human person and to the peculiar dynamism of walking one's own path. It turns out that it is not only the person who has his or her own dynamic that gives the road a specific shape but also that the road affects the individual. A person imposes a certain dynamic on his or her path through the dynamic of his or her character, personality, and temperament. There is a certain dialectic to these different dynamics, and their influence on one another reveals a deep meaning of individual vocation and self-realization of an individual.

The concept of being "on a journey" is characterized by ambiguity and lack of precise location, which implies that it may not have an immediately crystallized destination, although it has to be assumed that the journey leads to some destination.

Of course, it is possible to travel without a set destination, however, the journey ends somewhere anyway (and thus reaches a destination that was not intended). Although the destination remains in the background of the journey, it does not mean that it is left behind. The meaning of the destination is present in making the journey as such. Embarking on the journey, and the process of making an effort on the journey, in a sense turns out to be more important than the most precisely defined destination.

Being "on a journey," the human being appears as a being in formation (e.g. ethical), who finds fulfillment in actions, is capable of reflection, and is free. The very unpredictability of what may happen on the journey requires that the human being responds to the values that he (or she) encounters. Freedom plays a fundamental role in the individual, ultimately constituting the journey and the subject. Meanwhile, responsibility for one's way of being on the journey reveals itself with a specific choice. The link between freedom and responsibility, and being "on a journey" is inherent in the human condition and constitutes the axis of the relationship with others, as well as with the journey itself. Both the human being and the journey are relational; although they reveal different levels, or layers, of this relationship, they can co-exist and give an original shape to a person's life.

2. Two Perspectives on Experience in the Attempt to Understand the Phenomenon of the Journey

In the attempt to think of a "man on a journey" and to interpret the essence of the specific journey that a person makes on the *Camino*, two philosophical concepts of experience prove helpful. They not only constitute a point of departure for the understanding of the journey but also make it possible to express a more precise meaning of "being on a journey." An outline of these two concepts can lead us to a deep knowledge and understanding of the experience of the *Camino*.

Karol Wojtyła's adequate anthropology and Józef Tischner's philosophy of the encounter open up questions concerning the human nature i.a. with regard to consciousness and freedom, responsibility and love, acts and morality. These concepts make the description of the *Camino* route take on a philosophical and metaphysical significance for exploring the depth of some fundamental phenomena such as silence, presence, trace, experience, freedom, relationship, and beauty.

Karol Wojtyła wrote about experience that demands to be understood. His valuable intuitions lead to the amazement at the human being as a corporeal and spiritual being that cannot be fully grasped by cognition, while the experience itself "leads us to the full concrete existence of the human being, i.e. to the reality of the conscious subject" (Wojtyła 2000b, 436). The logic of thinking about the human being leads through the experience of the self, of one's own identity, one's freedom, consciousness,

and responsibility, as well as one's relationship to others and God. Wojtyła's amazement at the human being and his personal beauty and value ultimately refers to questions concerning truth, beauty, and their absolute source. The very act of amazement at the human being is immersed in the optics of questions about the Creator and the fundamentals of existence. As a gift and mystery, the human being and his existence are ontically and ontologically inscribed in the metaphysics of God's activity in the world.

Describing experience, Wojtyła refers to the human being's consciousness and agency. They make the human being capable of self-observation and experiencing oneself in the external and internal aspects. Components of experience: awareness of the self as an acting being and awareness of oneself in action are used to analyse the human person from a dynamic perspective. Different kinds of experience oscillate around the notion of the subjectivity and irreducibility of a person. The human being as a subject is distinguished by originality and individuality and gives his or her own existence a unique shape and direction of development. Through consciousness, the human being becomes, in a sense, a witness to himself or herself and a witness of the self as the source of own actions. Wojtyła understands action as a special moment of insight into a person, as "understanding the 'human act' as a dynamic conjunction of 'person-act' is fully covered in experience" (Wojtyła 2000a, 59). Since through the concrete fulfillment of an act one can more adequately get to know a person and who the person is becoming, one can at the same time get a better insight into the field of morality. This is because, in his or her actions, a person acquires a certain quality of being either good or bad. The person's moral qualification arises from specific choices made in favor of given values; then, the person is revealed even more in his or her dynamic essence. Wojtyła stresses that moral values "not only determine the inner quality of human actions but they also never enter into a dynamic sequence of actions without leaving an imprint whereby the human being as a person, owing to his actions that may be good or may be evil himself becomes either good or evil" (Wojtyła 2000a, 61).

A person as witness experiences his or her subjectivity and uniqueness in activating his or her own actions. Therefore, experience in the original sense means the experience of the self, and only later the experience of others. The realism of the human experience is revealed in this internal, individual, and unique character of the human being that cannot be reduced to anyone else. The external experience of one's own self (as the object of the experience) or of others, as well as the internal experience (of one's own self or other selves) integrate in the individual and relate to the same subject. The experience of one's own self makes it possible to know others but also, in a way, the experience of others enables a better understanding of one's own self. These experiences are interconnected and intertwined.

Starting from the original understanding of the experience of the self, Wojtyła developed the conception of the human being on the basis of successive types of

experience, namely, the experience of action, freedom, responsibility, morality, love, and spiritual bond and relationship with God.

Parallel to the amazement at the human being described by Wojtyła runs the experience of amazement at the journey. This is because *Camino* does not seem to be just any journey or simply a journey. *Camino* is a road whose significance and meaning are uncovered anew each time and in individually experienced time, giving it a personal touch, and forming the perception of reality in a new perspective.

The amazement at the journey may emerge and develop in different cognitive, emotional, and spiritual directions. The scale of that amazement may expand with attempts at taking new directions. *Camino* is characterized by the type of experience of the self, another human being, and the surroundings, in which the breadth of emotions, observations, and events is greater than that found in the monotony of everyday life. This means that the hitherto known dimension of experience is transported into a different one, which is unusual and different, and which opens new cognitive possibilities to the subject. This is the source of the thesis about the specific power and impact of the *Camino* as the condition of a deeper understanding of oneself or another person, the world, or God.

The "man on the journey" has multiple connotations and is seen as a pilgrim who carries his fate to the final destination. This is a reference to another dimension of everyday life, a new approach to the journey itself, and to a sharpened attention to nuances, previously hidden from the human being. A pilgrimage to Santiago is not always linked with a clear religious motivation, however, I would like to propose the thesis that the person who enters the pilgrimage route becomes a pilgrim, at least in some sense.[3] Being a "man on a journey," he or she has the opportunity to have a unique experience, even if it is not intentionally named spiritual or religious. Although the *Camino* provides a natural space for making the journey for religious reasons, it is not inaccessible to all those who travel on the road for entirely different motives. A certain transformation from a human being who simply travels on a given route (in this case, the Christian route leading to the tomb of St. James the Apostle) into a human being-pilgrim, may occur spontaneously, unknowingly, without prior planning or stimulation. This is to show that the very decision to enter the road may become an opportunity to encounter God both for those who wish to deepen their relationship with God in faith and for those who do not know him.

For the description of the "man on a journey" *Camino* represents the moment in which a person leaves his or her existing status quo. This may be done in response to the need for change or the desire for inner development, rejection of the current way of living, or the desire to spend some time in isolation to set oneself and relationships

---

3   Paweł Plichta deals with interesting distinctions in the context of the cultural, religious, and sociological understanding of pilgrimage. The author specifies the profile and the ethos of the modern pilgrim, both in the historical-cultural, and religious aspects, sketching the primary meaning and significance of traversing the routes of St. James (Plichta 2016b, 263–92).

with others in order, or to find a solution to specific problems. Setting off and embarking on the journey may be fascinating but also terrifying, it may be intriguing and paralyzing, provocative but also shocking; it may inspire hope but may also bring fear. This decision is certainly associated with hardship, psycho-physical effort, and entry into the unknown, however, it is also an attempt to interpret one's own deep motivations. The human being on the journey may not immediately know these motivations or be aware of them, instead, they may crystallize with each step. Hence, I think that the experience of the *Camino* impacts directly or indirectly the interpretation of one's individual style of pilgrimage, walking the road towards a set goal (in this case, reaching a holy place) in order to i.a. enter into a dialogue with the cultural, social, and religious reality that one encounters, to strengthen one's own identity, to deepen one's Christian consciousness, and, in a way, to manifest one's adherence to religious values, to bear witness to one's faith (Stefaniak 2018, 70).

Józef Tischner's conception is the second perspective on experience, while the idea of the journey itself leads to questions about truth, goodness, and beauty, as well as about losing one's way, going astray, emptiness, and evil. His philosophy of the encounter (also called the philosophy of drama) can be read in the context of a way in which the presence of the other self becomes a space of hope or fear, affirmation or negation, victory or defeat, doom or rescue, good or evil. This sets a broad research perspective and brings out new aspects of the interpretation of the *Camino*. The three-element view of the human being as a dramatic being refers to the concept of the journey because on it the human being experiences oneself and others in a specific time and on a specific stage, as well as meets the other face to face (Tischner 2006, 5).

Tischner treated experience as an event, which was something impossible to be duplicated or reproduced. An event entails all that is surprising, unique, and original, which cannot be enclosed into a scheme or framework. The experience that is constituted each time in a given event is distinguished by indelible novelty, potentiality, and its own specificity. To the experiencing subject, it not only opens a place for a multiplicity of experiences, observations, and feelings, but also provides a foreground for a deeper understanding of oneself, others, God, and reality. Tischner has stressed repeatedly that, in fact, we are given only one reliable experience. It is the experience of the Other, irreducible in his or her being and value. In meeting the Other, all things, including presence, participation, gestures, words, and looks, acquire a new meaning each time. According to Tischner, the experience of the self cannot be complete without a reference to the self of another person which, in the event of the encounter, takes the real form of a dramatic tension between good and evil. Tischner's experience of the Other is, *in fact*, an act of attaining the witness of the Other, the Other's witness, and witnessing of the established relationship. Becoming a witness in an experience is in itself an interesting perspective on the fate of the human being and his vocation in the world. If we are to agree with the author of the *The Philosophy*

of Drama, the witness, as the subject experiencing the Other, reaches to the deepest "layers of existence where questions arise about the meaning and meaninglessness of all that exists" (Tischner 1980, 142). According to Tischner, experience is not a simple compilation of facts but a complex and creative process of an encounter between I and You, dramatized by their personal freedom. The two "selves" that encounter one another, with their different biographies, hierarchies, conditioning, and resources, experience one another, but also their own selves, in that event. They also experience something that happens between them, namely, a series of often non-verbal, nuanced signs, gestures, symbols, impressions, or feelings that repeatedly create an original composition that plays out over time.

Witnessing understood this way is not only about a dry compilation of facts into a certified chronology of events but about the addition of meaning that one wants to leave to others in witnessing. One witnesses for a reason and in the name of something. The purposefulness of the witnessing is to serve something or someone, it can help with something or even cause a certain action. In witnessing, one attests to the truth and to that which refers one to the source of the truth. The multifaceted character of experience in which the power of witnessing is made apparent flows through the Other and, thanks to him, the meaning and significance of one's own self acquires a new and valuable optic each time.

The reading of the *Camino* with the aid of Tischner's concepts sheds a new light on pilgrimage, as well as on being "on a journey" in the senses approximated earlier in this paper. It is worth adding that without this "stage" there would be no place for the encounter to occur (Tischner 2006, 12). If one treats the *Camino* route as a temporal and spatial event endowed with meaning, dramatized with questions about the meaning and meaninglessness of everything that exists, it turns out that the *Camino* can be an important condition of the encounter and a unique cognitive, actional, and relational opportunity. Thus appears the potential development of a person, unforeseen opportunities for change, encounters, and entry into areas of humanity that may have been hitherto little known. Of course, there is also the possibility of a person's regression, and his or her spiritual diminution, as, to use Tischner's language, at the root of every encounter there is the agatological dimension of the drama of good and evil. Roads and pathless wildernesses, understood physically and symbolically or metaphorically, reveal the ambiguous implications of thinking about the human being. By thinking of meeting the Other on the journey, Tischner presents numerous moments of transition of "with" into "for." Being with the Other and accompanying the Other on a journey is, at the same time, being "for" the other. This is how a community is formed, in which one experiences not only one's own self in oneself but also the other who, in a way, becomes me, while I become him. On the journey, the relationship between Me and You enters the optics of "Us" where their mutual history takes place.

3. The Phenomenon of Silence on the Road to Self-Discovery

Among the host of valuable phenomena that reveal the specific character of the *Camino*, silence deserves a more in-depth presentation, as it reveals the specificity of the journey understood in metaphorical terms, as well as the peculiarity of that journey. Capturing the essence of silence as such is extremely difficult, which is indicated by its heterogeneous, complex, and multifaceted nature. Silence expands the problem of human experience onto new meanings, however, their description encounters a number of barriers. What is revealed on the *Camino* thanks to silence can serve a deeper discourse on the conditions of human subjectivity and its reference to others and the world,[4] however, it certainly does not exhaust the issue. It seems that the attempt to describe the silence that becomes evident on the *Camino* may become not so much a counterbalance to the "civilization of noise" (Sztumski 2012, 139) as the point of departure in the characterization of a certain "pedagogy of silence" (Olearczyk 2010, 9), which, in turn, in the discourse on the problems experienced by the modern human being, seems to play an integral role in the process of self-discovery, development (including spiritual development), and the understanding of reality by the individual. Thus, the theme of silence can be addressed not only from the perspective of responsibility for silence or education to silence (Olearczyk 2010, 11) but also responsibility for one's self in the horizon of silence (which forms, develops, takes shape, experiences itself, others, and the world within that silence).

Today, the concept of silence qualifies as an interdisciplinary category and is developed on the grounds of philosophy, ethics, theology, mysticism, psychology, and pedagogy, as well as broadly understood art and culture. This implies that there are various ways of defining and understanding silence and multi-directional interpretations of silence. Significant hypotheses are related to the stipulation of silence in human life on different levels of the human being's functioning in the world. It is emphasized, i.a. that silence is a certain answer to the needs of the modern human being, an alternative to the ubiquitous noise and chaos (resulting, for example, from the information noise and technicization), a bridge between the external and internal worlds, an aid to the explanation of a range of social and cultural phenomena, and a space for reflection (Olearczyk 2010, 21–31).

In the essay "Filozofa wstęp do ciszy" (A Philosopher's Introduction to Silence) Jacek Filek distinguishes between four basic meanings of silence. He speaks of relative silence, absolute silence, ambivalent, and dialogic silence. Yet, he does not develop the theme of silence in the absolute sense, because, as he claims "it is the silence of death. We have no participation in it" (Filek 2014, 90).

---

4   Other phenomena, such as freedom, space, relationship, presence, trace, time, beauty, responsibility, love, hardship and suffering, and the experience of trial, manifested on the *Camino* and bringing out many characteristics of the human being as a "being on a journey," go beyond the scope of this study and will require further research elsewhere.

Relative silence has many forms. One can point to its narrower and broader dimension. In the narrow sense, silence is the absence of sound and is gradable; in the broad sense, meanwhile, silence is metaphorical and can be "perceived" in a certain way.

The ambivalence of silence, in turn, may involve a situation where "we demand silence even though we do not desire it at all. We demand silence on the one hand so that we can listen on the other" (Filek 2014, 93). Silence in itself is neither positive nor negative. Its value is determined by the circumstances, context, and horizon in which it exists.

Filek also distinguishes between external and internal silence, which Plato called the "eyes of the soul," i.e. a peculiar sense of internal insight into things and matters that are inaccessible to the sense of sight. In the second sense, Filek adds an analogy to the sense of hearing. There is, he argues, a specific "hearing" of the soul that makes it possible to hear what happens within a person and in the person's self. Then, a person has a share in the inner silence, which is

> the opposite of the turmoil of thoughts, the rush of desires, the jostle of feelings […] The inner silence is the condition for hearing the voice of conscience. It can be understood in the Christian sense – as the voice of God in the human being. However, there is also a more universal interpretation of that voice; namely, the existential analysis of conscience, which understands it as the voice of the inner self, silenced by everyday business, by life subjected to the dictatorship of the most cunning dictator that hides behind the anonymous *one does* (Filek 2014, 92).

The last type of silence analyzed by Filek is the dialogic silence which occurs between a given I and You. He emphasizes that "Silence between us is a form of quietness, and quietness is a form of speech. Quietness speaks and its speech may have various meanings; therefore, quietness is meaningful" (Filek 2014, 92). The dialogic silence takes the form of a meeting, as the story of I and You is played out in it. Filek maintains that "we experience the fullness of the encounter when we can hear the inner voice of the other person in the dialogic inner silence" (Filek 2014, 92).

The reflection on silence and quietness, which is often associated with it, gives rise to the great meditative-mystical-religious, as well as poetic and philosophical tradition, which left its mark on fiction writing with their deep symbolism and endowed them with great value in describing the human being and his struggle in the world. However, it is worth adding that silence and quietness should not be treated as synonyms, as the distinction between them contains a powerful load of meaning and can refer to divergent aspects of human existence and condition.[5] Important

---

5   The difference between silence and quietness is exemplified by the poetry of Cyprian Kamil Norwid, who clearly separates these two terms. He does this using his own expressions: "monologists of quietness," as

contributions to the philosophical account of quietness (its basic functions and dimensions) are made by the reflections of Ludwig Wittgenstein and Martin Heidegger; however, they do not provide a clear definition of silence (especially when it comes to the specific type of silence, which is the inner silence). In Wittgenstein's work we are dealing with the discovery of the linguistic inexpressibility of what we experience in the realm of values; meanwhile, according to Heidegger, the voice of one's conscience or the quest for truth can only be heard in the mode of silence (Olearczyk 2010, 88–91).

In an attempt to grasp the deep meaning of reality, literate authors, as well as hermits, and Desert Fathers pointed to the indispensable role of silence in human existence, which gives expression to an increasingly clear perception of the world and the phenomena that occur in it. In the complex meanderings of the human being's interior, silence turned out to be the site where values and virtues emerged but also the site of combat and struggle against temptations. Silence and quietness have in a sense become the human being's link with oneself or with God, and, paradoxically, even with others (which was expressed i.a. in the theory of "quiet communication" in Martin Buber's work) or in Cyprian Kamil Norwid's "theory of silence," which was the outcome of the analysis and references to the classics of earlier poetry such as Ignacy Krasicki (with his "Pochwała milczenia" [In Praise of Quietness] and the essay titled "Milczenie" [Quietness]) or Józef Koblański (the author of "Milczenie" [Quietness]).

After the Desert Fathers (Kurek 2018, 10–15) one should mention that it is silence that invites one to penetrate deeper and deeper into the layers of spiritual reality and asceticism and becomes the condition of the clarity of the mind and purity of the senses. It is, among other things, in the silence of the inner life that the human being's spiritual struggle, as well as prayer and union with God are taking place. It provides the space for the deepest connection and relationship with the Creator. On the one hand, silence is also the space of dynamization of temptations and abandonment of the chosen path; on the other hand, however, it is also the space for the optics of inner victory and fidelity to the chosen path, as well as purification and entry onto the path of virtue.

In the contemporary literature on the subject, it is important to note the book by Alain Corbin *A History of Silence: From the Renaissance to the Present Day*, in which he interprets silence not only as the "absence of noise" but also as the necessary condition for concentration, "listening to one's self, meditation, prayer, daydreaming, and creativity" (Corbin 2019, 9). The problem noticed by the author

---

distinguished from the "dramatic silence." Quietness requires the involvement and decision of the subject and is either a consequence of historical events or (as was the case with the Pythagoreans) an attempt to contemplate the inexpressible. Meanwhile, silence has multiple meanings and exceeds the subject's capacity for articulating it. Silence cannot be verbalized or defined. Its definition remains vague and imprecise (Śniedziewski 2007, 28–29).

is outlined at the level of the possible drowning of silence in noise or is caused by the fear of silence. Silence is inherent in the human condition and is an important axis of self-discovery, creativity, and contemplation of truth. For Corbin, the place of imposing silence is the figure of the cathedral and the desert, which represent a place of listening, insight, deeper perception of phenomena and deeper self-discovery, as well as the sublime as a real human need (Błaszczyk 2020, 218). Thus, we can speak here of "inner" silence, that is, a very peculiar reality available to the human being, who participates in it and experiences it in a subjective way. The basic functions of silence in the internal aspect can include, among others: cognitive-reflective and transcendental, existential-axiological and personal-creative, metaphysical-contemplative, religious-mystical, as well as personal-communicative functions (Szmyd 2014, 204).

The cathedrals and the desert, revealing fundamental aspects of silence and its role in human life, mark a certain way of looking at the journey, not only in temporal and material aspects, but also in terms of the infinite and immaterial.

There are numerous kinds of silence on the *camino* and ways to "detect" or encounter it, which can compound the myriad attempts at describing it. It can present itself as a characteristic belonging to something and at the same time as a condition of, for example, a person's subjective relation to God, another person, nature, or even the cosmos as a whole.

Silence can appear at one time as a need or desire, at another time as a reaction or even a necessity to end what has been disturbed. It can itself fascinate and attract or evoke trepidation and fear, nevertheless "the promotion of silence as a value appears as a necessity in the context of the problem of noise [...]. The disproportion between the culture of silence and the culture of noise manifests itself as a fundamental problem of civilization" (Olearczyk 2010, 31).

There are many facets, types and meanings of silence on the *camino*, appearing in different contexts, places and times. Some are related to the laws of nature and their rhythm, others enter the realm of human experience and subjectivity, or even spirituality. The span, surprising facets and ways of occurrence, as well as the metaphorical references of silence, reveal the fundamental rationale for which the human being as an individual stands before the question of the meaning of his own Self and self in reference to what is outside the Self. Silence appears not only as a temporal-spatial event, but also as a condition for self-discovery or deeper interaction or the emergence of that which has hitherto been hidden from the human being. Silence often becomes a place for the germination of thoughts and actions, but also a source of loneliness and possible emptiness. When lived and experienced, it simultaneously opens "the possibility of reflection on the inexpressible" (Śniedziewski 2007, 27), the incomprehensible and infinite. This points to its metaphysical dimension, where questions about the meaning and significance of what is are born. Silence also "helps to achieve internal discipline, which requires inner balance, adherence to

rules, norms. Silence is a keystone, a connector, a kind of unity between the visible and material and the hidden and spiritual" (Olearczyk 2010, 37–38).

Silence can be found or evoked, surprising a person or being anticipated by them. It can testify to something or indicate something, signify a situation of tranquility, a steady flow of time and an unbroken harmonious weave of events, or reveal a situation of tension.

"Before" and "after" associated with silence reveal its different aspects and dimensions. Another dimension of silence is the moment that foreshadows it, and a different one that creates it after a given event. An example is the silence before the storm, which cannot be compared to the silence after the storm.

Silence does not have a permanent character, so it escapes simple generalizations or definitions. Something or someone can disturb silence or break it, interfere with it or deliberately establish it, order it or demand it. Silence can be interrupted but also evoked in a given situation. The goals and nature of silence may vary, but what seems relevant to the evolution of a person's path in life contains the profound truth of the overwhelming power of silence, affecting a person from within and without.

In an attempt to define silence more precisely, it is worth looking at its essential properties. It has the characteristics of an "awakener" (e.g., of reflection, emotion and other states in a person), a "therapist" (e.g. by calming and taming a person's fears or emotions, or a condition for listening to oneself), a "motivator" (for discovery, exploration of both one's own inner self by a person and the environment), and a hostess (as an invitation to enter into various relationships either as an opportunity to realise many new things, or as giving a space to retreat and through it discover what is new in oneself, others or the world). Thus, on the *camino* one can distinguish, experience or observe, among other things: the almost absolute, unbroken silence of nature and its own rhythm, the silence of sleeping cities, towns and villages of a slightly different nature experienced during the night hike, the silence of one's own thoughts, emotions, feelings, fantasies and fears, the silence that invites one to undertake hardship, effort and sometimes risk, the silence that subdues turmoil, tumult, noise and chaos in various dimensions, the silence of heat or rain, the silence of seclusion and solitude, the silence of beauty and its contemplation, silence as a space of freedom and at the same time its prerequisite, silence as an opportunity for self-transformation, bringing one closer to understanding oneself or reaching the deeper layers of one's own Self.

Silence, as the opposite of voice and sound, sharpens listening or mobilizes the movement of thoughts in unexpected directions. It can call or exhort to do something, or herald something to come. It can scare and frighten or calm and soothe. It certainly plays a significant role in a person's life, and is even sometimes a key interval in the hustle and bustle of a particular period of life. Silence is also the antonym of noise, all clamor, turmoil and hubbub. It has its own eloquence, and can even often act as a kind of "speech." Silence "speaks" and communicates both to the one

who participates in it and to the one who generates it. It can "speak" with itself, as it were, provoking the subject to reflect or to speak, it can "speak" to someone, as if speaking to his inner self, but it can also "speak" about the "self" in a specific moment of its being. The "self" of a person can in and through silence discover layers that he or she would not otherwise experience. It seems that in silence one understands oneself better, in silence emotional, spiritual, ethical and aesthetic sensitivity is sharpened. The intellect in silence enters a slightly different, so to speak, more concentrated register of functioning, and this opens up space for new areas of understanding. Silence is the prerequisite for the appearance of what cannot be heard or perceived in the noise. It is through it and in it that new possibilities, surprising moments of experience, different intuitions, non-standard approaches to circumstances, thoughts or people are highlighted.

The functioning of a person in silence enters a completely different register of communing also with another person, which gives rise to various areas of cognition, knowledge, or the birth of virtues. In silence one can experience the emergence of nuances of relations with the Other that are different from before, and new facets of reality (not necessarily positive). All this can make silence even a necessary condition for the emergence of what has hitherto been dormant or dulled by everyday life in a person.

Silence, as a condition for new insights, deeper analysis or sharper concentration on something/someone, is one of the more fascinating features of the *camino route.* It is encountered on a daily basis, especially in the morning glow of the day, when villages and towns are still asleep or are only tentatively initiating movement, interrupting the nocturnal stillness and almost soundless existence of nature. The silence on the *camino* surrounds the walker and permeates his consciousness. Whether a person wants it or not, silence dominates, showing on the one hand the beauty and often untouched character of streams, forests, meadows and mountains, and on the other hand highlights a certain mode of the various hardships one must face to reach the destination. Silence can trigger emotion, because it refers, as it were, to the original harmony of the world, to that which is often scarred by time, destructive human activity or unfavorable circumstances. It therefore provokes the posing of questions about the human condition, about the ultimate meaning of the human being and his pilgrimage in the world. It is in silence that these questions can become an exposition of what troubles, torments and puzzles the human being, or what is his hope, longing and deepest desire.

In walking the *camino*, silence reveals its own character, which must be distinguished from self-isolation provoked by silence. It is one thing to seek a quiet place for contemplation, and another to evoke contemplation with the silence one experiences in the moment. Hence, silence on the *camino* can be interpreted as a gift with which a person can do something (positive or negative). One can enter it with his or her whole self, listen, as it were, to what is possible to hear, understand, contemplate

in it, or drown it out with distraction, chatter, a series of unnecessary activities. The disposition of the person, depending on the day and physical strength, plays a huge role here, nevertheless the reflective nature of silence, which virtually imposes itself on the walker, can become a valuable opportunity for future transformation, acquiring new sensitivity and giving birth to creative ideas.

Experiencing the Other (human or God) in silence carries a lot of meaning. It turns out that the "silent communication" that Martin Buber perceptively described in the philosophy of dialogue on the *camino* becomes the dominant reality of communication. Silence is the fullness of the word. In spite of silence, and *de facto* thanks to it, the creative "in-between" of I and You is constituted, which in its form and content often communicates much more than verbal speech. The point here, however, is not to give primacy to silence over sound, the absence of words over speech, but to show its overwhelming influence on the nascent relationship of I and You. On the *camino*, the building of relationships in silence is clearly experienced, and not only because physical fatigue, irritation (from heat or cold) or other external obstacles often prevail, but because silence and the time that flows through it give a certain atmosphere, ambience and mood to the subjects. It is worth noting that Martin Buber did not narrow down silent communication to either the intimate relationship of lovers or mystical shared silence with the other. By giving the example of two people meeting by chance on the route, Buber argues that the mere attunement to the other, despite the lack of knowledge about him or her, already "brings out" the word. The experience of the other, the dialogue with this person, took place on the plane of this kind of interaction, where spoken speech was not a necessary condition for communication. Well, "silence [alone] brings it to the neighbor, for whom it was, after all, intended, and who accepts it, like any true destiny that befalls him or her, without reservation [...]. For where people, if only without words, rid themselves of mutual reservations, the dialogical word occurred in a sacramental way" (Buber 1992, 210).

Silence does not remove difficulties or potential conflicts with the other. Nor does it guarantee a successful chain of events or the occurrence of facts, but it does give space for overcoming and solving various problems in a different setting of interaction between I and You.

It is also impossible not to associate silence with the sight and sense of beauty and the harmonious passage of time. Silence refers back to what is further away, as if beyond the horizon. It reveals the absolute essence of beauty (of nature, of relationship with another, of one's own life). It transports one, as it were, beyond time, or in other words, shows the passage of time in a different perspective, where universal values, perhaps sometimes set aside in everyday life, count.

 The *camino*, in the analysis of silence, reveals itself as an event that can transform the I and You and approaches to many things. Moreover, on the *camino* a distance from what escapes or dominates in the practice of daily life, what captivates

or delights, what prevails or is in deficit is born, and this gives inner insight into hitherto unknown or little known corners of one's own being, one's limitations but also one's potential. This does not imply the exclusivity of this experience in reaching one's own Self or better understanding others. On the other hand, the *camino* provides an impetus for change, for an unorthodox approach, and opens up a space for reflection that may have its far-reaching consequences in the future.

In silence, the "in-between" of the I and the given You is highlighted. A kind of intersubjectivity is established in it, the quality of which is different from that without silence. In spoken speech, intersubjectivity manifests itself in verbal communication, which must meet various criteria of conversation. In silence, on the other hand, a completely different character of bond with the Other is established, one that does not demand expression in words, but perhaps just as strong and lasting.

Being near, being in relation or with respect to the other, and being for the other reveals the uniqueness of the phenomenon of silence. To be present is to be awake, to see the Other at one's side. Companionship on the journey is very often discovered through silence and in being embraced by silence. To be present is to be responsive to what the other brings to the relationship, to what he or she brings as his or her own experience, to be attentive to his or her needs, desires and purpose, and to be sensitive to his or her flaws and qualities. Presence, not so much as a physical filling of space by the Other and your presence beside him or her, but as an intentional orientation and "tuning in" to the Other, requires both awareness of otherness and acceptance of it. The presence of the Other on the *camino* is not just walking together, traversing the trail together, but interacting with each other on different levels and planes. These center in the "in-between" of I and You and, depending on the situation, change, intensify or fade away. The dynamics and variability of circumstances as well as the linear passage of time mean that the interaction can go through different phases, stages and degrees of intensification. Then, the very presence of I and You is constantly transforming and evolving. Therefore, an extremely diverse kind of bond is forged not infrequently in difficulties, overcoming barriers and encountering problems, and even in spite of them. There exists, thanks to problems, a vast array of values, enabling solutions to be found. There is, at the same time, a powerful reservoir of possibilities that can and should be made effective in transcending difficulties and finding resolution. In the *camino* experience, the multiplying difficulties reveal the sense of struggle, trial, strength of will and character. On the *camino*, the problems that occur (for example, relational, linguistic, organizational, or related to psycho-physical resilience), paradoxically, can fulfill the condition of something valuable in the experience. If it were not for difficulties and problems, there would be no progress in the cultivation and development of ethical attitudes, but also in seeing one's own limitations and flaws. It is often against the background of problems that what is creative, good and valuable in a person is highlighted and brought out. The process of getting to know oneself and the Other is forged in the crucible of

various experiences, which are often the resultant and mixture of antagonistic values pulsating in the human being, but on the *camino* they take the form of an essential condition for the decision to enter the route, walk it and complete it.

In summary, the essence of silence is manifested in its depth. Through participation in it, a person can learn more about himself and others, it can be "vertical in nature, referring to God, and horizontal, involving contact with people. It is a subjective, individual experience on the way to perfection. It allows finding values in oneself and actualizing them in action, dynamizing one's own and social life by developing a certain aspect of the world of values" (Olearczyk 2010, 41).

Conclusions

The issue of the human being in reference to the way carries a wide spectrum of meaning and can reveal new areas of interpretation. Showing a human being on a particular route, *camino*, not only uncovers new dimensions of experience, but also, thanks to it, points to a specific understanding of pilgrimage. Both the departure from the synthesized concept of Karol Wojtyła and Józef Tischner allowed a closer definition of the specific nature of the *camino* as a place where the irreducibility of the human person, endowed with a unique interior and the possibilities of self-discovery, was articulated. The phenomenon of silence, on the other hand, showed the depth of the experience and proved to be an important foundation for understanding, experiencing and perceiving the *camino* in a new light. The journey itself was shown in a dynamic perspective. Its own dynamics, as well as the dynamics of the human subject, were highlighted. The dialectics of the two dynamics permeate each other, enabling the spiritual, ethical and social formation of the human being.

Summing up the reflections about the human being on a journey and in relation to the Camino de Santiago, it is worth outlining some conclusions.

First of all, the *camino* not only becomes a chance to calm oneself and turn to spirituality, but also to experience transformation. What is present in pilgrimage is a separation from everyday life, entering the realm of learning, experiencing and perceiving differently than before. Through the analysis of silence in its various dimensions, the *camino* is shown as a condition for entering a new area of relationships but also as a basis for possible changes in a person.

Secondly, the *camino* has an inclusive character, not excluding anyone because of any differences. Cultural-ethnic-worldview pluralism, allows an individual to relate themselves to others to gain a more insightful view of their own destiny and the purpose of their existence. Through dialogue with one's own self, with another person in an encounter or relationship with God, there is an expanded perspective of awareness of the journey as such and that of the individual, which refers to the free choices

of the human being. In this view, the *camino* becomes a "bridge of hope" (Plichta 2016a, 209) on the path of encounter with others and God, a place of coexistence, trust-building and even possible metanoia.

Thirdly, the *camino*, in the aspect of the cited analysis of silence, appears as an event that is marked by potential, both in the perspective of the human being's self-discovery and his relationship to others and God, as well as to the surrounding reality. Silence on the *camino*, in its various forms, can open the subject to a change in approach to their own life, expand the room for reflection, and inspire new insights into their own destiny. In addition, the culture of silence emerging on the *camino* can become a counterbalance to the culture of noise, which the human being is exposed to from both the spiritual side and his functioning in the world.

Fourthly, the *camino* becomes a contemporary perspective, a sign and even a testimony to the progression of spirituality in the broadest sense. Pilgrimage to Santiago provides for many non-believers or those who do not engage in religious practices the conditions for a kind of revitalization of spirituality, and for believers the building, consolidation and strengthening of their religious identity. All this means that the phenomenon of secularization is likely to decline and affect individual societies less and less.

Fifth, paraphrasing the philosophical approaches presented, the *camino* can establish for the people who meet on it "a world of important and unimportant matters, momentous and trivial moments, sacred times and everyday times" (Tischner 2006, 13), which becomes a constant way of rediscovering one's own participation in the being of the other, one's vocation in the world, and one's relationship with God.

Bibliography

Barrio Barrio, Julián. 2018. "Duchowość pielgrzymowania Jakubowego." In *Duchowość i przestrzeń w kontekście Camino de Santiago*, edited by Piotr Roszak, Franciszek Mróz, and Łukasz Mróz, 13–15. Kraków: Czuwajmy.

Błaszczyk, Marek. 2020. "Dialektyka ciszy i milczenia." *Kultura Współczesna*, no. 1(108): 217–24. https://doi.org/10.26112/KW.2020.108.16.

Buber, Martin. 1992. *Ja i Ty: Wybór pism filozoficznych*. Edited and translated by Jan Doktór. Warszawa: Pax.

Corbin, Alain. 2019. *Historia ciszy i milczenia: Od renesansu do naszych dni*. Translated by Karolina Kot-Simon. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo "Aletheia."

Doburzyński, Dariusz. 2021. *Znak drogi: Teologia pielgrzymowania z perspektywy Camino de Santiago*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

Filek, Jacek. 2014. "Filozofa wstęp do ciszy." *Znak*, no. 707: 90–95.

Kurek, Ryszard. 2018. *Ojcowie pustyni*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo M.

Lubecki, Marcin. 2011. "Motyw drogi we współczesnej filozofii niemetafizycznej, 'Wege, Nicht Werke' Martina Heideggera." *Zeszyty Naukowe Towarzystwa Doktorantów Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego – Nauki Humanistyczne*, no. 1: 25–38.

Mariański, Janusz. 2015. "Sekularyzacja albo desekularyzacja – fałszywa alternatywa." In *Ponowoczesne przestrzenie oddziaływań wychowawczo-formacyjnych Kościoła i „ziemie niczyje"*, edited by Renata Jasnos and Ewa Miśkowiec, 41–68. Kraków: Akademia Ignatianum.

Mendyk, Emil. 2019. "Camino de Santiago jako element integracji europejskiej." In *Camino Polaco: Teologia – sztuka – historia – teraźniejszość*, edited by Piotr Roszak, Franciszek Mróz, and Rozynkowski Waldemar, 133–66. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

Nierodka, Paweł. 2015. "Spory filozoficzne o rozumienie współczesnej cywilizacji. W nawiązaniu do refleksji filozoficznej Andrzeja L. Zachariasza." *Σοφια* 15: 237–59. https://doi.org/10.15584/sofia.2015.15.16.

Olearczyk, Teresa. 2010. *Pedagogia ciszy*. Kraków: WAM.

Plichta, Paweł. 2016a. "Camino de Santiago jako współczesny most nadziei." In *Mosty nadziei: Jagiellońskie inspiracje dialogu międzykulturowego*, edited by Leszek Korporowicz and Paweł Plichta, 197–216. Kraków: Biblioteka Jagiellońska.

Plichta, Paweł. 2016b. "Camino Francés – jeszcze pielgrzymka czy już turystyka? Próba odpowiedzi na podstawie wspomnień polskich caminowiczów." *Folia Turistica*, no. 39: 263–92.

Plichta, Paweł. 2017. "Filozofia (i) Camino de Santiago w narracjach Marka Kamińskiego o pielgrzymce." *Turystyka Kulturowa*, no. 5: 19–34.

Roszak, Piotr. 2013. "Droga wiary i kultury na Camino de Santiago. O hermeneutyce wiary i tradycji na Szlaku św. Jakuba." In *1200 lat pielgrzymek do grobu św. Jakuba w Santiago de Compostela*, edited by Antoni Jackowski, Franciszek Mróz, and Łukasz Mróz. Kraków: Czuwajmy.

Seryczyńska, Berenika. 2019. "Dialog międzykulturowy w kontekście Camino de Santiago." In *Camino Polaco: Teologia – sztuka – historia – teraźniejszość*, edited by Piotr Roszak, Franciszek Mróz, and Rozynkowski Waldemar, vol. 4. 167–81. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

Śniedziewski, Piotr. 2007. "Poeta 'skąpy w mowie'. O milczeniu u Norwida." *Pamiętnik Literacki* 98 (4): 21–41.

Stefaniak, Łukasz. 2018. "Droga ciszy w głośnym świecie. Camino miejscem odkrywania i porządkowania duchowości człowieka." In *Duchowość i przestrzeń w kontekście Camino de Santiago*, edited by Piotr Roszak, Franciszek Mróz, and Łukasz Mróz, 61–72. Kraków: Czuwajmy.

Szmyd, Jan. 2014. "Cisza i hałas w środowisku życia ludzkiego – wymiar cywilizacyjny, społeczny i egzystencjalny." In *Cisza w teorii i praktyce. Obraz interdyscyplinarny*, edited by Teresa Olearczyk, 182–209. Kraków: Krakowskie Towarzystwo Edukacyjne – Oficyna Wydawnicza AFM.

Sztumski, Wiesław. 2012. *Człowiek wobec środowiska: Propedeutyka sozofilozofii*. Częstochowa: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Lingwistycznej.

Tischner, Józef. 1980. "Bezdroża spotkań." *Analecta Cracoviensia* 12: 137–72. https://doi.org/10.15633/acr.3014.

Tischner, Józef. 2006. *Filozofia dramatu. Filozofia dramatu*. 2nd ed. Kraków: Znak.

Wojtyła, Karol. 2000a. *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*. 3rd ed. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL.

Wojtyła, Karol. 2000b. "Podmiotowość i 'to, co nieredukowalne' w człowieku." In *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, 3rd ed., 433–43. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL.

Navigating the Postmodern Landscape: Embracing Interdisciplinary Openness in Pastoral Theology

DAMIJAN GANC (ID)

Reliance Family Institute in Sevnica, Slovenia, damijan.ganc@gmail.com

Abstract: In the face of rising secularization and the waning influence of the Church, contemporary pastoral theology encounters both a formidable challenge and an enticing opportunity in the postmodern era. This article explores how enhanced interdisciplinary engagement of pastoral theology can foster a renewed approach to evangelization aligned with contemporary sensibilities. Through a comprehensive literature review, we shed light on the experiences of the postmodern individual. By applying the analogy method and anchoring the concepts of "Logos Spermaticos" and "Influence and Vulnerability" in pastoral theology, we reveal its potential contribution to the interdisciplinary evolution of the concept of universal fraternity. The analysis shows that interdisciplinary collaboration in pastoral theology unfolds developmental prospects on two levels – learning *from* and learning *with* other disciplines. The "Logos Spermaticos" concept underscores the importance of acquiring new skills, empowering pastoral workers to communicate Christian doctrine more effectively. Simultaneously, the "Influence and Vulnerability" concept fosters a dialogical approach, positioning pastoral theology as a respected interlocutor in contemporary interdisciplinary dialogues. Collaborative efforts with other disciplines empower pastoral theology to foster dialogue and deepen the idea of universal fraternity, both in academic discourse and practical application. The interdisciplinary and global development of fraternal humanism represents the necessary "loosening of the soil" for the seed of the Word of God to sprout in the future. Therefore, it becomes imperative for pastoral theology to transcend its conventional role, actively engaging in interdisciplinary dialogue, thereby charting a course toward an elevated societal role and innovative avenues for proclaiming the Gospel.

Keywords: postmodernity, pastoral theology, logos spermatikos, influence and vulnerability, universal fraternity, interdisciplinary dialogue

In the Western world, the Catholic Church is grappling with its role within a secular postmodern society and culture. In this pursuit, it faces a multitude of challenges. Traditional pastoral approaches are progressively losing their effectiveness, while novel methods are often met with apprehension and skepticism. Over the past five centuries, the Church has navigated significant political, social, and cultural shifts. While in the year 1500, it was almost impossible not to believe in God, the 21st century presents precisely the opposite scenario (Taylor 2007, 25). The advent of modernity signified a rupture from traditional Christian society, and in the latter half of the 20th century, the era of postmodernity emerged.

The transition from traditional Christian society to the modern era, alongside the concurrent process of secularization, has been extensively studied. According to

modernists, the Biblical God has become a relic of a superstitious era that hinders human progress toward true liberation. Thinkers like Émile Durkheim, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and others, who were instrumental in shaping modern thought, have introduced new ideas in philosophy, sociology, politics, and psychology, with the aim of completely reorganizing our way of thinking and subsequently replacing traditional values, religious doctrines, and teachings. Disillusionment with the grand narratives of modernity, such as exclusive humanism, scientific and technological progress, principles of production, and the market economy, which failed to deliver the expected results, culminated in the tragedies of both world wars. This led to the advent of postmodernism (among its key architects are Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Richard Rorty, Fredric Jameson, etc.), in which there is no room for grand narratives but is characterized by relativism, skepticism, epistemological constructivism, pluralism and subjectivism. Postmodernism is suspicious of reason and acutely sensitive when discussing the role of ideology in maintaining political and economic power (Svetelj 2022, 171–72).

The Church has consistently responded to evolving societal dynamics. In response to the critiques of modernity, it fortified itself by reinforcing its teachings and institutional structures, methodically developing a robust doctrine, and establishing an efficient governance system. This evolution gradually gave rise to Catholicism as a socio-cultural manifestation of the Church, symbolizing a steadfast response to the challenges posed by European modernity, the Reformation, and the ongoing processes of modernization, secularization, and globalization. Viewed in a historical perspective, Catholicism represents the result of a defensive mentality and practice that evolved from the Counter-Reformation era up to the First Vatican Council, which marked the pinnacle of this development (Nadbrzeżny 2023, 3). Many Christian thinkers developed an apology of the Christian faith (Borto 2022, 504–6). Christianity, therefore, grappled primarily with another grand narrative during the modern era, which Taylor refers to as exclusive humanism (Taylor 2007, 242–48).

The advent of postmodernity signifies the culmination of an era characterized by the collision of grand narratives, which had been relegated to the margins. Christianity, and by extension, Catholicism, have undergone a transformation, experiencing a waning societal influence, as they find their place among the myriad legitimate worldviews and religions in a predominantly secularized and pluralistic Western culture (Svetelj 2022, 172–74). While postmodernity does not outright reject Christianity itself, it does reject its metaphysical underpinnings, which are branded as manifestations of power and violence (Klun 2022, 985). In response to the societal shifts brought forth by the onset of postmodernity, the Catholic Church embraced a more open and dialogical approach through the Second Vatican Council, departing from its previously defensive stances. The terms "aggiornamento" and "dialogue" emerged as distinctive markers of this new trajectory (Nadbrzeżny 2023, 5). In addressing the prevailing secularism of contemporary society, many

thinkers embarked on a quest to lay the groundwork for constructive interfaith dialogue (Kałuża 2023, 853–54).

In the forthcoming discourse, we will center our attention on the realm of pastoral theology and explore its potential to engage in meaningful dialogue with other academic disciplines. This dialogue seeks to revitalize and enhance its methodologies, thereby enabling it to connect more effectively with individuals navigating the complexities of a postmodern world. Our endeavor will include an exploration of the distinctive experiences and fundamental needs of the post-modern individual. Building upon the foundational concepts of "Logos Spermaticos" from the patristic tradition and the "Influence and Vulnerability" concept we will underscore the imperative of fostering greater interdisciplinary collaboration of pastoral theology.

1. The Human Experience in the Postmodern Landscape

In order to effectively address the contemporary individual, pastoral workers must possess an understanding of the complexities of their experiences, needs, and potential challenges. In this chapter, our aim is to illuminate the fundamental aspects of human existence in the postmodern era through a literature review. This effort will serve as a foundational guide for pastoral theologians as they navigate the postmodern landscape. Simultaneously, this review will serve as a starting point for our further exploration of how pastoral theology can enhance its methodologies through interdisciplinary dialogue, ensuring their alignment with the realities and experiences of the post-modern individual.

The contemporary individual no longer accepts a single, externally imposed source of objective truth as a given. Instead, they rely on their own subjective experiences and past encounters. They no longer blindly adhere to authority and its doctrines; instead, they perceive authority as someone who assists them in developing their personal religious experiences and aids them in discovering their own religious identity (Svetelj 2022, 172–78). Another significant outcome of subjectivism is the development of a culture of authenticity, expressive individualism, in which people are encouraged to explore their own unique path to self-fulfillment (Taylor 2007, 299). The logical consequence of subjectivism is, therefore, cultural and religious pluralism (Stala and Vodičar 2018, 186). In the postmodern era, individuals often explore various spiritual practices, with influences from Eastern religions being appealing to many (Halík 2017, 91–93).

Following the expulsion of God from traditional Western society and the subsequent inadequacy of reason to fill that void, the era of existentialism and epistemological constructivism emerged. In this period, individuals no longer rely on reason to provide definitive answers to fundamental questions about their existence.

Instead, they emphasize a subjective perspective and prioritize personal development in their quest for "eudaimonia" – a fulfilled and happy life (Svetelj 2022, 170). Central to their focus are experiences, with an emphasis on emotions and key relationships in their lives. In the context of this shift, attachment theory has gained significant prominence in the field of social sciences over the past fifty years. This theory places the regulation of emotions at the core of human development and psychotherapeutic treatment. Numerous studies during this time have highlighted how the attachment formed in early childhood, particularly in relation to parents, significantly influences the overall quality of an individual's life (Schore 2012, 27–51). Daniel Goleman, in his influential works, has underscored the importance of emotional and social intelligence for leading a successful life. These concepts have become crucial elements that complement subjective experience and personal development. Emotional and social intelligence impact the quality of relationships and an individual's ability to adapt to life's various challenges (Goleman 1995; 2006). Consequently, we find ourselves in a therapeutic age where psychotherapy has become a substantial presence, filling the void left by the withdrawal of religion from public life (Svetelj 2022, 174–76). The psychotherapeutic approach integrates insights from attachment theory, emphasizes emotional and social intelligence, and highlights personal development as key elements for achieving a fulfilling life.

Among the most significant factors shaping an individual's life in the postmodern era is undoubtedly also the phenomenon of globalization, where the world is becoming a single "global village." In this context, people simultaneously experience the same events and use identical mass consumer products. Cultures intertwine and influence each other, consequently diminishing the importance of local and national culture, as well as nation states. The process of globalization is closely intertwined with the proliferation of information technology, offering individuals an extensive array of choices in shaping their own identities and value systems. Information technology, facilitated by mass media, social networks, and consumer-driven orientations, drives such rapid societal changes that individuals no longer have the capacity to critically evaluate the significance of these changes for themselves. In a world lacking stable signifiers, they can no longer find the foundations for establishing a solid, stable identity; instead, their identities become fragmented and subject to constant adaptation to ever-evolving global trends (Stala and Vodičar 2018, 185–89). Pope Francis discusses deconstructivism within the social and cultural sphere, highlighting its tendency to marginalize historical memory while closely intertwining with boundless consumerism and empty individualism (*FT* 13).

In the quest for identity, the contemporary individual often turns to consumerism, through which they affirm their existence („I consume, therefore I am!") and purchase their own value. Willing to work hard and sacrifice much, they seek to increase their income and thereby strengthen their position as a consumer. Skillful advertising from global, recognizable companies imposes the idea that one can

belong to a specific social group only by using their products, which have become established as status symbols (Osewska and Stala 2021, 737).

2. Pastoral Opportunities in the Postmodern Landscape

After delineating the key elements of the human experience in the postmodern era, the question arises regarding the appropriate pastoral approach in guiding believers to receive adequate support on their spiritual journey. The secularized postmodern culture, with all its challenges, also presents some valuable opportunities for pastoral practice to assist believers in deepening their personally and freely chosen faith (Groome 2019, 30–33).

Pastoral theology, seeking to approach the individual within their subjectivity, should respectfully listen to their (religious) experience. The interest in an individual's authentic experience serves as the starting point for a potential dialogue between the pastoral worker and the believer, enriching the individual's development of their religious experience. In accordance with the Socratic tradition, Tomáš Halík refers to such respectful accompaniment as "maieutical." He suggests that sometimes the right answer is having the courage and patience to keep asking the right questions (Halík 2017, 8–9). The pastoral practice of the modern individual is more inclined to provoke with a maieutic rather than an authoritative (*ex cathedra*) approach, which is also applicable in overcoming the crisis of identity. If we consider the excessive inclination towards consumerism as one of the symptoms of the contemporary human identity crisis, the task of pastoral theology is to assist this individual in seeking a path to fundamental answers about themselves and to enable them to relate their own responses to the transcendent.

Pastoral practice grapples with the task of addressing the heightened emotional dimension of the contemporary individual and aspiring to achieve a more balanced right-hemispheric approach. While commendable progress has been made, there exists a continuous opportunity for refinement, especially in instilling authentic enthusiasm and a wholehearted dedication to community well-being. The pursuit of a more righ-hemispheric balanced approach in pastoral practice remains an ongoing journey, necessitating a deeper exploration of emotional and intuitive dimensions.

As pastoral practices evolve, a genuine commitment to developing quality interpersonal relationships emerges as a pivotal factor for transformative impact on both individuals and the broader community. This entails recognizing and responding authentically to the diverse and evolving needs of the community. In essence, the evolution of pastoral care should encompass a sincere and dynamic engagement with emotional, intuitive, and interpersonal dimensions, fostering a positive and resonant communal experience that aligns with the contemporary individual's multifaceted

journey of faith and well-being. Contemporary evangelization approaches, therefore, focus on the wholeness of human experience and encourage the development of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ (Szewczyk 2021, 723). The holistic approach, which is close to the contemporary person, also involves the inclusion and consideration of the body in spiritual life (Platovnjak 2023, 25–26).

Among the key opportunities for the development of pastoral theology is the interdisciplinary approach, identified on two levels – *learning from* and *learning with* other disciplines. The first level (*learning from*) aims to strengthen the methods of pastoral work and establish a dialogue with other disciplines, while the second (*learning with*) involves seeking new interdisciplinary approaches to creating a more humane society, raising the quality of vulnerable groups, strengthening dialogue with other disciplines, and establishing pastoral theology as a significant, valuable participant in the contemporary social context. In the following two chapters, we will apply the concepts of "Logos Spermaticos" and "Influence and Vulnerability" using the analogy method to evaluate the significance of openness in pastoral theology for interdisciplinary dialogue (Ketokivi, Mantere, and Cornelissen 2017, 637–58). This will represent an enhancement of the dialogical approach of the modern Church.

3. "Logos Spermatikos" and the Interdisciplinary Approach to Pastoral Practice

In this chapter, we will employ the patristic concept of "Logos Spermatikos" to substantiate the need for an interdisciplinary enriched pastoral theology that is capable of *learning from* other disciplines. During the formative centuries of Christianity, as the Church Fathers heralded the Gospel, they masterfully wove a tapestry of metaphors, narratives, literary constructs, philosophical tenets, and mythological motifs endemic to their era. In this intricate process, they engaged in profound dialogues using the rich conceptual framework inherent to their cultural milieu, concurrently enriching it with novel and profound insights (Svetelj 2022, 169). As the Gospel spread, the Church Fathers were cognizant of the imperative for theological engagement with contemporary pagan culture. One of the pioneers in the dialogue between early Christianity and the pagan world was St. Justin, with his concept of "Logos Spermatikos" playing a particularly pivotal role in this endeavor (Holte 1958, 8–9). According to this concept, God created the world by embedding the seed of His Word (Logos) within it, allowing it to grow and evolve across diverse cultural contexts until its ultimate fulfillment. Within these contexts lies a profound truth that needs to be unveiled and perfected through the Good News. Justin the Martyr, Tertullian, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, and other Church Fathers incessantly sought this seed of truth in pagan environments, which could serve as the foundation

for evangelization (Svetelj 2022, 169–70). Despite being regarded as apologists for Christianity, they can justifiably be considered among the first dialogical theologians (Kristiatmo 2021, 276–77).

Continuing, we aim to demonstrate that the concept of "Logos Spermatikos" can also be applied to the realm of science, an area underutilized by pastoral theology. Numerous disciplines have developed new knowledge and insights, as well as effective methods for working with people, which could significantly enrich pastoral practice. This is also emphasized by Pope Francis when encouraging the development of pastoral care of families:

> The response to the consultation also insisted on the need for training lay leaders who can assist in the pastoral care of families, with the help of teachers and counsellors, family and community physicians, social workers, juvenile and family advocates, and drawing upon the contributions of psychology, sociology, marital therapy and counselling. [...] All this in no way diminishes, but rather complements, the fundamental value of spiritual direction, the rich spiritual treasures of the Church, and sacramental Reconciliation (*AL* 204).

The concept of "Logos Spermaticos" can foster greater openness in pastoral theology to new insights and the incorporation of innovative working methods developed by other disciplines. From the perspective of "Logos Spermatikos," knowledge emerging outside the field of (practical) theology is the fruit of the seed planted by God in creation, granting it fundamental legitimacy. Therefore, pastoral practice must not ignore it but strive to integrate it with all its efforts so that the seed is glorified, "bearing much fruit" (John 12:24).

Although the integration of insights and working methods emerging from other disciplines may seem self-evident and rational, this process occurs (too) slowly, with significant resistance, caution, and skepticism. The reasons for this can be found in the complexity of changing perspectives, which involves understanding the aforementioned social and cultural changes and transitioning from traditional Christianity to a Christianity that strives to remain a valuable interlocutor in postmodern society. Changing perspectives is a complex process that, in our opinion, must occur bidirectionally, both top-down (e.g., Church teaching, clerical formation, theological curriculum, and research) and bottom-up (e.g., regional synods, acceptance of initiatives from the Church community, presentation of case studies of good practices, etc.).

Beyond the scope of this discussion is the determination of numerous disciplines that can significantly contribute to enriching pastoral practice. However, considering the characteristics of the postmodern era described above and its associated experiences and the needs of contemporary individuals, we can indicate some key directions for the interdisciplinary development of pastoral theology. Additional competencies of pastoral workers in promoting quality interpersonal relationships,

balancing professional and family life, regulating the emotions of those who are suffering, evaluation and validation of individuals' personal experiences, creating and leading small communities, understanding the issues of addiction (including information technology), mental health, loneliness, poverty, and social exclusion are highly important (XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: First Session 2023, 4c). Therefore, we believe that the Pope's call in the Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, initially focused on pastoral care of families, should be applied more broadly to the entire field of pastoral theology. The incorporation of insights and working methods from other disciplines is crucial both for understanding the needs and experiences of believers and for enhancing the competencies of pastoral workers. As we will demonstrate further, an empowered and, above all, interdisciplinary open pastoral practice also forms the foundation for a quality and deep dialogue between the Church and the world.

4. Pastoral Theology as a Valuable Interlocutor in the Dialogical Postmodern World

The second level of the interdisciplinary approach in pastoral theology (*learning with*) involves the exploration of new interdisciplinary solutions to foster a more compassionate society, enhance the well-being of vulnerable groups, strengthen dialogue with other disciplines, and establish pastoral theology as a significant and valuable participant in the contemporary social context. Before delving into the interdisciplinary and dialogical nature of pastoral theology, let's first introduce the concept of "Influence and Vulnerability," which has gained recognition in the realm of psychoanalytic supervision and treatment. This concept is also applicable to interdisciplinary dialogue. At its core, it acknowledges a tension within the client during psychoanalytic treatment—a delicate interplay between the desire for influence from the analyst and the associated fear. The shift towards a relational focus in psychoanalysis has underscored that authentic transformation in treatment materializes only when an environment of safety and a foundation of trust are established. In this context, influence arises from mutual vulnerability, signaling a joint commitment from both the analyst and the client to evolve and grow together (Slavin 1998, 233–46).

As our discussion unfolds, our intention is to demonstrate that this relational principle can be seamlessly extended to the realm of dialogue, where pastoral theology engages with other disciplines. Only when pastoral theology is capable of embracing its own vulnerability, inadequacy, initiating self-questioning, and transforming through dialogue with other disciplines, will it truly become relational and, as such, sufficiently secure and appealing for fruitful interdisciplinary dialogue. The application of the concept of "Influence and Vulnerability" will assist us in further elucidating

the crucial role of the dialogical approach in pastoral theology, a significant component of the developing dialogical ecclesiology (Nadbrzeżny 2023, 3). The skepticism among certain Christians concerning the conciliar call for dialogue between the Church and the contemporary world can be attributed, in part, to apprehensions about potential identity loss or perceived compromise of professed truths amid the exchange of arguments. The anti-dialogue disposition frequently emerges due to a deficit in faith regarding mutual comprehension and consensus. This mindset may be an outcome of a steadfast belief in the imperative to convert others, coupled with a reluctance to consider the possibility of being converted by others. Such sentiments are rooted in concerns about the Church's potential erosion of its missionary zeal (Nadbrzeżny 2023, 9).

At this juncture, we touch upon a key point where pastoral theology can advance in interdisciplinary dialogue. Authentic dialogue is not the art of transforming the other but the creation of trust, mutual understanding, and a search for ways to grow and develop together. In interdisciplinary dialogue, the goal is not to seek the dominance of one discipline over another but to sincerely develop a relationship and a common path. Pastoral theology must, therefore, be aware that every authentic dialogue reflects the fundamental dialogue that God initiated with humanity—the dialogue of salvation. Alongside authenticity, attentive and respectful listening, gradualness, patience, and an awareness that the fruits of encounter are ultimately God's grace are crucial (Polak 2021, 712–13). The readiness of pastoral theology for authentic interdisciplinary dialogue, learning both from and with other disciplines, and its readiness to collectively address the most urgent societal challenges will make it a desirable interlocutor in the contemporary world. Such an approach, where the institutional aspects of the Church as a societas perfecta are not foregrounded, will gradually lead to changes in media representations of the Church (Kraner 2021, 182–83).

Further reflection is needed on how pastoral theology can develop interdisciplinary collaboration. A unified model cannot be specified as collaboration depends on cultural contexts, state legislation, and numerous other factors. Additionally, collaboration can occur at different levels, beyond academic research on societal issues. To move forward practically, pastoral theology needs to engage in interdisciplinary dialogue and collaboration at both macro and micro levels. At the micro level, fostering dialogue to find common solutions for alleviating the suffering of the most vulnerable groups is crucial, with pastoral workers taking a proactive stance. Pastoral theology will become more socially relevant and a desirable interlocutor by collaboratively seeking and shaping new solutions to improve the quality of life for those on the margins and facing life's challenges.

Vulnerability in pastoral theology, understood through the application of the "Influence and Vulnerability" concept, also involves initiating dialogue with other institutions, stepping out of the comfort zone, and risking rejection, initial disapproval,

and doubt about the sincerity of its intentions. If pastoral theology cannot withstand this risk and vulnerability, it will not foster the relationships necessary for greater social and interdisciplinary involvement.

A comprehensive analysis of the possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration of pastoral theology with other disciplines on a practical level exceeds the scope of our discussion. Various fields emerge where pastoral theology can be a highly esteemed interlocutor. These include the areas of mental health, social exclusion, charity, or social justice. Pastoral theology can make a significant contribution to the development of palliative care (Platovnjak 2022, 65–70). Research demonstrates the vital role spirituality plays in processing traumatic experiences (Jerebic, Bošnjaković, and Jerebic 2023, 361). One of the most pressing issues today is the need to rediscover hope, which can give meaning to life and history and enables people to walk together (Gardocki 2023, 273). Recently, theology has increasingly focused on evaluating and supporting ecological efforts (XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: First Session 2023, 4q). Drawing from the Church's social doctrine, pastoral theology can contribute significantly to the evaluation and development of social entrepreneurship (Zadroga 2022, 998–1003).

On the vertical plane of pastoral theology, the concepts of "Logos Spermaticos" and "Influence and Vulnerability" synergize to fortify the notion of universal fraternity, a central tenet of Francis's fraternal humanism. Just as this principle extends to individuals, nations, religions, and cultures, fraternal humanism further evolves through the collaborative efforts of diverse scientific disciplines engaged in dialogue. Together, they strive not only to preserve the essence of humanity but also to champion universal values and pursue the common good. Fraternal community is shaped by ethical relationships that presuppose freedom, equality of all participants, and respect for the dignity of each (Petkovšek 2019, 22–25).

The Church, operating across various domains but particularly in academic realms, is summoned to both safeguard and foster dialogue, crucial for the cultivation of fraternal humanism, seeking tangible and practical manifestations. In this framework, religious education plays a pivotal role, actively shaping a religious identity that is not only open but also committed to advancing the ideals of universal fraternity (Rybicki, Mąkosa, and Mazur 2022, 95). Encouraged by Pope Francis in the Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium*, the Church is called to bravely embrace its leading responsibility in synthesizing all knowledge to foster interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary unity. This vital undertaking involves collaboration with various disciplines and should be approached with wisdom and creativity, illuminated by the Light of Revelation (*VG* 4,c).

Theology should fulfill this role with a high degree of sensitivity towards inclusivity and the acknowledgment of other disciplines, inviting collaboration in service of a common goal. Its role can be understood in terms of transcending or renouncing Giraud's mimetic desire, which, even at the level of interdisciplinary

collaboration, leads to competitiveness and division (Petkovšek 2022, 588–92). This approach would ultimately overcome the conflict with humanism that characterized the modern era. The vision of universal fraternity is so crucial for the development of humanity on various levels that it should materialize in academic circles through active movements and international forums, fostering vibrant (academic and political) discussions and seeking innovative and interdisciplinary solutions in the spirit of universal fraternity. Strengthening fraternal humanism, in our view, represents a crucial foundation for loosening the soil upon which the seed of the gospel can continue to flourish in the future.

At the same time, we want to emphasize the significance of the horizontal dimension in the development of interdisciplinary collaboration in pastoral theology. The application of the concepts "Logos Spermaticos" and "Influence and Vulnerability" encourages pastoral workers to adopt a more courageous and dialogical approach in establishing partnerships with other institutions. Such an approach is marked by vulnerability and requires courage and respect for dialogue partners, yet it establishes relationships and facilitates the development of ongoing dialogue, seeking new interdisciplinary solutions in the local environment. As we conclude our discussion, we offer some illustrative examples of interdisciplinary collaboration that pastoral theology can foster:

(a) Pastoral workers, in a scheduled meeting with local healthcare professionals, introduce a new activity in the parish—a biblical-discussion group for individuals in mental distress. They present the target group of the activity, work methods, goals, and expected outcomes. The group is led by a priest and a layperson, a psychologist by profession. Healthcare professionals working with individuals in mental distress actively promote this activity among religious clients. The group is also open to people with different worldviews and accepts them with the necessary sensitivity.

(b) In response to the priest's initiative, a network of volunteers is formed in the parish, ready to visit socially excluded elderly individuals and assist them with certain simple household tasks. In a meeting with the local social services center, the priest and some volunteers present the activity, and the center offers it to the most vulnerable individuals in the local community. Volunteers visit individuals who express a desire for such companionship once a month, engage in conversations, and assist them with necessary tasks. Monthly, volunteers gather for supervision with the priest, share their experiences, and develop work methods.

(c) Pastoral workers in the parish realize the need for additional skills to develop pastoral relationships with parishioners and communicate more effectively with them. They arrange a series of educational sessions with a local psychotherapist to become familiar with key psychotherapeutic interventions (emphatic reflection, validation, evocative responding, heightening emotions, emphatic

conjecture, etc.). Each session focuses on presenting a specific intervention, and through concrete cases, they collectively consider the possible application of each intervention in pastoral practice. They also become acquainted with the limitations and risks of application.

The meaningful and effective integration of pastoral theology into interdisciplinary dialogue is contingent upon the active engagement of adept lay individuals—those who possess expertise in intersecting disciplines and can make valuable contributions to pastoral work. This transformative process requires an internal commitment to interdisciplinary openness within pastoral theology itself. By fostering an environment that encourages dialogue and collaboration not only externally but also internally, pastoral theology can not only receive insights from diverse perspectives but also actively contribute to genuine and fruitful interdisciplinary partnerships. This involves recognizing the unique skills and knowledge that well-trained lay experts bring to the table, facilitating a two-way exchange of ideas, and ultimately enriching the scope and impact of pastoral practices in the contemporary social context.

Conclusions

In the face of secularization, the role of the Church in society has been marginalized, prompting reflection on how to forge new paths for proclaiming the Gospel to the contemporary individual. The postmodern Western person no longer relies on tradition and religious authority in shaping their worldview; instead, personal experience takes precedence. In the pursuit of authentic self-expression and personal fulfillment, considerable attention is given to emotional experiences and the search for happiness in significant interpersonal relationships. Additionally, local culture plays a diminishing role in the life of the modern individual, increasingly influenced by global trends, often seeking identity through consumerism.

This article contends that the Church, along with pastoral theology, must modernize its approaches to more effectively proclaim the Gospel to the contemporary individual. Greater interdisciplinary openness of pastoral theology can play a crucial role. By applying the concept of "Logos Spermaticos" to pastoral theology, we argue for a more profound transfer of knowledge and working methods developed by other disciplines. Through this, the contemporary individual can feel more heard and addressed. The concept of "Influence and Vulnerability" indicates the path of interdisciplinary dialogue, through which pastoral theology can regain respect as a valuable interlocutor in modern society.

Pastoral theology must embrace the risk (vulnerability) and step out of the "comfort zone," actively collaborating with other disciplines and institutions. As demonstrated in the discussion, globally, pastoral theology can extend an invitation to other disciplines for the common development of fraternal humanism or the concept of universal fraternity, serving as a basis for reflecting on key social issues. The development of universal fraternity is a crucial phase of pre-evangelization, sensitizing the contemporary individual to be more open to Christian messages and the Word of God. Therefore, pastoral theology should endeavor to establish global interdisciplinary movements that lead to in-depth discussions on the development of this idea. Simultaneously, we emphasize the importance of horizontal integration of pastoral theology at the local level, contributing to an increased role of the Church in society and opening new avenues for proclaiming the Word of God. Integrated into interdisciplinary and interinstitutional collaboration, pastoral theology can reach numerous new individuals, especially those from the most vulnerable social groups. In this process, as emphasized by Pope Francis, the interdisciplinary involvement of lay pastoral workers will become increasingly important.

Bibliography

XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: First Session. 2023. *A Synodal Church in Mission: Synthesis Report*. Vatican: Secretaria Generalis Synodi. https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/assembly/synthesis/english/2023.10.28-ENG-Synthesis-Report_IMP.pdf.

Borto, Paweł. 2022. "From an Apology for Catholicism to Theological Modernism: The Principle of Development in Alfred Loisy's Thought." *Verbum Vitae* 40 (2): 501–13. https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.13682.

Francis. 2016. Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (= *AL*).

Francis. 2017. Apostolic Constitution *Veritatis Gaudium* (= *VG*).

Francis. 2020. Encyclical Letter *Fratelli Tutti* (= *FT*).

Gardocki, Dariusz. 2023. "Christian Hope as Seen by J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI." *Verbum Vitae* 41 (2): 271–90. https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.14581.

Goleman, Daniel. 1995. *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More than IQ*. New York: Bantam Books.

Goleman, Daniel. 2006. *Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships*. New York: Bantam Books.

Groome, Thomas H. 2019. *Faith for the Heart: A "Catholic" Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press.

Halík, Tomáš. 2017. *Spovednikova noč: Krščanska vera v času negotovosti in novega upanja*. Ljubljana: Družina.

Holte, Ragjtak. 1958. "Logos Spermatikos. Christianity and Ancient Philosophy According to St. Justin's Apologies." *Studia Theologica - Nordic Journal of Theology* 12 (1): 109–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/00393385808599790.

Jerebic, Sara, Josip Bošnjaković, and Drago Jerebic. 2023. "Duhovnost kot pozitiven način spoprijemanja s težkimi življenjskimi (pre)izkušnjami in travmami [Spirituality as a Positive Way

of Coping with Difficult Life Trials and Trauma].” *Edinost in dialog* 78 (2): 355–67. https://doi.org/10.34291/edinost/78/02/jerebic.

Kałuża, Krystian. 2023. “One God – Many Religions? The Role of Negative Theology in Contemporary Interpretations of Religious Pluralism.” *Verbum Vitae* 41 (3): 833–58. https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16381.

Ketokivi, Mikko, Saku Mantere, and Joep Cornelissen. 2017. “Reasoning by Analogy and the Progress of Theory.” *Academy of Management Review* 42 (4): 637–58. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2015.0322.

Klun, Branko. 2022. “Neosholastična metafizika Aleša Ušeničnika in njena (post)moderna kritika [The Neo-scholastic Metaphysics of Aleš Ušeničnik and its (Post)Modern Critique].” *Bogoslovni Vestnik* 82 (4): 975–88. https://doi.org/10.34291/bv2022/04/klun.

Kraner, David. 2021. “Medijske reprezentacije kot odsev problema institucionalizacije Cerkve [Media Representations Reflect the Problem of the Institutionalization of the Church].” *Bogoslovni Vestnik* 81 (1): 163–81. https://doi.org/10.34291/bv2021/01/kraner.

Kristiatmo, Thomas. 2021. “Justin Martyr’s Logos: Its Import for Dialogical Theology.” *MELINTAS: An International Journal of Philosophy and Religion* 37 (3): 268–79. https://doi.org/10.26593/mel.v37i3.7091.

Nadbrzeżny, Antoni. 2023. “Od katolicyzmu do katolickości. W poszukiwaniu adekwatnej eklezjologii dialogicznej [From Catholicism to Catholicity: In Search of a Relevant Dialogical Ecclesiology].” *Verbum Vitae* 41 (1): 1–15. https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.15118.

Osewska, Elżbieta, and Józef Stala. 2021. “The Human Being Lost in Consumerism: A Polish Perspective and Challenges in Religious Education.” *Bogoslovni Vestnik* 81 (3): 733–45. https://doi.org/10.34291/bv2021/03/osewska.

Petkovšek, Robert. 2019. “Teologija pred izzivi sodobne antropološke krize: preambula apostolske konstitucije Veritatis gaudium [Theology Facing the Challenges of the Modern Anthropological Crisis: Preamble of the Apostolic Constitution Veritatis Gaudium].” *Bogoslovni vestnik* 79 (1): 17–31. https://doi.org/10.34291/bv2019/01/petkovsek.

Petkovšek, Robert. 2022. “Spreobrnjenje želje v luči mimetične teorije [Conversion of Desire in the Light of Mimetic Theory].” *Bogoslovni Vestnik* 82 (3): 587–610. https://doi.org/10.34291/bv2022/03/petkovsek.

Platovnjak, Ivan. 2022. “Meeting the Spiritual Needs of a Dying Person.” *Nova Prisutnost* 20 (1): 57–71. https://doi.org/10.31192/np.20.1.4.

Platovnjak, Ivan. 2023. “Contemplation of the Body.” *Polonia Sacra* 27 (2): 7–28. https://doi.org/10.15633/ps.27201.

Polak, Mieczysław. 2021. “Catechesis in the Church’s Dialogue with the World.” *Bogoslovni Vestnik* 81 (3): 711–19. https://doi.org/10.34291/bv2021/03/polak.

Rybicki, Adam, Paweł Mąkosa, and Radosław Mazur. 2022. “Religious Education and the Concept of Universal Fraternity in the Light of the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* of Pope Francis.” *Teaching Theology & Religion* 25 (4): 85–98. https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12627.

Schore, Allan N. 2012. *The Science of The Art of Psychotherapy*. *Norton Series on Interpersonal Neurobiology*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.

Slavin, Jonathan H. 1998. “Influence and Vulnerability in Psychoanalytic Supervision and Treatment.” *Psychoanalytic Psychology* 15 (2): 230–44. https://doi.org/10.1037/0736-9735.15.2.230.

Stala, Józef, and Janez Vodičar. 2018. “Der Umbruch in den modernen Gesellschaften.” *The Person and the Challenges. The Journal of Theology, Education, Canon Law and Social Studies Inspired by Pope John Paul II* 8 (2): 181–93. https://doi.org/10.15633/pch.2569.

Svetelj, Tone. 2022. "Opportunities for and Challenges to Faith in Postmodernity." In *U kakvog Boga ljudi danas vjeruju odnosno ne vjeruju*, edited by Josip Bošnjaković and Drago Jerebic, 169–81. Đakovo: Katolički bogoslovni fakultet. Sveučilište Josipa Jurja Strossmayera.

Szewczyk, Leszek. 2021. "The Specific Content of Preaching the Word of God in a Secularized Environment." *Bogoslovni Vestnik* 81 (3): 721–32. https://doi.org/10.34291/bv2021/03/szewczyk.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Zadroga, Adam. 2022. "Catholic Social Teaching as a Source of Enrichment of the Moral Dimension of Social Enterprise Management." *Verbum Vitae* 40 (4): 989–1006. https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.14380.

Catholic Pastoral and Prophetic Responses to a Secularizing Landscape

JOHN SULLIVAN (iD)
Liverpool Hope University, sullivj@hope.ac.uk

Abstract: The purpose of this article is to offer a retrieval of some major themes in the writings of Romano Guardini and Ivan Illich, two twentieth century Catholic priests who responded to secularization in ways that could be described as both pastoral and prophetic. Guardini tended towards a more pastoral emphasis, while Illich's stance was more prophetic. Guardini exemplified a Catholic way to bridge the gap often experienced between faith, life and culture. Illich demonstrated how a Catholic can address their culture in a way that is both challenging and fertile and does so in penetrating observations about contemporary secular professions and preoccupations. The article has three parts. In part one, I sketch a range of responses to Christianity that have emerged in an increasingly secular culture, as well as the types of response that Christians have made to such a culture. In parts two and three a representative sample of the writings of Guardini and Illich is drawn on and analysed, together with a range of secondary literature on Guardini and Illich, in order to explain the nature and the role of four key themes (in each case) within their overall outlook. For Guardini, in part two, these are Catholic worldview, liturgy, providence and cultural critique. For Illich, in part three, I examine his notion of the mission of the Church, his treatment of schooling, his understanding that modernity is a perversion of Christianity, and his advocacy of friendship as a healing and liberating mode of engaging the world.

Keywords: Catholic worldview, liturgy, providence, cultural critique, church, renunciation of power, schooling and dependency, modernity as a perversion of Christianity, friendship

After an initial sketch of responses to Christianity in our culture and of responses to this culture by Christians, I focus on two exemplars of Catholic responses to secularization, very different in tone, style and emphasis: Romano Guardini (1885–1968) and Ivan Illich (1926–2002). Although each of these priests could justifiably be described as offering both a pastoral and a prophetic approach in their dealings with individuals and through their critique of society, Guardini tended towards a more pastoral emphasis, while Illich's stance was more prophetic. Both offered an analysis and a critique of developments in the society and culture of their time. While their insights, even when combined, do not suffice on their own as comprising a comprehensive Catholic response to a secularizing landscape for our time, they provide an indication of some key features needed as part of such a response.

The work of both Guardini and Illich has been taken up, not only by Christians outside Catholicism, but also by people of other faiths and by those who claim no religious affiliation. Guardini's writings on literature, as well as those on the challenges for modern culture posed by technology, have a wider appeal than merely to

his fellow Catholics and to other Christians. Many of Illich's writings were addressed to – and received widespread commentary from – a secular readership. However, my retrieval of central aspects of the work of Guardini and Illich is intended to bring out some of the richness of the resources inherent in Catholicism, resources that can help Catholics to engage discerningly, constructively and effectively with an increasingly secularizing landscape.

1. Facing the Challenge of Secularization

Secularization can refer to the process where there occurs a transfer of control or influence over key features and functions of society – for example, education, health, social welfare, politics and morality – from the Church to secular bodies. It can also refer to a situation in which there is a notable decline in numbers of those espousing and practising religious belief and the rise in numbers of those claiming allegiance to no religion. While lamented by some Christians, neither of these two signs of secularity necessarily imply any serious undermining of the mission and role of the church; indeed, the loss of ecclesial power and the turning away from church attendance may allow for a more authentic expression of the church's nature and indicate a smaller but more sincere committed church membership than is the case when affiliation to a church was a cultural necessity. Charles Taylor suggests a third sense of the emergence of secularity, one that is more challenging for – and potentially corrosive of – Christian self-confidence: "a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others," (Taylor 2007, 3) contested and questioned, if not resisted and resented by major cultural agencies and forces. In such a society it becomes harder (though, of course, not impossible) to admit to Christian faith and to express such faith openly. Without a doubt, secularization – in all three senses just described – also affects faiths other than Christianity, though in different ways, according to the relative weight that adherents of these faiths attribute to such features as their scriptures and doctrines, their structures of authority, and their understanding of community and tradition. How it does so is beyond the scope of this article.

The process of secularization might overlap with, or even lead to secularism – a worldview that seeks to deny any public authority or privilege to religious belief, either of individuals or of religious institutions – but that is not an inevitable or necessary outcome of secularization. A highly secularized society might still constitute a benign and hospitable space for Christians and people of other faiths, depending on the nature of the secularist elements within it and depending on the authority that society grants to those elements. Generally, however, secularization tends to

erode our connections with history, culture and community, because of the habits of thought and lifestyle that accompany secularizing processes.

Christian faith has met with a range of responses within different cultures and societies. Some people have expressed great hostility to the Church because of experiences of abuse, authoritarianism, or unloving behaviour by church leaders or by the Christians they have come across. Some have displayed great ignorance about the faith, while others, even if they possess some knowledge about it, remain indifferent, seeing it as irrelevant to their concerns in life. Others again seem to be highly selective in apparently adopting some kind of partial, but incomplete, and thus distorted acceptance of the faith. They borrow some Christian values, but do so blindly, unaware of their source or their true nature.

Even after acknowledging the very real opposition to Christianity that does exist in various sectors of society, it could well be argued that the more damaging factor for the Church is the weakness of Christians' positive presentation of and practical witnessing to the faith when they do have the opportunity for this. It could be argued that Christians have not offered in the past, and are still not offering, a serious, cogent and winsome counter-culture and alternative vision for humanity in the Church and in Church-sponsored bodies, including her schools and higher educational institutions.

A recent commentator on the situation of the Church in modern society deploys two striking images to emphasize the challenge to be faced (Maspero 2022, 56). First, he likens today's believers to "hostesses or stewards on airplanes who explain safety rules before take-off, without being heard by anyone." Then he refers to the risk that Christians might be perceived as "custodians of a museum, constantly confronted with beautiful realities, whose salvific content has, however, been forgotten." These two images might prompt Christians to reflect on how they are being received by society and why they are being received as they are.

Just as one can discern a range of responses to Christian faith in modern culture, so too there is a range of responses by Christians to a secularizing landscape. Some seek to combat and reconquer the world and to re-establish Christendom. Others prefer the path of withdrawal from society, in order to be uncontaminated by its evils. A third category, while claiming to hold onto their faith, are willing to be accommodating to cultural norms, and in doing so, often end up self-secularizing. A fourth response is to use secular "tools" to modernize the church or in an attempt to communicate her message more effectively, for example, through better management techniques to improve leadership, or by deploying sociological data to inform decision-making and to analyse what is going on "on the ground," or via the use of new media in order to communicate the faith in ways recognizable to digital natives. Alternatively, a fifth approach has its focus on dialogue and encounter, in an attempt to reach out, in a reconciling manner, to the disaffected, the wounded, those with alternative worldviews and those who are searching for meaning and purpose in life.

With a sharper edge and tone of voice than the culture of dialogue and encounter, sixth, there are those who call for a more militantly prophetic emphasis, where the current idols before which many people worship (or give their allegiance) are confronted and critiqued. For Searle, "The prophet sees the present in the light of eternity and is able to perceive God's redemptive purposes in the world. … The truly prophetic figure is someone who is aware of the spiritual forces acting in history and knows all the possibilities contained within the infinite sphere of the effective action of God for whom all things are possible" (Searle 2018, 27). In reading the signs of the times and finding where God is pointing us to, Searle asserts that prophecy can involve lamentation, exhortation, and protest about the present situation followed by ending the tendency for Christians to retreat into religious clubs (Searle 2018, 28) and, instead, offering a courageous and confident response of confrontation, outreach and demonstrating an alternative lifestyle.

Closely linked to the call for a more prophetic stance towards the world, there is the powerful cultural commentary given by Phil Davignon (2023). Davignon interrogates the practical atheism he sees as pervasive in society, including among many of those who claim to be Christians. By practical atheism, he means living as if God does not exist. Davignon proposes that "Culture is not only transmitted through liturgies that directly shape people's desires, imagination, and identity, but also within more mundane social practices that quietly form enduring dispositions (virtues or vices). Even if these dispositions do not directly shape one's ultimate desires, they still incline people to think, feel, and act in ways that are either hospitable or inhospitable to the Christian life" (Davignon 2023, xvi).

If culture is most powerfully transmitted implicitly, via "taken-for-granted habits, routines and practices," for example, in the family, in education, in the world of work, and in a consumerist lifestyle, and if these contexts are organized according to secular assumptions and values, rather than in the light of the Gospel, these domains of life "foster habits and dispositions that undermine people's ability to fully embody the Christian faith in their daily lives" (Davignon 2023, xvii). Davignon poses an important question for Christians of any church to ponder: "Do congregations offer the kind of formation that could offset the secularizing effects of modern culture?" (Davignon 2023, 89).

James Davison Hunter (2010) calls for Christians to exercise a faithful presence in the world, while at the same time not being *of* the world. Sherry Weddell (2012) sees the need to rejuvenate and to revitalize the faith community. From an Eastern Orthodox perspective, Evi Voulgaraki-Pissina (2023) believes that, in order to foster Christian witness amidst the desert of post-modern cities, what is required is a rediscovery of theology. She claims that "We need to apply ourselves, with devotion, diligence, and love, to studying the riches of our tradition" in order to present to the world "a moving, flexible, living faith" (2023, 6).

As a final example, Carmody Grey and Oliver Dürr advise Christians, faced with a society that scarcely knows Christianity at all, to focus on the nature and needs of humanity, rather than to rely on traditional religious language.

> If we seek to locate and articulate, in order to reflectively engage, the horizons within which contemporary northern Europeans generally live, the goods that orient people's lives, and the ideas and values that move and motivate them, we need to talk not about "religion" and the lack of it, but about the idea of the human. Within the concept of the human is nested today the sense of orientation, meaning, goodness and importance that notions of "religion" used to express (Grey and Dürr 2023, 1).

In giving attention to the nature and needs of the human person, Christians should ask, in common with other questioners from diverse worldviews: "What fulfils her; what hurts her; what renders her life meaningful, worthwhile, or not; what makes it possible for her, despite everything, to go on" (Grey and Dürr 2023, 15). This constitutes a call for a renewed form of Christian humanism, one that equips members of the Church to engage constructively and winsomely with contemporary culture (Sullivan 2021a).

These diverse responses are not necessarily alternatives; some can be and have been combined. Nor do they exhaust the possibilities for ways to respond to secularization. In what follows I explore in more depth the responses of two Catholic priests to a world they saw as increasingly being secularized. Guardini is better known within the Church, while Illich is better known outside it.

2. Romano Guardini

Ordained in 1910 and having completed two theses on Bonaventure in 1915 and 1922, Romano Guardini served as Professor in the Philosophy of Religion and Catholic Worldview at the University of Berlin from 1923 until 1939. He exercised throughout this period a leadership role in Quickborn, a German Catholic youth movement. After the Second World War he again taught as Professor of Philosophy of Religion and Christian Worldview, first, at the University of Tübingen (1945–1948) and from 1948–1962 at the University of Munich. Pastoral in tone, emphasis and ethos, he set about equipping people to engage in the life of faith, constantly providing formation and encouragement, especially to young Catholics, displaying sensitivity and gentleness. From a young age, he formed study circles with friends. Later he fostered similar networks for students and young people more generally, where they discussed literature, theatre and art as well as matters of faith. He also led retreats and pilgrimages, and organised social events for the young he was nurturing. Active in pastoral

ministry, he never restricted his time and energy to the academy. A regular preacher, he took seriously new communication media, such as films, radio and television. A telling glimpse of how he saw himself is given by Jane Lee-Barker when she quotes Guardini: "I found myself the type of brotherly priest who does not act out of his official position but carries the priesthood in himself as a pastoral force; who does not confront the faithful as the owner of authority but stands next to them … [and] joins them in their searching and asking in order to arrive with them at common results" (Lee-Barker 2022, 36).

Not only was he fluent in German and Italian, languages spoken at home, he also learned Latin, Greek, French and English. Before studying theology he had tried chemistry and economics. He wrote books about Dante Alighieri, Michel de Montaigne, Blaise Pascal, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Friedrich Hölderlin, Rainer Maria Rilke, Socrates, Augustine and Søren Kierkegaard. His writing was a blend of personalism, existentialism, scriptural reflections, explorations of the liturgy, interpretations of literature, cultural commentary and opening up mystical dimensions. He made important contributions to the renewal of church thinking on the liturgy, Christology, the church and theological anthropology – all of which contributed to how he revealed aspects of a Catholic worldview. The many questions he addressed included: What difference does having Christian faith make as we engage with the world? What does it mean to live from the Church? What is the relation between faith and culture? As a recent commentator on the thought of Guardini has observed, his books "transcend the boundaries between theology, philosophy, literary criticism, and human biography and they touch on psychology, sociology, and numerous other areas" (Lee-Barker 2022, 7).

This rich intellectual hinterland, combined with his warm and pastoral concern, his essential humility, and his facility in making connections between contemporary culture and the living tradition of Catholicism marked him out as a distinctive voice and as an attractive representative of the faith. One admirer, referring to Guardini as a sapiential theologian, claims that "A writer such as Guardini stands as a prophetic alternative to those theologians who have allowed their work to become so academically rarified that they cannot speak beyond the narrow limits of their academic specialty" (Cunningham 1995, 70). It was his close attention to the real-life contexts and experiences of those he hoped to reach that shaped how he communicated the faith. He acknowledged the diverse ways that people come to and experience faith in different ways according to their circumstances. "The structure of faith will be one thing for those who educate, teach, heal, assist, and serve, and something different for those who fight, conquer, reign, etc." (Guardini 1998b, 88). We can extend this to those who clean, care, produce, sell, advertise, suffer, endure illness, experience betrayal or abuse. He goes on to refer to the different perspectives caused by gender, age, intellectual capacity, social location and roles at work.

Admired by several Popes, including John Paul II, Benedict XVI and Francis, Guardini influenced deeply Hannah Arendt, Karl Rahner, Josef Pieper and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Robert Krieg describes Guardini as a forerunner of Vatican II, claiming that "he played a major role in leading Catholicism from Pius IX to John XXIII, from the knowing stance of the First Vatican Council to the listening stance of the Second Vatican Council" (Krieg 1997, 22). In an earlier work Krieg summarises the difference in tone and purpose between the First and Second Vatican Councils: "The church of Vatican I saw itself as a fortress or bastion of truth against the errors of the Enlightenment; in contrast, the church of Vatican II sees itself as a pilgrim people on its way, in dialogue with other peoples, to the reign of God" (Krieg 1995, 25), and he attributes a major part in this shift to Guardini.

For those Catholics who view Vatican II unfavourably, and who accept the assessment that Guardini can accurately be interpreted as a precursor of that Council, then Guardini might be considered to have contributed to the damage they believe was caused by it. For example, with regard to liturgical changes, his emphasis on the meal (rather than sacrifice) as being the essence of the Mass, will be a bone of contention for some. His flexibility and his avoidance of being easily classified make him vulnerable to accusations of vagueness, especially with regard to doctrine. His tendency to avoid using Thomist language and to be closer to the Augustinian tradition made him suspect for some readers, especially in the half-century between the crushing of modernism and the years of the Second Vatican Council, when Thomism prevailed as the normative form of describing and explaining the faith. He might also be accused (from different quarters) of being an impractical Romantic, of addressing only people who were highly educated, rather than ordinary people, and of being inattentive to developments outside Europe. In light of later technological developments that occurred after his death, he may seem insufficiently aware of the colonizing and unhealthy effects of these developments on human lives. And, although he was in favour of members of the Church engaging in dialogue with the modern world, many of his writings might come across today to readers outside of the Christian faith as conservative and exclusivist in their claims. Despite these potential shortcomings, as seen from various perspectives, Guardini represents a fertile example of how a person of his time, steeped in the Catholic faith, reached out to the people of his culture in a manner that bridged the gap that often opens up between life, faith and culture.

For the purposes of this article, among the many themes explored in his writings by Guardini, I shall attend to only four: his treatment of a Catholic worldview; the importance he attributed to liturgy in founding and shaping that worldview; belief in providence as a constitutive element within a Catholic worldview; and the cultural critique he brought to bear as a consequence of reading the world in the light of that worldview.

2.1. Worldview

To hold a worldview, according to Guardini, is a matter of seeing the totality of things and the character of the world that is given to us, perceiving its inner unity, able to contemplate it, to assess its value and relation to us, and taking up a stance toward the world (Guardini 2019, 32–33). Having a worldview goes beyond the possession of knowledge to include accepting that one has a task to accomplish in response to this world (Guardini 2019, 40). He believed that both the world within a person and the world that surrounds that person come from God. "The task of human beings is to walk towards God and to take the world with them" (Guardini 2019, 46). A proper appreciation of and response to the world requires from us both distance – in order to maintain perspective on it and also a degree of liberty from it – and a love that is open to all being (Guardini 2019, 51). To embrace a Catholic worldview means taking seriously divine revelation in all its content and in all its implications for how we live (Guardini 2019, 68). That, in turn, calls believers to accept their need to live their lives nurtured and guided by the Church, which is the historic depository of how Christ sees the world. Life within the Church, with all its dimensions such as dogma and liturgy, has implications for what we can come to know and how we should think and act (Guardini 2019, 71).

In addition to learning from a Catholic worldview, Guardini also advised his audiences to be willing to learn from today's world (despite its defects) – because God is its Creator, the source of all truth, beauty and goodness, and because God both loves the world God has created and, through his Holy Spirit, is active within it. Catholics are therefore called to engage with the culture around them, not to shun it, but nor are they to allow themselves to be colonized by it. That engagement has to be discerning, appreciative yet also critical.

2.2. Liturgy

The foundation for an authentic way of life is given in the liturgy, according to Guardini. We begin with what is given by Christ and continued in the liturgy. To become immersed in the liturgy shapes our outlook and our desires and it orients us towards a Christlike mode of reading and responding to the world. In order to live charitably in the world we must first embrace the identity given to us in the Eucharist. For Guardini there is a direct link between the proper celebration of liturgy and the authentic renewal of culture.

Among the strengths of the liturgy, for Guardini, are its corporeal and communal dimensions: it deploys the body through various liturgical gestures and it bonds us into a community and thus releases us from the insistent individualism which is a feature of contemporary culture. In place of the constant busyness and shallow self-expression of much of modern life, the liturgy promotes stillness, reservedness

and reposefulness (Guardini 1998c, 14). Yet this does not constitute an escape from caring for and exercising responsibility within the world; rather what happens in the liturgy is meant to be connected to and carried forward into the "problems and tasks of public and family life, and with those of Christian charity and of vocational occupations" (Guardini 1998c, 19). Another strength is the way, across its various seasons throughout the year, the liturgy "embraces, as far as possible, the whole of Divine teaching," (Guardini 1998c, 24) in contrast to partial and incomplete readings of that teaching. With Christ at the heart of its focus and the Holy Spirit as its animating force, the liturgy incorporates us into Christ, and gives us a share in the divine life. The cost of opening ourselves up to these benefits is the renunciation of self-determinism and of spiritual isolation; we humbly submit to the body being built up in liturgical celebration, rather than going our own way. As Guardini puts it, "the liturgy is a school of religious training and development to the Catholic who rightly understands it [and also of] cultural formation" (Guardini 1998c, 47).

It achieves this because it puts worship first, an acknowledgement of our dependency on our Creator, and because it addresses our deepest needs, which go far beyond the desire for material satisfaction as promised by the prevailing mechanized worldview and technocratic mentality. Liturgy, for Guardini, is the context in which we discover the true freedom granted by living in conformity with our God-given nature. It connects us to ultimate and life-giving truth. As Roland Millare explains, "Adoration is a concrete recognition on the part of the human person that he is not self-sufficient or autonomous. Adoration is a humble act that recognizes God as the source of all existence" (Millare 2020, 530). Only when we are in right relationship with God can all our other relationships become properly ordered and sustained.

2.3. Providence

Jane Lee-Barker argues that providence is a pervading theme running through all of Guardini's writings. Divine Providence is "that order which exists between God and those who give themselves to him in true faith. To the extent that man recognises God as his Father, that he places his trust in him and makes the kingdom the primary concern of his heart, to precisely that extent, a new order of being enfolds about him, one in which 'for those who love God all things work together unto good' (Rom. 8:28)" (Lee-Barker 2022, 131–32, quoting Guardini).

Building on Matt 6:25–34, calling us to trust in God's care for each of us, Guardini, while endorsing the need to trust that God is present to us and caring for us at each moment of our lives, does not imply mere passivity on the part of God's people. Rather he suggests that we open ourselves to God's grace so that we can cooperate with this in acting with initiative and responsibility in the world. As Lee-Barker says, "in God's created and very sacred world, people are given the opportunity for discernment, decision, and action in relationship with God who guides but does not

force, coerce, or thrust 'fate' upon them" (Lee-Barker 2022, xiii). A little further on, she continues, "Providence in Guardini's view is not a finished act or plan which God imposes on the world. Being open-ended it allows for the possibility of human involvement in its completion. … One must be transformed by the grace of God in order to contribute to a transformed world" (Lee-Barker 2022, 5).

Thus providence is not only a gift and help to us but also a task and a demand, a call to display a Godly care for creation. But that is only possible if we are truly participating in the life of God, mediated to us through the Church, receiving the sacraments, intentionally developing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and actively opening oneself to the work of the Holy Spirit. As Lee-Barker describes Guardini's teaching on providence, "Providence … is the process of a person, becoming redeemed, in a world also in the process of being redeemed. The human person can contribute to this process by allowing God to be active in his or her life, making the person more Godly and enabling the person to be a door for God in the world. Guardini will argue that Godly people can help the world to be a Godly world" (Lee-Barker 2022, 95). The possibility and privilege of each person having the capacity to act as a door through which God can enter the world is a motif that recurs several times in Guardini (Lee-Barker 2022, 12, 22, 87).

One further point might be made here about Guardini's teaching on providence. This is that an appreciation of providence emerges from, relies upon and has implications for communal life. There are two aspects here. First, a person only learns how to understand God's purposes in the context of community – with that community itself being informed by the liturgy. Second, the faith that is supported by a strong sense of providence calls not only for a vibrant personal relationship between believers and God, but also requires that they involve themselves, insofar as it lies in their capacity, in the right ordering and developing of the world.

2.4. Cultural Critique and Technocratic Mentality

Once one has appreciated Guardini's take on what is entailed in possessing a Catholic worldview, the centrality of the liturgy in shaping and orienting that worldview, and his emphasis on providence, it follows that one recognizes how the ethos of modern culture is governed by an entirely different set of values, purposes and priorities. Whereas "The *ethos* of modern culture is governed by a mechanistic and utilitarian *logos,* the *ethos* of an authentic Christian culture is underpinned by a Eucharistic *logos* oriented towards self-giving love" (Millare 2016, 974). For Guardini, "The technological mind sees nature as an insensate order, as a cold body of facts, as a mere 'given,' as an object of utility, as raw material to be hammered into useful shape" (Guardini 1998a, 55). He urges that Christians turn from the *logos* of *techne* to the *logos* of the liturgy. In his view, a culture which prioritises *techne* is one that is concerned with the exercise of power and domination; it is means-oriented, without

adequate attention to the ends being pursued; it lacks ethical depth; in its focus on what technology makes possible, it is so present-oriented that it neglects the wisdom of historical traditions; it limits itself to an anthropocentric and immanent perspective and it fails to be open to the transcendent or to revelation (Sullivan 2021b). As Millare observes, "Another name for this separation of culture from revelation is secularization" (Millare 2016, 976).

A purely secular society, one which is not illuminated by revelation, in Guardini's view, misreads human nature, with serious consequences. It assumes that material needs are preeminent in human decision-making, while either neglecting or at least underestimating humanity's spiritual needs and nature. As Tracey Rowland points out, "Guardini argued that advanced industrial society created false consumer needs that integrated individuals into a system of media-driven mass consumption" (Rowland 2021, 128). The bourgeois temperament that emerges in this context is "calculating, pragmatic, focused on efficiency and predictable outcomes. It discourages moral heroism as unreasonable. … It both levels and narrows horizons" (Rowland 2021, 128).

Another manifestation of a secular landscape is the denial of the important role played by asceticism in granting men and women freedom from being controlled by their desires and passions and in freeing them for a higher form of life. Without the self-giving (and therefore, also, when necessary, self-sacrificing) love called for by Christian faith, humanity loses self-control.

> Man has extensively mastered the immediate forces of nature, but he has not mastered the mediate forces because he has not yet brought under his control his own native powers. Man today has power over things, but … he does not yet have power over his own power. … Only the freedom won through self-mastery can address itself with earnestness and gravity to those decisions which will affect all reality. … As long as men are unable to control themselves from within, they will inevitably be "organized" by forces from without (Guardini 1998a, 90, 93, 113n5).

On this point Guardini was to be echoed in a later generation by Ivan Illich, who also stressed the need for humanity to learn to live within limits and with self-restraint.

In Guardini's critique of culture he also exposed two erroneous understandings of the human person. One was to overemphasize autonomy and to reduce people to isolated monads who failed to appreciate their inescapable interdependence. This was corrosive of an attitude of solidarity with other people. Liberal capitalism was particularly prone to this misreading of our nature, encouraging a selfish and even ruthless competition for goods while neglecting the common good. The alternative extreme, preferred by both communist and fascist collectivism, led to "mass man", subordinated and sacrificed individuals to the needs of the party or the state, and failed to preserve a space for the uniqueness, mystery and essential incommunicability of

each person. A liturgically shaped outlook, as advocated by Guardini, would allow for a better balance between individual dignity and freedom on the one hand, and, on the other hand, commitment to the common good.

Although Guardini died before some of the most recent developments in technology had surfaced, he had exposed the direction of travel, sounded alarm bells and proposed a path towards a more humane and healthy alternative. His insights have been taken up by Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium* and in *Laudato 'Si*, as has been noted by Massimo Borghesi (Borghesi 2018, 103, 105, 138, 139). Guardini's project of addressing contemporary culture from a Catholic worldview was to be taken up in the final third of the twentieth century and into the beginning of the twenty-first century, although in ways that sound strikingly different.

3. Ivan Illich

In many respects, Ivan Illich seems surprisingly similar to Guardini with regard to the importance he attributes to the church, liturgy, personal responsibility, cultural critique and historical perspective. Yet he also comes across as displaying strikingly different emphases on each of these and adopting a radically different tone of voice. He was an eclectic and idiosyncratic thinker, who stood outside current terms of debate and therefore saw issues afresh, opening up new possibilities. He took pains to attend to and redefine the categories within which our conversations usually take place. Disconcerting in his exposure of many prevailing assumptions and discomforting in the starkness, scope and radical nature of his arguments, he could be scathing and satirical, but also poetic and prophetic. Scholastic and erudite, often aphoristic in style and offering a kaleidoscope of images and metaphors to jolt his readers and audiences into fresh perspectives, Illich could be described as an ascetic anarchist, a restrained revolutionary, simultaneously humble yet bold, reticent yet given to sweeping assertions.

He was a controversial figure for a number of reasons: his readiness to critique the institutional church, a stance that – when he began to do this – seemed to put him beyond the pale; his frequent scathing language about viewpoints he castigated; his tendency to offer sweeping generalisations and to pontificate about professions about which he had only a relatively superficial knowledge; his inclination to view medieval Christianity too benignly as an ideal expression of faith; and his image in his later years as a jet-setting and deliberately provocative intellectual celebrity. Despite all this, Illich does exemplify how Catholics can, drawing upon their faith and its intellectual and spiritual traditions, engage with their culture in a manner that is challenging, fertile and with something pertinent to say to many aspects of secular life.

For Illich, what is important is poverty, powerlessness, spontaneity and freedom in exercising initiative. Rather than planning or control, he stressed the need for openness to the surprising and what comes to us as gratuitous. He deployed historical perspective to provide a necessary and essential vantage point from which to help us gain some degree of distance from our current assumptions and concerns, our ways of thinking and acting in which we are so submerged that we are often imprisoned by them. He was both radical and conservative, orthodox yet also iconoclastic. His understanding and expression of faith was seen by some as subversive of many church policies.

He was influenced by Hans Urs von Balthasar, Erich Pryzwara, Romano Guardini, Jean Daniélou and particularly by Jacques Maritain. Among other influential figures, he was close to Archbishop Helder Camara and Erich Fromm. He taught in several German universities and also in several American ones. Alert to contemporary cultural developments and interpreting these in light of Christian tradition, he addressed a wide range of audiences and readers: architects, educators, policy makers, medical personnel, Lutheran bishops, economists and many others. Although his sensitivity to the issues facing these different groups was remarkable, it was inevitable that in some cases his grasp of the specificities and detail in each case could sometimes be rather broad-brush and possibly lacking in depth of penetration. Intending to be a gadfly, exposing assumptions with a view to provoking fresh thinking, he wanted to undertake an archaeology of modern "certainties," those ideas and feelings that seem too obvious and too "natural" ever to be put into question; and he had come to see the twelfth century as one of the great seedtimes of these certainties (Illich and Cayley 2005, 19). Among such certainties he considered that contemporary ideas of conscience, citizenship, technology, text, individuality, and marriage all began to emerge in that era. "Certainties are those things that we can't think *about* because they are what we think *with* – they are what lie, Illich says, 'beyond the horizon of our attention'" (Illich and Cayley 2005, 19; Cayley 2021, 13, 21).

After initial and highly successful pastoral work, especially with a Puerto Rican community in New York, in 1956 Illich had been recommended by Cardinal Spellman for the post of vice-Rector of the University of Puerto Rico, after which he went on to be Director of a Centre for Intercultural Formation in Cuernavaca from 1960–1967. This Centre was "an experimental micro-cosmos with powerful transformative characters in interaction with a very conservative Mexican Catholic hierarchy associated with the powerful" (Bruno-Jofré and Igelmo Zaldívar 2022, 47). The tensions arising between the conservative expectations of church leaders and Illich's own creative and prophetic thinking led him eventually to remove himself as an official spokesperson for the church in order to give himself the freedom to forge ahead with his own vision of a radical role for the Christian in the world. This vision led him not only to call into question the comfortable assumptions held by many in the Church (assumptions that made them complicit in a colonialist and paternalistic mentality), but also to offer a reading of trends in the secular world that needed to

be resisted. Colin Miller claims that "One of Illich's great contributions is to give a non-Marxist account of the relation between our material culture and our intellectual habits" (Miller 2017, 91). However, despite the fact that a glance at Illich's many publications after he had left the service of the church may seem to justify describing him as a social critic, one who wrote from a rather idiosyncratic historical perspective, his close friend and collaborator, Lee Hoinacki, suggests that, rather than be considered as a social critic, philosopher or historian, Illich should be understood instead as an apophatic theologian (Hoinacki 2003, 382–89). This theology running through and underpinning the whole corpus of his writings might be implicit, rather than spelled out, but it was never absent.

Because of his early formation in scholastic theology and then his particular interest in the work of Hugh of St Victor (Illich 1993) – and twelfth century life and thought more generally – a marked feature of Illich's writing and lectures was the historical perspective he brought to bear on twentieth century practices, institutions and assumptions. He sought distance from the present to enable him to see it with a mind strongly informed by and familiar with quite different ways of living and thinking. "I plead for a historical perspective on precisely those assumptions that are accepted as verities or 'practical certainties' as long as their sociogenesis remains unexamined" (Illich 1992, 9). Elsewhere he explained his use of history: "I study history to become sensitive to those modern assumptions which, by going unexamined, have turned into our epoch-specific, *a priori* forms of perception" (Cayley 2021, 291). His purpose was to loosen the grip of what is normally taken for granted and to open up the possibility of imagining a different future.

In what follows I will focus on four themes from Illich's writings and lectures. The first of these is his sense of the church. Under this heading I will refer to his comments on mission, renunciation of power and on tradition as a source for renewal. Then I attend to his cultural critique of leading professions and their implicit curriculum, by using the example of schooling as promoting an unhealthy dependency. His criticisms of schooling were intended to show the need to promote self-sufficiency, initiative and personal responsibility among learners. Third, Illich developed an unusual and original theory that modernity can be seen as the perversion of Christianity, with modern institutions and professions operating as replacements and distortions of church and ministry. Finally, I draw attention to his desire to model and be an advocate for friendship as a counter to the negativity and damage caused by contemporary culture, envisaging friendship as a matrix for mutual and authentic learning and for healing the world.

3.1. The Church

Although Illich was always a devout Catholic, fully subscribed to church doctrine and moral teaching, loved the liturgy and read the world in the light of revelation and

the formation in faith he had received in his childhood, his youth and in the seminary, his relationship with some of the institutional aspects of the church was not always smooth. He was critical of the church as an institution, its bureaucracy, its political role in Latin America, the seminaries, and the role of the priests and of celibacy. (Bruno-Jofré and Igelmo Zaldívar 2022, xvi; Bruno-Jofré and Zaldivar 2016, 568–86). Although not involved in social action or in liberation theology, he did have a great interest in – and made significant contributions to – the pastoral preparation of religious and lay people (Bruno-Jofré and Igelmo Zaldívar 2022, 59, 62). However, he came to believe that, as an institution, the Church, in some of its stances, actually operated in a way that undermined the Gospel. Therefore, in 1969 he resigned from church service and renounced his priestly titles, benefits and privileges, left ecclesiastical structures and roles, yet never left the church.

For him, whether in his time working for the church or in the secular world, the church should act as a leaven which penetrates and lifts up the world with which it engages. "To separate the leaven from the flour means uselessness for both. If Catholics ever lose their concern for those who do not have God, they lose also their charity" (Illich 2018, 11). If his earlier years were spent in pastoral service and the final three decades of his life were committed to a more prophetic role, in both cases one can claim that he acted as a leaven, mingling with, reaching out to, immersing himself in diverse groups of people in multiple contexts, always seeking to give himself away to them and thereby enhancing their activities.

This chimes with how he described the role of the missionary in 1961: "The missioner is he who leaves his own to bring the Gospel to those who are not his own, thus becoming one of them while at the same time continuing to be what he is" (Illich 2018, 51). "Mission … requires an ability to bracket and relativize one's own culture in order to hear what the Gospel says when it speaks in the voice of another culture" (Illich and Cayley 2005, 20). This willingness to let go of one's own inheritance and to be open to the perceptions and needs of those one hopes to serve was a manifestation of spiritual poverty, "willingness to be without what we like" (Illich 2018, 53). "Just as spiritual poverty implies not the absence of likes, but freedom from them; so the attitude of the missioner carries him not to the denial of his background but to communication with that of another" (Illich 2018, 53). Without such spiritual poverty, he believed that missionaries were in danger of unwittingly importing a foreign culture, an alien Gospel, a misguided pastoral approach, all of which functioned as favouring an unhealthy western capitalism (to which the church was only too accommodating). Not only that, but the drive to send thousands of missionaries from North America and Europe to South America ran the risk of obscuring the need for radical reforms in how the Church conducted herself.

> If North America and Europe send enough priests to fill the vacant parishes, there is no need to consider laymen to fulfil most evangelical tasks; no need to re-examine the structure of

the parish, the function of the priest, the Sunday obligation and clerical sermon; no need for exploring the use of the married diaconate, new forms of celebration of the Word and Eucharist and intimate familial celebrations of conversion to the Gospel in the milieu of the home (Illich 2018, 95).

Rather than the temptation to hold onto power and privilege, for Illich the Church needed to accept that the renunciation of power is a precondition of love and a necessary corollary of accepting the Cross as the sign of the Christian. He warned that "The Church's community-creating functions break down when supported by symbols whose driving force lies in an authority structure" (Illich 2018, 111).

Despite his urging the Church to be ready to renounce power and privilege, Illich had a nuanced appreciation for the role of tradition and how Christians should be ready both to embrace and deploy this, as well as to discern when to either sit loosely to it or to dare to develop it in new directions. On the one hand, sharing in "the sense of the Church" occurs when a person is "rooted in the living authority of the Church, lives the imaginative inventiveness of the faith, and expresses himself in terms of the gifts of the Spirit. This 'sense' is the result of reading the sources of authentic Christian tradition, of participation in the prayerful celebration of the liturgy, of a distinct way of life" (Illich 2018, 117). On the other hand, one must not turn the Church into an idol. This would be to abdicate personal responsibility. "Each Christian must struggle to establish and maintain a delicate balance between independence of the Church and dependence on the Church" (Illich 2018, 140). For Illich, tradition does not prevent or oppose change; rather it orients and anchors it. This is possible because "freedom to innovate and rootedness in tradition are different sides of the same coin. Without rootedness, innovation is promiscuous and unguided. … Without the innovation, … rootedness in tradition lapses into arid habit. … Grounding without freedom is bondage, ungrounded freedom only permissiveness. … [A] wholeness can only be sustained when the opposites that compose the whole are each given their due" (Cayley 2021, 464). Illich modelled a deliberately cultivated, careful and self-disciplined freedom within and for the Church at the same time as drawing from her the depth and enduring motivation of his life.

3.2. Education as Example of the Promotion of Unhealthy Dependency

Illich controversially lambasted a range of modern professions and cultural trends. Among these he offered a searing critique of medicine. This is illustrated in the following quotation: "A professional and physician-based health care system which has grown beyond tolerable bounds is sickening for three reasons: it must produce clinical damages which outweigh its potential benefits; it cannot but obscure the political conditions which render society unhealthy; and it tends to expropriate the power of the individual to heal himself and to shape his or her environment" (Illich 1975, 11).

This sentence encapsulates claims that he also addressed to other aspects of modern life: something originally worthwhile and benevolent has grown unwieldy through exponential growth; the profession "managing" particular services holds a monopoly, thereby denying others an opportunity to contribute; there are damaging side-effects of the profession's practices that are too easily ignored; the very need felt by the general public for the services of this profession prevent them from recognizing wider social conditions that should be addressed; and unwarranted dependence on these services encourages excessive passivity and undermines initiative and the development of a mature responsibility in the population.

Although Illich's book on medicine stirred up lively arguments, it was his writings on education that really brought him fame and notoriety. Just as people put too much trust, he asserted, in the medical profession, so too they relied too much on institutions set up to provide education. In *Deschooling Society* and in other writings of the 1970s and 1980s, Illich was critical of how the nation-state had secured a monopoly of education through its schools. He exposed what he saw as a malign hidden curriculum that was being promoted in schools. He denounced one outcome of this state monopoly as leading to the conflation in people's minds between schooling and the broader endeavour of education. "Work, leisure, politics, city living, and even family life, depend on schools for the habits and knowledge they presuppose, instead of becoming themselves the means of education" (Cayley 2021, 19). He shrewdly noted that most people acquire most of their learning outside of school, as a side-effect of their informal engagement in ordinary life activities and relationships.

"The child grows up in a world of things, surrounded by people who serve as models for skills and values. He finds peers who challenge him to argue, to compete, to cooperate, and to understand; and if the child is lucky, he is exposed to confrontation or criticism by an experienced elder who really cares. Things, models, peers, and elders are four resources for education" (Illich 1992, 98).

His critique of the education system was hard-hitting and, to many, it seemed unduly harsh. He claimed that "Education serves the dominant minority as a justification for the privilege they hold and claim" (Illich 1974, 85). In one lecture he went so far as to assert that "The school system is a worldwide soulshredder that junks the majority and hardens an elite to govern it" (Illich 1988, 2). He compared the certificates that pupils received at the end of schooling with those given out by those selling indulgences in the later Middle Ages, implying that both were meaningless and without value. Too many people acted as if they held a religious faith in the power of education to fit them for the world. "The first thing the child learns from the hidden curriculum of schooling is an age-old adage of faith corrupted by inquisition, – *extra scholam nulla est salus* – outside this rite, no salvation" (Illich 1974, 86).

At the heart of his critique of schooling was his concern for individual imagination and personal freedom, initiative, creativity and responsibility. Enforced instruction stifles the will to learn independently. "By making men abdicate the responsibility

for their own growth, school leads many to a kind of spiritual suicide" (Illich 1992, 80). His views here are an outgrowth of his concern that the Church, like schooling, fosters dependence, passivity, immaturity and a lack of authentic ownership of one's own faith formation. In such cases, learning, whether sacred or secular, in the Church or in schools, fails to lead to a transformation of consciousness. He wanted to make *the expansion of freedom*, rather than the growth of services, the criterion of social progress; he hoped to "uncover and encourage the abilities, intuitions, and encounters that are smothered by the blanket of professional care" (Illich and Cayley 2005, 14, 38).

3.3. Modernity and the Perversion of Christianity

Some might claim that Christianity has been left behind by the gains of modernity and is now merely of historical interest. Perhaps it only ever constituted a stage in human development, and we have learned how to advance beyond Christianity's superstitions, misogyny, indoctrination and restrictions on freedom. Its shortcomings have been exposed and we exist in a much more enlightened age. Others might claim that, although Christianity did pave the way for the emergence of modernity, we can now safely liberate ourselves from its metaphysical, mystical and ecclesiastical dimensions, while borrowing (selectively) from some of its moral teachings. Illich, however, argued that modernity is neither the fulfilment nor the antithesis of Christianity, buts its *perversion*. Furthermore, he believed, this perversion of the faith has come about not through the evil machinations of people in modern times who misinterpreted and distorted what was once pure and authentic in the Church's teaching and practice, but that the Church herself modelled the perversion and distortion, instead of exemplifying what should have been at the very heart of the Church's life and *modus operandi.*

I have already pointed to Illich's commitment to the Church and what he saw as central to her life: mission, renunciation of power and living tradition. The problem, as he saw it, was the misguided tendency – one which had been a constant temptation since the fourth century, when, in rapid succession, Christianity went from being proscribed and persecuted, to toleration (in 313AD), and then to being prescribed as the official religion of the Roman Empire (in 383AD) – to try to preserve, guarantee and enforce the faith, to circumscribe its teachings and life with regulations and power. When this happens, the Gospel has been corrupted and what should be the best becomes the worst. "I can't do without tradition, but I have to recognize that its institutionalization is the root of an evil" (Illich and Cayley 2005, xv).

Illich distinguished two forms of the Church – as *she* and as *it.* The first is "the living embodiment of Christian community" while the second is "a self-serving, worldly power" (Illich and Cayley 2005, 4). And, acting as a self-serving power, the Church was always tempted to adopt the methods and tools of other worldly

powers. In doing so, she betrayed the very Gospel she was meant to serve and demonstrated that she did not fully believe in or trust this Gospel or the Holy Spirit to bring about God's will. This betrayal, and the ensuing perversion of the faith, not only began with the Church, but spread to later institutions, agencies and professions. Thus, he claimed, "It was the Church that first gave its clerisy legal jurisdiction over souls and made the faithful dependent on clerical services. It was the Church that made learning a consequence of authoritative teaching, that made standing in the faith a result of correct answers to catechisms and inquisitions, and that made salvation a question of compulsory attendance at various rituals" (Illich and Cayley 2005, 12).

At the heart of Christian faith lies the freedom to accept God's invitation to share in his life, as taught by Jesus. The use of force, whether hard or soft power, is corrosive of the free response of the human spirit to the Holy Spirit. For Illich, the Church, which he loved, also exasperated him by the tendency to use compulsion, to confuse conformity with true commitment, and by the abuse of authority. "The Church identified salvation with attendance at services, submission to prescribed rituals, and obedience to Church rules" (Cayley 2021, 386). As a result, Illich noted, the Church "contains the Gospel in both senses of the term – it preserves and protects it, but it also holds it in, containing its power and shielding society from its effect" (Cayley 2021, 391–92). In his wide-ranging critique of the institutions, agencies and professions of modernity, Illich claimed that his contemporaries were practicing a perverted and degenerated form of Christianity; they did so because they participated in institutions that had learned only too well from the Church's example and which still bore the church's genetic imprint.

3.4. Friendship

In contrast to his prophetic and critical commentary on the Church and on modern institutions and professions, Illich showed a softer and more pastoral side when he both spoke about and demonstrated in his own life the enduring benefits and potential of friendships. Friendship offers each of us a mode of belonging quite different from that of the family or the nation, more expansive and liberating than the former and less fraught with the power to swallow up our individuality than the latter. "For me friendship has been the source, condition, and context for the possible coming about of commitment and like-mindedness" (Illich and Cayley 2005, 147). In response to the question: how can one live gratuitously in a world like this? Illich simply and succinctly replies: "Friends" (Illich and Cayley 2005, 228). It is clear from many of his comments that Illich had a deep appreciation of the potential of friendship to open up paths towards more humane ways of living. Friendship requires and calls forth attention, responsiveness, celebration, renunciation and self-limitation, presence, fidelity, self-discovery; it generates community (Sullivan 2023).

For Illich, the effective and winsome communication of faith depends on it emerging from a communitarian and fraternal mode of living. Compulsion and speaking from a position of power stifle the human spirit and obscure openness to the working of the Holy Spirit. Even the search for truth, he believed, presupposes an ambience of friendship rather than a lonely and insistent individualism, however dogged and persistent this may be. Deeply committed human bonds are needed to sustain a common investigation into the issues facing humanity. "The vocation by which I try to live today I would call that of a friend rather than the prophet. … This is the way in which hope for a new society can spread. And the practice of [friendship] is not really through words but through little acts of foolish renunciation" (Illich and Cayley 2005, 170).

Conclusion

Both Guardini and Illich offer resources for contemporary Christians to draw upon in responding to a secularizing landscape. If both provided a critique of contemporary culture and the forces that threaten to destroy our humanity, each gave emphasis to different aspects of a remedy. Guardini stressed the need to develop a Catholic worldview, to draw life and orientation from the liturgy, and to trust in providence. Illich not only highlighted the vital importance of mission, renunciation of power, and tradition as a source for renewal, but he challenged the Church to recognize her own contribution to the distortions of modernity and to look to friendship rather than control as a counter to the defects of contemporary culture.

Thinking and speaking about God and God's relation to us cannot be restricted to church settings. In order to speak with credibility and confidence of God in multiple contexts, Christian theologians need to be learning from and contributing to dialogue with people from many different disciplines. One of the reasons that both Guardini and Illich exerted such influence – and showed the way for others to do so today – is that, building on the foundation it had given them, they took their Catholic faith out into the world, beyond the borders of the Church and engaged with discernment the culture of their time. Can the Church offer an alternative today to the state, the university, the media, the market and to technological progress when it comes to giving people inspiration and guidance for why and how to live?

Bibliography

Borghesi, Massimo. 2018. *The Mind of Pope Francis: Jorge Mario Bergoglio's Intellectual Journey*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

Bruno-Jofré, Rosa, and Jon Igelmo Zaldívar. 2022. *Ivan Illich Fifty Years Later: Situating Deschooling Society in His Intellectual and Personal Journey*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Bruno-Jofré, Rosa, and Jon Igelmo Zaldivar. 2016. "Monsignor Ivan Illich's Critique of the Institutional Church, 1960–1966." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 67 (3): 568–86. https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022046915003383.

Cayley, David. 2021. *Ivan Illich: An Intellectual Journey*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Cunningham, Lawrence S. 1995. "Romano Guardini as Sapiential Theologian." In *Romano Guardini: Proclaiming the Sacred in a Modern World*, edited by Robert Anthony Krieg, 61–72. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.

Davignon, Phil. 2023. *Practicing Christians, Practical Atheists: How Cultural Liturgies and Everyday Social Practices Shape the Christian Life*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

Grey, Carmody, and Oliver Dürr. 2023. "On Changing the Subject: 'Secularity', 'Religion', and the Idea of the Human." *Religions* 14 (4): article no. 466. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14040466.

Guardini, Romano. 1998a. *The End of the Modern World*. Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute.

Guardini, Romano. 1998b. *Living the Drama of Faith*. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute.

Guardini, Romano. 1998c. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. Translated by Ada Lane. New York: Crossroad.

Guardini, Romano. 2019. *La vision catholique du monde*. Translated by Vincent Billot and Caroline Blanchet-Tilkin. Roma: Chora.

Hoinacki, Lee. 2003. "The Trajectory of Ivan Illich." *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society* 23 (5): 382–89. https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467603259776.

Hunter, James Davison. 2010. *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Illich, Ivan. 1974. "Lima Discourse: A Paper Read to the World Council of Christian Education Conference in Lima, Peru, on 18th July 1971." *Learning for Living* 13 (3): 85–89. https://doi.org/10.1080/00239707408557026.

Illich, Ivan. 1975. *Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health*. London: Calder & Boyars.

Illich, Ivan. 1988. "The Educational Enterprise in the Light of the Gospel [Lecture given in Chicago, November, 1988]." https://www.davidtinapple.com/illich/1988_Educational.html.

Illich, Ivan. 1992. *In the Mirror of the Past: Lectures and Addresses 1978–1990*. New York: Marion Boyars.

Illich, Ivan. 1993. *In the Vineyard of the Text: A Commentary to Hugh's Didascalicon*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Illich, Ivan. 2018. *The Powerless Church and Other Selected Writings, 1955–1985*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Illich, Ivan, and David Cayley. 2005. *The Rivers North of the Future: The Testament of Ivan Illich*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press.

Krieg, Robert Anthony, ed. 1995. *Romano Guardini: Proclaiming the Sacred in a Modern World*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications.

Krieg, Robert Anthony. 1997. *Romano Guardini: A Precursor of Vatican II*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press.

Lee-Barker, Jane. 2022. *God's World. No String Puppets: Providence in the Writings of Romano Guardini*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications. https://www.vlebooks.com/vleweb/product/openreader?id=none&isbn=9781532663239.

Maspero, Giulio. 2022. *After the Pandemic, after Modernity: The Relational Revolution*. South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press.

Millare, Roland. 2016. "The Primacy of Logos over Ethos: The Influence of Romano Guardini on Post-Conciliar Theology." *The Heythrop Journal* 57 (6): 974–83. https://doi.org/10.1111/heyj.12029.

Millare, Roland. 2020. "The Hermeneutic of Continuity and Discontinuity between Romano Guardini and Joseph Ratzinger: The Primacy of Logos." *Nova et Vetera* 18 (2): 521–63. https://doi.org/10.1353/nov.2020.0034.

Miller, Colin. 2017. "Ivan Illich, Catholic Theologian (Part I)." *Pro Ecclesia* 26 (1): 81–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/106385121702600109.

Rowland, Tracey. 2021. *Beyond Kant and Nietzche. Illuminating Modernity*. London: T & T Clark.

Searle, Joshua T. 2018. *Theology after Christendom: Forming Prophets for a Post-Christian World*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

Sullivan, John. 2021a. "Catholics, Culture and the Renewal of Christian Humanism." *Religions* 12 (5): article no. 325. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12050325.

Sullivan, John. 2021b. "Transcending the Technocratic Mentality through the Humanities." *Religions* 12 (9): article no. 676. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090676.

Sullivan, John. 2023. "Friendship and Spiritual Learning: Seedbed for Synodality." *Religions* 14 (5): article no. 592. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14050592.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Voulgaraki-Pissina, Evi. 2023. "Theology, Witness, and Spirituality in a Post-Secularized Historical Context." *Religions* 14 (2): article no. 179. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14020179.

Weddell, Sherry A. 2012. *Forming Intentional Disciples: The Path to Knowing and Following Jesus*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor.

Why More "Exodus" Is Needed in Church and Pastoral Care. Reflections on an Attitude-Forming Paradigm Shift

SALVATORE LOIERO (iD)
Paris Lodron University of Salzburg, salvatore.loiero@plus.ac.at

Abstract: The relationship between secularity and religion/religiosity is a main topic of practical theology and ecclesiastical pastoral care. However, several research papers on religious studies show that the thesis that with disappearing institutionalized religiosity, plural and differentiated forms of religiosity increase is not convincing. In fact, the development shows that where people do not experience religion, it becomes irrelevant to them. This fact is an urgent question for the Church: With and from which basic attitude can and will she be able to encounter religious and secular people in such ways that the Christian gospel of human emancipation and redemption can become a reality in their lives? The Church can realize such a fundamental attitude in reference to the biblical Exodus and by generating a pastoral exodus.

Keywords: secularity, religiosity, pastoral care, Exodus

1. Cultural and Sociological Considerations: Revolutionary Compression of the Present

From a global or continental perspective, Paul Zulehner aptly characterizes our current world as "floundering" to an extreme degree (Zulehner 2023). We observe the various trouble spots of war and crisis of our time, the presence of racism and anti-Semitism, whether latent or open, as well as the recent emergence of fundamentalism and chauvinism, even in democratic societies. We note that pandemics such as COVID-19 are pushing the boundaries of scientific and technological knowledge that were previously believed to be solid. We see the constant fluctuation of our economic and work systems and, on occasion, the highly polarized discourse surrounding the changes in existing social, family, and gender patterns and gender roles; all of these scenarios are compressed into the fundamental sense of a floundering world. Zygmunt Bauman was right when writing about how this is transferred to the prevailing spirit among individuals: "We live under the conditions of *permanent revolution*. Revolution has become the *normal state of* today's society" (Bauman 2003, 6).

Permanent revolution does indeed convey the prevailing spirit of our social and individual life contexts as the concise and formative spirit of our experience of the present time in a floundering world, namely in our resistance to the constant incomprehensibility, uncontrollability, unpredictability, and incalculability that

surround us "glocally" (Seibert 2017).[1] This resistance to the constant unmanage-ability of all the uncertainties that surround us is constantly fed by all the "risky freedoms" (Beck 2020a; 2020b) that our analog and digitally networked world offers us in its "glocal" contexts, its fluid constellations and its persistent ambivalence and ambiguity (Bauer 2018).

In the revolutionary nature of this prevailing spirit, the present is therefore not only compressed into the "now" of "done or not" or the "now" of "hit or miss" but also into the permanent obligation to justify the reference points for our thoughts and actions. We must locate these reference points and take responsibility for them in view of the uncertainties and ambivalence regarding our individual and socioge-netic identity processes and personality development.

We are not born with the ability to productively manage the challenges of this revolutionary compression of the present. Instead, we must repeatedly work through it, resisting the seductive, ideological power of the voices and forces, which – again, in Zygmunt Bauman's words – feed their contexts of justification from a "lost/stolen/orphaned, and in any case, undead past" (Bauman 2018, 13). These voices and forces promise people relief with corresponding narratives and visions in the spirit of their undead "retrotopias" by eloquently guaranteeing them risk-free certainties and un-ambiguity that put an end to permanent uncertainties, ambivalence, and ambiguity; voices and forces that ultimately bring about nothing other than life-historical dead ends and the disgrace of civilization.

In view of our "floundering world" and the permanent presence of a "revolution-ary compression of the present," the question arises all the more acutely as to what significance religion and the Church (still) have or assume for people. This question is becoming all the more acute as the Church, in the force field of the gospel, wishes to provide people with guidance and the Christian faith as a compass for their lives, increasingly situated in differentiating social contexts and secular realities. Moving on from these cultural and sociological remarks, we now consider striking religious and scientific reflections on modernity, religion, and the Church.

2. Reflections on Religious Science: From "believing without belonging" to "neither believing nor belonging"

In the context of her book *Religion in Britain Since 1945* (Davie 1994) Grace Davie's phrase "believing without belonging" (Davie 1997) became a catchphrase for the con-nection between religion and secularization in late modernity. Davie's research is

---

[1]   The neologism glocalization is formed from globalization and localization and aims to summarize the inner connection and the inseparable interrelationship between the two.

regarded as an important reference point and source of inspiration for the individualization thesis, according to which people remain religious to a certain extent, even without belonging to a religious/church community.[2] The predominance of this thesis has been well accepted not only in the UK but throughout Europe. It is particularly attractive to the Church and theological approaches that are critical of the strict view that modernity and religion are incompatible and that religion is coming to an end as a result of secularization processes. Essentially, Davie's individualization thesis should be understood from the position it takes opposite to the secularization thesis and its distinction from what is known as market theory. The latter is primarily due to the religious studies focus on North American contexts, with Peter L. Berger as its most prominent representative (Pollack 2021, 39–61; Pollack and Müller 2022, 381–95).

According to Detlef Pollack and Gergely Rosta (2022, in particular 67–75), the secularization theory must be viewed and applied in a more differentiated way today. This is because secularization processes cannot be limited to only one scenario: The progressive stringency of a negative juxtaposition of modern society and religion. As Pollack and Rosta repeatedly point out, this is due to the possibility of different scenarios in the relationship between the social differentiation of modernity and religion. Regardless of this differentiated approach, however, it should be noted that the functional differentiation processes of (late) modern societies continue to lead to autonomous functional systems within our modern society that no longer require the legitimization or integration potential of religion or churches. This applies to civil society and social as well as individual contexts.

A striking counter-model to this form of secularization theory is the so-called market theory. It argues that the end of the monopoly position of religion or the Church due to social differentiation processes initially leads to a market situation and competition between religious interpretations and interpretative sovereignty. The resulting plurality of religious offerings can, but does not have to, lead to the end of religion. On the contrary, in view of the modern processes of differentiation and individualization, it is assumed that religiosity is growing. In this sense, the late Peter L. Berger states that "an individual can be *both* religious *and* secular" (Berger 2013, 3). For Berger, secular and religious (non-secular) discourses are therefore not mutually exclusive; neither one cancels the other out, nor is one subject to the other in the game of the (argumentative) power of the strongest. Instead, as Berger states: "A standard secular discourse coexists with a plurality of religious discourses, both in society and in consciousness" (Berger 2013, 5). Pollack, in particular, doubts that

---

2   In her 2015 study *A Persistent Paradox* (Davie 2015), which builds on the 1994 research, Davies sees her thesis confirmed once again, even if – except in urban cultures, due to migration and plural pastoral offerings – secularization is increasing rapidly.

Berger's statement can be considered a refutation of the secularization theory. We return to this subject below.

In European contexts, the individualization thesis associated with Grace Davie, in particular, has gained dominance. It stands for the approach that modernization processes do not lead to a decline in the social relevance of religion but rather to a change in its former social forms (such as religious communities and churches). The distinction between religion and Church(es) is crucial for the theory of individualization. It is argued that the consequences of secularization affect the decline of traditional forms of established churches and religious institutions but not of individual religiosity. Instead, the deinstitutionalization and loss of importance of churches and religious institutions due to secularization is accompanied by increased individual religiosity. This also goes hand in hand with the detachment of individuals from institutional guidelines, particularly with regard to their religious ideas and behavior. In individualization theory, the loss of significance of religion does not apply to the individual forms of religiosity but rather to its institutionalized forms; it can posit the characteristics of post-secular faith realities in "believing without belonging."[3]

Among the various approaches to addressing modernization, secularization, and religion, Detlef Pollack's secularization theory is particularly applicable to ecclesiastical and theological questions about secularization and religion, provided that they consider the internal interrelationship between the individual and communal character of believing and the significance of contingency for the related theological and ecclesiastical questions. Pollack's studies of religion do not endeavor to make a normative assessment of religious change. They are also critical of stringent statements about market theory and individualization theory. Instead, Pollack's research advocates a non-deterministic or goal-oriented understanding of modernization and secularization, according to which modernization inevitably leads to the end of religion(s). This non-deterministic approach thus makes it possible to keep a constant focus on the spatiotemporal scope and periodization of modernization and secularization processes, as well as on the contingent character of the spatiotemporal shaping of the world and life – with a fundamental openness to empirical correction (Pollack and Rosta 2022, 59–69, 541–42).

According to Pollack's approach, the stringency of individualization theory, according to which the deinstitutionalization of religion leads to an increase in individual religiosity, cannot be made absolute (Pollack and Rosta 2022, 545–46). Instead, a "neither believing nor belonging" (Voas and Crockett 2005) can be observed, according to which the increase in individually determined and non-church religiosity does not lead to compensation for the loss of institutionalized religiosity. Jörg Stolz's "cohort secularization" (Stolz et al. 2022) concept shows that secularization grows as

---

[3]   In particular, various approaches to a "subjective theology" find a key hermeneutical concept in the basic approach of individualization theory.

each new generation (cohort) is less religious. Individual religiosity is, therefore, only one component and not the rule of prevailing secularization. This thesis is supported by Pollack's latest publications on global contexts (Pollack and Rosta 2022, 83–502; Stolz et al. 2022, 7–32) and Stolz's publications on Swiss conditions.

3. First Challenges

Cultural and religious sociological insights until now have shown that the question of the significance of religion or the Church for people in secular contexts inevitably leads to the question of whether they are confronted with forms of religious or church practice, and if so, which ones. For the Church, this repeatedly places the relationship between orthodoxy and orthopraxis at the center of self-efficacious self-criticism. It raises the question of the basic attitude deriving from which the Church may become a space for people's experience or for what happens to them that enables the relevance of faith to become an event option within themselves and among others. Basic attitudes of lived religiosity sensitive to plurality and difference can be generated from this position – both individually and collectively.

For this reason, the need for differentiation in the Church's perception and handling of religiosity and holistic[4] spirituality becomes apparent. Thus, not all holistic spirituality should be characterized as religious linearly and stringently because there are also holistic forms of spirituality without religious reference (Loiero 2021b, 119–43). The source of the distinction lies in the monotheistic understanding of *religere*, i.e., binding oneself back to the revealing God. Thus, "religere" can also occur on a structural level in spiritual acts, namely in the self-effective binding back (in the sense of a holistic anchoring) to a transcendent anchor point in one's own life or to immanent places of experience such as nature, friends, family, etc. The difference between holistic spirituality without religiosity and religiosity with holistic spirituality lies in going beyond this structural level. To this effect, all religiously generated holistic spirituality is always preceded by its enabling moment, namely the offer of the experience of a self-revealing God as the anchor point of a basic spiritual attitude as a religious one.

In this Christian proprium of holistic spirituality as an enabled attitude of lived religiosity lies the real challenge for the Churches regarding whether and how they can give God a voice in secular contexts: As a God who does not want to be experienced as the God of the hereafter but rather of human experience[5] – not as a God

---

4   Holistic here refers to the inner interrelatedness and self-effective reciprocity of thinking and doing or doing and thinking.

5   For the experiential dimension of the Christian proprium cf. Salvatore Loiero (2010).

who is absorbed by these experiences but rather as the "familiar unfamiliar" who repeatedly becomes the harshest critic of elitist proclamations of God that disempower or marginalize people.

Read in this way, the challenge of dealing with the question of the significance of religion or the Church in people's lives in secular contexts lies in the question of the attitude from which and toward which people are able to experience God through the Church as the "familiar unfamiliar." In relation to this attitude, I ascribe a key pastoral role to the theologoumenon of Exodus – both in terms of the attitude of individual religiosity and that of communal religiosity.[6]

4. Exodus Existence – The Attitude of Believing Existence

"Nomadism" – in the sense of a "basic attitude of nomadism" – has probably become a compatible metaphor for late modern movements related to seeking because it is a type of identity generation and personality development that not only promises to survive *in* and *between* the uncertainties *and* certainties of revolutionary compression in the present but *also to live in a meaningful way.* Nomadism can and wishes to show that the ability to change can be productively combined with control and routine. This is because – metaphorically speaking – for nomadism, the certainties of the oases *and* the uncertainties of the desert, as the space between the oases (Bauman 2003, 39), inevitably belong together, i.e., both define and form the *one* "living space." For nomadism, the focus of meaning generation is not solely on the oases, i.e., the certainties, but also includes the desert, i.e., the uncertainties. Accordingly, it is able to promote identity generation and personality development that aims to enable a productive approach to ambivalence and ambiguities – not in the sense of a mere risk-taking adventure, but in the sense of everyday coping that ranges from being risk-conscious to being risky. Read in this way, "nomadism" refers to a question of the attitude of believing existence, as compressed into the concept of "Exodus existence."

Jürgen Manemann has updated the concept of Exodus existence (Manemann 2021), according to which: "exile existence does not end with entering the promised land. The memory of the experience of the Exodus is, on the one hand, a foundation in a fathomless time, and on the other hand, that which repeatedly pulls the ground from under our feet and leads us into exile" (Manemann 2014, 352).

Inspired by the American philosopher Michael Walzer's reading of the Exodus (Walzer 1988, 25), in and through the memory of the Exodus, "being there becomes being an Exodus" (Manemann 2021, 135), human existence is revealed as an Exodus existence. In the search for an attitude-forming generation of identity and personality

---

6   For the significance of the Exodus, see also Konrad Schmid (2023).

development, this does not particularly rely on "one-sided and final transformations" (Walzer 1988, 25). Instead, human existence exposes itself to the real possibilities of an Exodus existence, which understands both itself and the signs that make it possible as contingent and is experienced as free for the necessary interplay of movement and stability, of freedom and certainty, of routine and change and of the familiar and the unfamiliar (Bauman 2003, 39).

The meaning-generative and critical-productive thrusts of an Exodus existence lie in that for which the Canaan of the Bible has become a lasting symbol in the Exodus narrative: Namely for the right of humans, confirmed and guaranteed by God, to such life and faith options that they must never lose their basic attitude and empowerment to experience liberating release by subversively or openly degenerating into life and faith-historical Egypt (to remain in the biblical metaphors of the Exodus narrative).

To speak of an Exodus existence, therefore, means to speak of a faith-generating attitude that sees itself as a *contrasting project* to everything that Egypt stands for in the Exodus narrative:
–   the conscious deformation of human self-esteem into the bondage of "learned helplessness" (Loiero 2014);
–   the will-breaking subordination and immunizing submission to the normative power of the "might of the strongest";
–   the reality-resistant transfiguration and spiritual underpinning of unfreeing certainties of action and orientation, driven by the fear of losing bourgeois security mechanisms.

At the same time, an Exodus existence refers to a basic attitude of faith that sees itself as a *search project* for everything that Canaan stands for in the Exodus narrative:
–   the stubbornness of a love of freedom and a thirst for freedom as an attitude-forming basis for life and faith;
–   the stubbornness of theological self-esteem that promises all the assurances and the right to community-promoting self-development, free from incapacitating external control and outside expectations;
–   for the "revolutionary conscience" (Walzer 1988, 125) of a hope that, in the face of cynicism and fatalism and of resignation and indifference, keeps alive the attitude-forming paradigm of an Exodus existence – in the decisions and deeds of a freedom that knows itself to be grounded in its invincibility beyond the grave.

It is this non-manipulable and non-corruptible paradigm of freedom that repeatedly subjects the basic attitude of an Exodus existence to self-criticism and criticism by others; it is a criticism that is not fueled by a messianic otherworld that is resistant to reality or even unfit for reality, but rather by the non-redemption of human liberation and freedom that retains the sensitivity to "suffer in the suffering of others and

to respect the prophecy of others' suffering" (Metz 1992, 80), as Johann Baptist Metz repeatedly reminds us.

It should be noted at this point that the terms used so far, including freedom/liberation/setting free, are to be understood theologically with Karl Rahner and Edward Schillebeeckx, i.e., in the quality of redemption and salvation. Therefore, all human endeavor toward emancipation in the sense of the endeavor for liberation must always be taken very seriously, albeit with the critical reservation that theological freedom or the theological potential for liberation is not absorbed by human emancipation but always transcends it or allows itself to be transcended into new freedoms.

The question of the attitude of an Exodus existence involves daring to take courageous steps, both individually and institutionally, toward liberation or the establishment of freedom with an Exodus quality. This has the aim of enabling a "standpoint of redemption" (Adorno 1997, 333–34), which does not arise in the sense of a world-distant or power-political messianism but in the sense of indomitable hope and active realization of the liberating reliability of the Exodus God. This God, or "Deus Humanissimus" (Schillebeeckx 1975, 594) – as Edward Schillebeeckx aptly describes the nature of God – allows the individual or institutional thwarting of the liberation of people in the potential of their *mutually liberating* humanity to be uncovered and to stand up against it.

The above leads us to turn to the attitude-forming significance of the Exodus for a basic pastoral attitude of the church in secular contexts, as will be elaborated below.

5. Exodus Pastoral Care – The Question of Pastoral Attitudes

> We – or many of us – still believe in what the Exodus first taught us about the meaning and possibility of politics and its proper form ... first, that wherever you live is probably Egypt; second, that there is a better place, a more delightful world, a Promised Land; and third, that the way to this land is through the desert. We can only get there from here if we unite and march (Walzer 1988, 157).

The term "Exodus pastoral care" can be formed from Michael Walzer's summary of his reflections on an Exodus policy. It represents a fundamental pastoral attitude that follows the criteria of a consistently liberating interpretation of the Exodus: The indomitable resisting and rising against unfreedoms, the unquenchable hope for liberation, both the individual and communal struggle and coming together as a Church that continually sets people free – as *the* relevance potential for the church in secular social contexts.

The attitude-forming potential of Exodus pastoral care can be combined in a particular way with three options:

The first basic attitude-forming option lies in the Church's "post-exilic localization of God." This is prefigured and, so to speak, inscribed in the "ecclesiogenetic genealogy" and is based on an "aggiornamento" of the Exodus event, as it is linked to the appearance and person of the Baptist in the New Testament and is essential for Jesus' proclamation and practice of the Kingdom of God. The special moment of this "Exodus aggiornamento" lies in the fact that it lays bare to Israel the complete untenability of the individual and institutional forms of its localization of God, in the sense of a creative return to its own Exodus existence. This is preserved in a morally inhibited, cult-like rubricated, and fear-driven correctness of faith which has betrayed or is betraying the uncontainable potential for liberation for which the Exodus was intended and which the God of the Exodus stands for a God who, in the words of Schillebeeckx: "in the face of what has been realised reveals himself again and again as 'the absolutely new'. We must allow God his freedom in our newness – just as he must respect our freedom in the salvation we realise in the world ... *God is new every moment*, always the source of new possibilities" (Schillebeeckx 1984, 50–51 [emphasis in original]; Loiero 2009).

Such localization of God can be referred to as post-exilic as it can be connected to the transcendent quality of a basis for life and faith that – transferred to today – can no longer be realized in the patterns of thought and action of a gentrified and bourgeois Church and pastoral forms that are only too susceptible to being more Egypt than Canaan. Instead, the transcendent quality of a post-exilic localization of God lives from and moves toward occurrences and enablement of the Church that, in the force field of mutual mindfulness and appreciation, set people free to experience the localization of God not as a loss of self and a compulsion to give oneself up, but as a gain of self (Korsch 1997, 259) and a release for self-giving.

In a post-exilic localization of God, an Exodus attitude of ecclesial pastoral care thus aims for an ecclesiogenetic awareness of each person as the bearer of a unique relationship with God and of liberation and a genuine heir to all the promises of Canaan. This awareness will have a pastoral guiding effect, above all, on matters of the participatory and synodal form of the Church, namely, whether and how the dignity of baptism and confirmation has *a constitutive* and *not a constructed* meaning for an ecclesiogenesis in which justice for subjects and openness to the situation as well as plurality and diversity are not just well-meaning pastoral contingencies, but also their non-negotiable *conditio sine qua non*.

The post-exilic location of God in Exodus pastoral care thus pursues the learning processes and paths associated with a pastoral attitude that knows no discriminatory or marginalizing fears of contact or loss. Instead, it allows for different and yet equally important forms of enabling and events in the Church that are self-organizing and yet inconceivable without their community reference – ecclesiogenetic learning processes and paths that should not be lost in legal rigor driven by fear and loss but

which, in the words of Johann Baptist Metz, trust their own evangelical "radicalism" (Metz 1984, 18).

The second attitude-forming option of Exodus pastoral care can be located in the ecclesiogenetic footprint of the "defenseless superiority of God" (Schillebeeckx 1990, 170), using which Schillebeeckx seeks to interpret the omnipotence of God in the face of Jesus' death on the cross and his supposed failure. This refers to an option that breaks the entire seductive idolatry of pastoral concepts of power and authority in the essence of a God who is and remains alien to the rationale of power and violence of human "do-it-to-them" forms of radicalism or unconditional "either-or" cultures. In other words, a God who, in holding fast and persevering in his unconditional love for humanity, prefers to follow the path of Jesus' defenselessness on the cross rather than betraying the essence of his name as "Deus Humanissimus" by responding as "deus ex machina" with a radical, messianic act of power.

The ecclesiogenetic footprint of the "defenseless superiority of God" thus aims to keep hope alive in the power of the potential for repentance and reconciliation. It allows people to come together in spaces that open up the future, in which they confront each other with the radical nature of sin but also with the real option of reconciliation – as "people seeking and pronouncing judgment" and as "people seeking and pronouncing grace" (Fuchs 2000, 14) at the same time.

Anyone who affirms Exodus pastoral care from the "defenseless superiority of God" as attitude-forming will need to be aware, as argued by Walzer, that the paths to the promised land are not a messianic final battle. Instead, they are a long series of decisions, relapses, and constant reforms (Walzer 1988, 155) beyond power asymmetries, which require a culture of debate that allows us to struggle for the truth of the human-liberating gospel and to uncover its perversions. In other words, these paths must never ignore the real possibilities of hope for conversion and reconciliation. It is precisely in the context of our floundering world and the permanent revolutionary intensification of the present that the Church could rediscover her relevance to civil society as a performative sign of hope (Hoff 2022). However, the Church must first realize the possibility of this hope *ad intra* – and not just limited to the pastoral care of confession and repentance or prison chaplaincy, but as a fundamental characteristic of a Christian attitude (Loiero 2021a).

A third attitude-forming option of Exodus pastoral care is concealed in the role-reversal undertaking of theological hospitality, as developed by Rolf Gärtner as a model for parish pastoral care (Gärtner 2011). Gärtner shows how the post-exilic reflection, interpretation, and transformation of hospitality developed so that, in terms of the history of theology and philosophy, the divisive understanding of self and other could be overcome in favor of a unifying understanding of otherness. Under the sign of being different, the undertaking of hospitality thus implements an interactive event involving role reversal between host and guest. To put it another way: In the event of hospitality, a performative space opens up in which host and

guest experience each other mutually and self-effectively as recipients and givers – just as we Italians know from our word *ospite*, which we usually use for both the host and the guest.

It is the performative event of this self-effective exchange of roles that I find inspiring in the context of Exodus pastoral care for the Church that is reconnecting with the original concept of the "parish as a place of and for strangers," albeit involving the aspect of being different. It is transformed into a place of and for the people who encounter each other in their dignity and the right to be different. They are challenged to overcome all hierarchical and role patterns that lead to a tolerated or even promoted "culture of perpetrators" (Loiero 2012) – in Church and society – in a mutual exchange of roles between the giver and the receiver.

An Exodus attitude of hospitality thus calls for the learning of pastoral leadership attitude, which permits justice to be established in relation to resources and responsibility (Bauman 2019, 180–81) and which does not grant to any group or individual in the Church the paternalistic habitus of claiming the permanent right, without exception, to be the "hosting person" and reducing all others to a purely receiving guest status. Learning the attitude of hospitality requires the corresponding professionalization and competence acquisition processes for pastoral care and pastoral workers with basic intercultural sensitivities.

This intercultural dimension can, therefore, not only be narrowed to the questions of the hospitality and role reversal paradigm around migration and the integration of communities and missions who speak other languages within overall pastoral change processes. Instead, basic intercultural sensitivity should be understood as an essential competence that generally allows us to think and act in the three dimensions of plurality- and diversity-sensitive pastoral care, as these should provide pastoral guidance for finding and defining the location of the Church. These dimensions are the self-effective interplay and interaction of one's own spaces, the spaces of "others" and the spaces of the in-between (intermediate spaces). Only in the self-effective interplay and interaction of these three spatial dimensions will a truly participatory and synodal ecclesiogenesis be possible, which consistently rethinks community formation from the perspective of individuals and subjects (and not from the perspective of fitting individuals and subjects into predetermined community constellations), so that no one has to feel ignored, excluded, or colonized.

6. Exodus Pastoral Care as a Paradigm Shift That Shapes Attitudes and Provides Stability

A state of being experienced as an "Exodus being," human existence as Exodus existence, and pastoral care as Exodus pastoral care is the basic attitude of being practically

and factually caught up with this paradigm shift goes hand in hand with an urgency that can be recognized with Schillebeeckx in the "radical no" (Schillebeeckx 1990, 27). People express it, in particular, in the contexts of a floundering world and revolutionary compression in the present due to the most diverse "negative contrastive experiences" in Church and society. These contrastive experiences make it unmistakably clear that the reality of the Church and society as people experience it is unacceptable and full of contradictions. According to Schillebeeckx, this "radical no" is always accompanied by an "openness to a different situation ... to the unknown and to something better," which "certainly has a claim on our yes" (1983, 49).

7. Further Challenges

In the "post-exilic localization of God" of the Church, in the reference back to the "defenseless superiority of God" and in the "role reversal undertaking of theological hospitality," an attitude-forming and supportive paradigm shift in secular contexts proves to be possible and developable. This can certainly confront the trend of culture's religious emptiness or religion-free cultures critically and productively. The intended paradigm shift subjects the Church to the judgment of negative contrastive experiences and the radical veto of people inside and outside the Church – without having theologically sophisticated or sanctimoniously banal phrases ready as a quick answer. Instead, what is intended is a paradigm shift that allows the Church to find a new, self-effective stability in the "yes-claim" of the theological will and potential for liberation of her Exodus God. This is a "yes" whose credibility essentially depends on the courage of pastoral leaders to abandon all the supposed certainties of bourgeois pastoral and pastoral care concepts. It is not just for the moment, in the sense of a church-political survival strategy, but as attitude-forming new learning paths to the finding and determining of the place of the Church, which have a systemic-strategic *and at the same time* systemic-flexible character (and include corresponding professionalization and competence orientation processes of pastoral workers, Church leadership, and team development).

This liberation requires not only faith in the indomitable liberation potential of the Exodus God but also the boldness to take the first step to recognize and realize this liberation potential with corresponding options for a Christian religiousness. In this "first step," which has to be taken repeatedly, a pastorally guiding Exodus attitude finds its support again and again, as well as its corrective. Inspired by the Exodus event, such an attitude recognizes, above all, that without constantly taking the first step anew, there can be no Canaan, especially not in the newly differentiated expanses of secular and religious social contexts.

Conclusions

The cultural and religious studies considerations outlined above present a particular challenge for an attitude-forming paradigm shift in the Church and pastoral work. It makes a significant difference whether such a paradigm shift is addressed and communicated in religious contexts and those related to religion or in contexts entirely unrelated to religion. Any approaches and strategies presenting practical solutions to such a paradigm shift must, therefore, be just as plural and multi-layered as the present late-modern period itself.

One, if not *the* decisive question is whether and how the Church (*ad intra* and *ad extra*) can bring people together so they can enter into conversation through their religiously and secularly motivated narratives – as they seek a merging of horizons to manage their lives and their experience of "joy and hope, grief and fear" along the way (*GS* 1).

The character of this merging of horizons does not level out and cancel out the plurality and diversity of paths of life and faith. First and foremost, it appreciates them and is decisive for the credibility of the Church whose pastoral work proves the reality it stands for – namely, that of the "Deus Humanissimus," who always wishes to be experienced as a God who liberates people, thus expressing the innermost core of the "pastoral care" of Jesus.

The liberation option and dynamic of this "Deus Humanissimus" is and remains the Exodus event, which has always been and now continues to offer the potential for liberation for those who wished and still wish to be freed from the dead ends of bourgeois saturation and the disgrace of civilization – particularly those caused by faith. Finding the pivotal moment and self-effective moving force for the Church and pastoral work in the *aggiornamento* of this Exodus event is proving to present a new challenge because the liberation of people by God is and remains an eschatological factor.

In late-modern plural contexts, the Church no longer has a monopoly on interpreting what freedom potential means for people. However, if she accepts the paradigm of Exodus liberation as a pivotal moment and self-effective moving force for herself and her pastoral work, she will be able to develop a discursive capacity that enables the various narratives of experiences of liberation to merge horizons, as indicated above.

The Church's central act of *koinonia* (communion/community) should increase in significance in an ecclesiogenetic sense in such a way that the Church, establishing and moderating human and ecclesial communion, becomes a genuine "mediating factor" that "mediates and unifies the many different parts [...] and vice versa. The opposite of the unity expressed by communion is not the many, outside of it, but rather within it; the unity of the many who remain [...] However, communion always denotes the mediation of identity and difference – that which is distinct, different or

alien is brought together in unity through participation in a commonality, without differences being dissolved" (Greshake 1992, 95).

Creating human and ecclesial community in and with people who have been set free and claiming this where this has been denied to people should indeed always be the first stage of the Exodus character of Church and pastoral work, as she no longer recognizes or permits master-servant relationships – either for believers or for secular people.

Bibliography

Adorno, Theodor W. 1997. *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben*. 23rd ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Bauer, Thomas. 2018. *Die Vereindeutigung Der Welt: Über Den Verlust an Mehrdeutigkeit Und Vielfalt*. Stuttgart: Reclam.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2003. *Stadt Der Ängste, Stadt Der Hoffnungen*. Wien: Kanten.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2018. *Retrotopia*. 2nd ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2019. *Gemeinschaften auf der Suche nach Sicherheit in einer bedrohlichen Welt*. 5th ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Beck, Ulrich. 2020a. *Risikogesellschaft: Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne*. 24th ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Beck, Ulrich. 2020b. *Weltrisikogesellschaft auf der Suche nach der verlorenen Sicherheit*. 6th ed. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Berger, Peter L. 2013. "Nach dem Niedergang der Säkularisierungstheorie." In *Nach dem Niedergang der Säkularisierungstheorie: Mit Kommentaren von Detlef Pollack (ed.), Thomas Großbölting, Thomas Gutmann, Marianne Heimbach-Steins, Astrid Reuter und Ulrich Willems sowie einer Replik von Peter L. Berger*, edited by Detlef Pollack, 1–9. Münster: UniPrint; Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster.

Davie, Grace. 1994. *Religion in Britain since 1945*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Davie, Grace. 1997. "Believing without Belonging. A Framework for Religious Transmission." *Recherches Sociologiques et Anthropologiques*, no. 3: 17–37.

Davie, Grace. 2015. *Religion in Britain since 1945: A Persistent Paradox*. 2nd ed. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Fuchs, Ottmar. 2000. "Die Buße im Horizont des Jüngsten Gerichts – ein vergessener Zusammenhang." In *Doch bei dir ist Vergebung Bußgottesdienste*, edited by Anton Bauer, 13–34. Ostfildern: Schwabenverlag.

Gärtner, Rolf. 2011. *Seid jederzeit gastfreundlich: Ein Leitbild für heutige Gemeindepastoral*. Ostfildern: Grünewald.

Greshake, Gisbert. 1992. "Communio – Schlüsselbegriff der Dogmatik." In *Gemeinsam Kirche sein. Theorie und Praxis der Communio*, edited by Günter Biemer, 90–121. Freiburg: Herder.

Hoff, Gregor Maria. 2022. *Performative Theologie: Studien zur fundamentaltheologischen Theoriebildung*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Korsch, Dietrich. 1997. "Buße: Zur Theologischen Rekonstruktion Einer Religiösen Lebensform." In *Der ‚ganze Mensch'. Perspektiven Lebensgeschichtlicher Individualität: Fest-Schrift*

Für Dietrich Rössler Zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag, edited by Volker Drehsen, Dieter Henke, Reinhard Schmidt-Rost, and Wolfgang Steck, 249–62. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Loiero, Salvatore. 2009. "Schillebeeckx' Erfahrungstheologie als praktisch-hermeneutische Religions- und Kirchenkritik." In *Biblische Religionskritik: Kritik in, an und mit biblischen Texten: Beiträge des IBS 2007 in Vierzehnheiligen*, edited by Joachim Kügler and Ulrike Bechmann, 131–43. Münster: LIT.

Loiero, Salvatore. 2010. *Fundamentalmetanoia: Untersuchungen zu einem Ort eschato-praktischer Erfahrungs- und Erinnerungskultur*. Münster: LIT.

Loiero, Salvatore. 2012. "'Ernstfall Umkehr' Unter Der 'Kritik Praktischer Gnade.'" *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 121 (1): 72–78.

Loiero, Salvatore. 2014. "Berufen zur Freiheit der Tat: Das 'Phänomen erlernter Hilflosigkeit.'" *Schweizer Kirchenzeitung* 182 (45): 642.

Loiero, Salvatore. 2021a. "'Mein Recht will ich, nicht Almosen.' Vom christlich-katholischen 'Und' als 'Preis' Praktischer Barmherzigkeit." In *Das Prinzip Barmherzigkeit und die Theologie / Le Principe Miséricorde et La Théologie*, edited by Salvatore Loiero and François-Xavier Amherdt, 121–38. Basel: Schwabe.

Loiero, Salvatore. 2021b. "Pastoraler Byzantinismus? Von der notwendigen Differenzierung spiritueller und religiöser Erfahrungen: Zugänge zu einer differenzsensiblen Pragmatik erfahrungsbezogener Theologie." In *Pragmatik christlicher Heilshoffnung unter den Bedingungen der Säkularität*, edited by Ansgar Kreutzer, Salvatore Loiero, Andreas Odenthal, and Matthias Mohring-Hesse, 119–43. Basel: Schwabe.

Manemann, Jürgen. 2014. "Exoduspolitik – Politik ex memoria passionis." In *Das Politische und das Vorpolitische: Über die Wertgrundlagen der Demokratie*, edited by Michael Kühnlein, 339–59. Baden-Baden: Mohr Siebeck.

Manemann, Jürgen. 2021. *Revolutionäres Christentum: Ein Plädoyer*. Bielefeld: transcript.

Metz, Johann Baptist. 1984. *Jenseits bürgerlicher Religion: Reden über die Zukunft des Christentums*. 4th ed. Mainz: Grünewald.

Metz, Johann Baptist. 1992. *Glaube in Geschichte und Gesellschaft: Studien zu einer praktischen Fundamentaltheologie*. *Welt der Theologie*. 5th ed. Mainz: Grünewald.

Pollack, Detlef. 2021. "Religion in der Moderne." In *Säkularisierung und Religion. Europäische Wechselwirkungen*, edited by Irene Dingel and Christiane Tietz, 39–61. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Pollack, Detlef, and Olaf Müller. 2022. "Religion and the Churches." In *The Oxford Handbook of German Politics*, 381–95. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198817307.013.23.

Pollack, Detlef, and Gergely Rosta. 2022. *Religion in der Moderne: Ein internationaler Vergleich*. 2nd ed. Bad Langensalza: Campus.

Schillebeeckx, Edward. 1975. *Jesus: Die Geschichte von einem Lebenden*. 3rd ed. Freiburg: Herder.

Schillebeeckx, Edward. 1983. *Das Evangelium erzählen*. Düsseldorf: Patmos.

Schillebeeckx, Edward. 1984. *Gott ist Jeden tag neu: Ein Gespräch*. Mainz: Grünewald.

Schillebeeckx, Edward. 1990. *Menschen: Die Geschichte von Gott*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

Schmid, Konrad. 2023. *Das Exodusbuch heute lesen. Bibel heute lesen*. Zürich: TVZ.

Second Vatican Council. 1965. Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et Spes* (= *GS*).

Seibert, Barbara. 2017. *Glokalisierung: Ein Begriff reflektiert gesellschaftliche Realitäten: Einstieg und Debattenbeiträge*. 2nd ed. Berlin: LIT.

Stolz, Jörg, Arnd Bünker, Antonius Liedhegener, Eva Baumann-Neuhaus, Irene Becci, Zhargalma Dandarova Robert, Jeremy Senn, Pascal Tanner, Oliver Wäckerlig, and Urs Winter-Pfändler. 2022. *Religionstrend in der Schweiz: Religion, Spiritualität und Säkularität im gesellschaftlichen Wandel.* https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-36568-4.

Voas, David, and Alasdair Crockett. 2005. "Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging." *Sociology* 39 (1): 11–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038505048998.

Walzer, Michael. 1988. *Exodus und Revolution*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer.

Zulehner, Paul M. 2023. *Hoffnung für eine taumelnde Welt. Eine Pastoraltheologie für Europa*. Ostfildern: Grünewald.

Opcja preferencyjna na rzecz rodziny odpowiedzią Kościoła w Polsce na postępujący proces sekularyzacji

Preferential Option for the Family A Response of the Church in Poland to the Progressive Process of Secularisation

MAREK FIAŁKOWSKI (iD)

Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, marek.fialkowski@kul.pl

Streszczenie: W artykule postawiono pytanie, w jaki sposób Kościół może odpowiedzieć na wyzwanie sekularyzacji i przeciwstawić się jej skutkom. Przyjęto równocześnie założenie, że sekularyzacja nie jest zjawiskiem nieuchronnym, któremu należy poddać się poprzez przystosowanie do obecnej sytuacji, ale można wypracować właściwą odpowiedź na nie. Najbardziej odpowiednią reakcją jest priorytetowe potraktowanie duszpasterstwa małżeństwa i rodziny. W tym celu, poprzez analizę nauczania Kościoła i opracowań teologicznych, ukazany został ich potencjał, wyrażający się przede wszystkim w sakramencie małżeństwa oraz fenomenie Kościoła domowego. Strategia Kościoła wobec procesów sekularyzacji winna być skoncentrowana na odkrywaniu bogactwa sakramentu małżeństwa oraz wspieraniu rodzin w niełatwym procesie stawania się Kościołem domowym. Inne działania duszpasterskie Kościoła powinny być dostosowane i skoncentrowane na tej strategii, gdyż wzmacniając rodzinę jako Kościół domowy, same zyskują większą skuteczność.

Słowa kluczowe: sakrament małżeństwa, rodzina, duszpasterstwo rodzin, Kościół domowy, sekularyzacja

Abstract: The article asks how the Church can respond to the challenge of secularisation and counter its effects. At the same time, it is assumed that secularisation is not an inevitable phenomenon that one must surrender to by adapting to the current situation. Still, it is possible to develop an appropriate response to this phenomenon. The most appropriate response is prioritising the pastoral care of marriage and family. To this end, an analysis of the Church's teaching and theological studies was carried out to show their potential, expressed primarily in the sacrament of marriage and the phenomenon of domestic Church. The Church's strategy in the face of secularisation processes should be focused on discovering the richness of the sacrament of marriage and supporting families in the complex process of becoming a domestic Church. Other pastoral activities of the Church should be adapted and focused on this strategy, because by strengthening the family as the domestic Church, they become more effective.

Keywords: sacrament of marriage, family, family ministry, domestic Church, secularisation

Opisując zjawisko sekularyzacji, często się sięga do znanego określenia Petera L. Bergera, który rozumiał ją jako proces, w wyniku którego sektory społeczeństwa i kultury wyzwalają się spod dominacji instytucji i symboli religijnych (Berger 1997, 150). Wydaje się, że jednym z najbardziej istotnych pytań, jakie trzeba sobie zadać wobec tak opisywanego zjawiska, jest pytanie o nieuchronność sekularyzacji. Carl A. Anderson, odwołując się do krytyki, z jaką spotkała się teza sekularyzacyjna,

podkreśla, że twierdzenie o jej nieuchronności można uznać za swoisty mit. Jest on o tyle niebezpieczny, że może osłabić – i w pewnym stopniu jest to widoczne – odpowiedź na ten proces ze strony kultury i samej religii. Anderson twierdzi, że jeśli przyjmiemy nieuniknioność sekularyzmu, to najbardziej racjonalną odpowiedzią jest przystosowanie się. „Jednakże temu, co nie jest nieuniknione, można się przeciwstawić, a to czemu można się przeciwstawić, można powstrzymać" (Anderson 2023, 54–56).

Biorąc to pod uwagę należy postawić pytanie, jak można odpowiedzieć na wyzwanie sekularyzacji i przeciwstawić się jej skutkom. Przy czym chodzi nam przede wszystkim o reakcję Kościoła, często dziś marginalizowanego, a nawet odrzucanego. Poszukując odpowiedzi na to pytanie, trzeba unikać skrajnych rozwiązań proponujących z jednej strony odcięcie się od dialogu ze światem i poszukiwanie schronienia w izolacji od dynamicznych przemian, a z drugiej – naiwne i bezkrytyczne poddanie się silnym, lecz zmieniającym się prądom współczesności, stając się niemal otaczającym Kościół światem. Wydaje się, że najbardziej optymalnym miejscem, w którym może dokonać się trudny proces właściwej odpowiedzi na sekularyzację, jest rodzina.

Pozwala to sformułować tezę, że Kościół może wypracować adekwatną odpowiedź na procesy sekularyzacji, koncentrując się w swojej posłudze duszpasterskiej przede wszystkim na małżeństwie i rodzinie. One także odczuwają skutki sekularyzacji, której nie zawsze potrafią skutecznie się oprzeć, jednak historyczne doświadczenia zdają się potwierdzać, że mają ku temu odpowiedni potencjał. Rodzina oparta na sakramencie małżeństwa od początku chrześcijaństwa stanowiła przestrzeń, w której wzrastał i umacniał się Kościół, nawet podczas niekorzystnych dla Kościoła trendów i okoliczności. Właśnie sakrament małżeństwa stanowiący fundament oraz fenomen rodziny rozumianej jako Kościół domowy posłużą nam do ukazania możliwości tkwiących w najstarszej i trwałej strukturze społecznej, a także pozwolą wyciągnąć wnioski dla strategii Kościoła wobec naporu sekularyzacji.

1. Odkrywanie sakramentu małżeństwa

Uruchomienie potencjału małżeństwa i rodziny w dziedzinie przeciwdziałania skutkom sekularyzacji wymaga ponownego odkrycia wartości sakramentu małżeństwa. Rosnąca liczba rozwodów oraz związków nieformalnych świadczą o braku zrozumienia tego sakramentu. Jak uczy *Katechizm Kościoła katolickiego*, małżeństwo przynależy do sakramentów służących komunii i posłaniu, które udzielają szczególnej misji w Kościele i służą budowaniu Ludu Bożego (*KKK* 1534, 1211). Jako wspólnota życia i miłości zostało ustanowione przez Stwórcę i unormowane Jego prawami (*KDK* 48; *FC* 3, 11, 13; *KKK* 1603).

Można wyróżnić trzy charakterystyczne znamiona małżeństwa: opierając się na miłości jest ono totalne i radykalne, stanowi trwałą strukturę historii świata oraz trwa i rozwija się przez wszystkie pokolenia (Beinert 1980, 273). Małżeństwo jest najbardziej rozpowszechnionym powołaniem chrześcijańskim, któremu Jezus Chrystus przywrócił jego pierwotną formę, utraconą przez nie wskutek grzechu pierwszych rodziców, oraz oczyścił je z historycznych naleciałości – wielożeństwa i rozwodów. Podniósł je także do godności sakramentu (*AL* 71; Krzywda 2002, 42–43). Małżeństwo między ochrzczonymi stanowi znak szczególnej obecności Boga w życiu dwojga ludzi, łączących się nierozerwalnym węzłem przysięgi. Jako sakrament jest ono nie tylko trwaniem w miłości, lecz sposobem istnienia w Bogu przez Chrystusa mocą nadprzyrodzonej konsekracji dokonującej się w Duchu Świętym. Z tego sakramentu kobieta i mężczyzna czerpią nadprzyrodzone siły do wiernego i świętego wypełniania swoich obowiązków i zadań aż do śmierci (Papieska Komisja do spraw Rodziny 1976, 98–99).

Kobieta i mężczyzna poprzez sakrament małżeństwa są powołani do przeżywania wspólnoty osób pojętej jako wyraz, znak i symbol mistycznej więzi Chrystusa z Kościołem. Bóg, okazując pełne zaufanie człowiekowi, osobiście wzywa go do wypełnienia tego zadania, udzielając mu niezbędnej łaski. Jezus towarzyszy małżonkom na drodze ich życia, na którą ich kieruje, obdarowując szczególną łaską wynikającą z sakramentu małżeństwa. Powołanie małżeńskie jest środkiem wzajemnego uświęcenia osób w tym związku (zob. *KKK* 1661). Dar sakramentu małżeństwa jest dla nich łaską, pomocą i wsparciem we wspólnym życiu, jest także powołaniem i przykazaniem, by pozostali sobie wierni na zawsze, pomimo rozmaitych prób i trudności, jakie mogą ich spotkać. Sakramentalny związek jest zatem sposobem związania się z Bogiem, formą pójścia za Chrystusem – po prostu: właściwą małżonkom drogą do świętości (Rada do spraw Rodziny KEP 2009, 30).

Małżeństwo nie istnieje samo dla siebie, lecz zgodnie z zamysłem Bożym stanowi podstawę szerszej wspólnoty rodzinnej (*FC* 13). Miłość dwojga osób nastawiona jest na rodzenie i wychowanie dzieci (*KDK* 48). Dzieci zaś są „najwspanialszym darem małżeństwa i w największym stopniu przyczyniają się do dobra samych rodziców" (*KDK* 50). Przez płodną miłość małżeńską, sakramentalny związek daje początek chrześcijańskiej rodzinie. W niej zaś mogą najpełniej rozwijać się dwie najważniejsze wartości osobowe – życie i miłość. Życie rodzinne jest powołaniem Bożym i dlatego wszyscy jego uczestnicy otrzymują łaskę i obowiązek budowania prawdziwej wspólnoty osób (Skowronek 1996, 45–48). Zdaniem Hansa Ursa von Balthasara, Kościół, sprawując sakramenty, realizuje zamysł swego Pana, aby człowiekowi w decydujących sytuacjach jego egzystencji – czy to unikalnych i niepowtarzalnych (np. chrzest, bierzmowanie), czy też powtarzalnych – dać uczestnictwo w obiektywnej świętości Boga w Jego Kościele (Balthasar 2005, 303).

W sakramencie małżeństwa Bóg szczodrze obdarza kobietę i mężczyznę swoją łaską. Takie spotkanie i odpowiedź wymagają od nich pełnej aktywności wyrażającej

się realizacją przyjętych zobowiązań. Wydaje się, że nie ma żadnej dziedziny ludzkiego życia, od której w równym stopniu nie zależałoby szczęście mężczyzny i kobiety niż od miłości przybierającej konkretny kształt w małżeństwie i rodzinie. W nich wiara styka się blisko z życiem, gdyż należy ono zarówno do porządku stworzenia, jak i odkupienia (Kasper 1977, 9). Wiara obejmuje, wyjaśnia i stawia we właściwym świetle wszystkie aspekty związku sakramentalnego. Bóg, który jest miłością (1 J 4,8.6), ustanowił małżeństwo, aby zrealizować pośród ludzi swój projekt miłości (*FC* 17), zatem omawiane powołanie wzywa do miłości małżeńskiej (Fiałkowski 2010, 67–74).

Pogłębione rozumienie sakramentu małżeństwa otwiera nowe spojrzenie na wspólne życie i wypływające z niego obowiązki. Stanowi także swego rodzaju świadectwo, a niekiedy i wyzwanie dla innych, tak ważne wobec wszechobecnego dziś lekceważenia zasad. Wierność złożonym przyrzeczeniom małżeńskim i postępowanie zgodne z zamysłem Boga względem małżeństwa i rodziny budują zaporę dyktaturze relatywizmu i tymczasowości. Idzie także pod prąd przekonaniu, że wszystko zależy od człowieka i jego decyzji. Sakrament przypomina bowiem, że każdy z ludzi, a zwłaszcza ci, którzy decydują się na wspólne życie, potrzebują Bożej łaski i wsparcia, co łączy się z otwarciem na Boga i Jego dary. Odcięcie się od tego źródła grozi obumieraniem miłości i konsekwentnie prowadzi do osłabienia więzi małżeńskich.

2. Budowanie Kościoła domowego

Zdaniem Kurta Kocha rodzina jako podstawowa komórka społeczna narażona jest dziś na liczne niebezpieczeństwa, dlatego musi być zakotwiczona w większej rodzinie, a mianowicie w wielkiej rodzinie Kościoła, który daje jej wsparcie i ochronę. Zarówno Kościół jako wielka rodzina Boża, jak i poszczególne rodziny jako Kościoły domowe potrzebują siebie nawzajem i wspierają się wzajemnie (Koch 2010, 208; Czaja 2009, 137).

Wspólnotę Ludu Bożego tworzą poszczególne rodziny stanowiące podmiot ewangelizacji, a sakramentalne małżeństwo i rodzina, podobnie jak Kościół, same są rzeczywistością, w której człowiek znajduje przestrzeń spotkania z Bogiem. Wzajemne podobieństwo i zależność między wspólnotą Kościoła a chrześcijańską rodziną dobrze oddaje określenie „Kościół domowy". Rodzina chrześcijańska gromadzi się nie tylko w imię Chrystusa, ale na mocy znacznie silniejszego z Nim związku. Małżeństwo jest sakramentem i realizuje posłannictwo oznaczania i urzeczywistniania Kościoła. Określenie małżeństwa i rodziny „domowym Kościołem" opiera się właśnie na tym sakramencie (Żurowski 1978, 51).

Modelem organizacji tworzącego się w początkach chrześcijaństwa Kościoła był Kościół domowy, żyjący Chrystusem i ukazujący Go innym (zob. *AL* 15; Longosz 2004, 35; Gnilka 2002, 288–89). Rodzina w Kościele pierwotnym pełniła stosunkowo

szeroką funkcję religijną, będąc przekazicielką prawd wiary i moralności. Chrystologiczno-eklezjalny sens małżeństwa, przyznawany przez św. Pawła życiu małżeńskiemu i rodzinnemu (Ef 5,21–33), wyraźnie wskazywał na doniosłą rolę wychowania religijnego w rodzinie, która była przedmiotem i zarazem podmiotem tego wychowania. Obok katechumenatu kościelnego istniał bowiem katechumenat rodzinny, zwany także domowym, który przetrwał niemal do późnego średniowiecza. Rodzina w Kościele pierwotnym była miejscem przekazywania prawd wiary, wprowadzania w życie liturgiczne Kościoła i kształtowania postawy apostolskiej (Poręba 1991, 94).

Duży wpływ na ukształtowanie się rodziny jako Kościoła domowego wywarła rodzina żydowska, szczególnie funkcjonująca w realiach diaspory, nierzadko w niesprzyjającym jej środowisku. Tworzyła ona zamknięte na wpływy zewnętrzne sanktuarium, jakby domową synagogę, w której ojciec – jak kapłan – przewodniczył codziennej modlitwie i śpiewowi psalmów i – jak nauczyciel – objaśniał Biblię, uczył Tory i prawd religijnych, przekazywał zasady moralne i przypominał o najważniejszych wydarzeniach z historii Izraela (Longosz 2010, 42). Warto też podkreślić, że w swojej strukturze rodziny wczesnochrześcijańskie nie różniły się zasadniczo od grecko-rzymskiej rodziny starożytnej. Jednak ich sposób życia, oparty na Ewangelii, odróżniał je od rodzin pogańskich, a wzorując się na Świętej Rodzinie, stawały się one Kościołami domowymi (Longosz 2004, 28–30).

To, co szczególnie istotne w konfrontacji ze współczesnymi procesami sekularyzacji, to przekonanie, że rodzina jako domowy Kościół jest naturalnym miejscem rozwoju życia ludzkiego i chrześcijańskiego swoich członków. W niej bowiem człowiek od początku swego życia powinien zdobywać autentyczne doświadczenie Kościoła i rozwijać w sobie „zmysł Kościoła" (por. *DWCH* 3; Miras and Bañares 2009, 173). Kościół znajduje w rodzinie zrodzonej z sakramentu małżeństwa swoją kolebkę i miejsce, w którym wchodzi w pokolenia ludzkie, a one wchodzą w Kościół (*FC* 15; Zarembski 2010, 190). Jak podkreślał Benedykt XVI, Kościół jest budowany przez rodziny, małe Kościoły domowe (Benedykt XVI 2005, 32).

Rodzina wpisana w tajemnicę Kościoła realizuje jego trzy podstawowe funkcje: nauczycielską, kapłańską i pasterską (*FC* 50). Poprzez nie Kościół wypełnia swoje zadania, aktualizując i kontynuując zbawcze dzieło Chrystusa. Dzięki tym podstawowym funkcjom Kościół staje się rzeczywistością konkretną i uchwytną także w rodzinie (Wysocki 1990, 15; Fiałkowski 2013, 707–17).

W kontekście rozważań dotyczących odpowiedzi Kościoła na sekularyzację warto sobie uświadomić, że Kościół w pierwotnym sensie był Kościołem domowym, a rodzinę postrzegano jako podstawową komórkę Kościoła. Życie w Kościołach domowych można więc traktować jako pierwotną społeczną postać chrześcijańskiej wiary. Benedykt XVI uważał, że wielkiemu wkładowi chrześcijańskiego małżeństwa i rodziny zawdzięczamy fakt przetrwania chrześcijaństwa aż do naszego pokolenia. Rodziny mają wciąż do odegrania niezastąpioną rolę w przekazywaniu wiary przyszłym pokoleniom (zob. Koch 2010, 217–23).

Należy pamiętać, że rodziny chrześcijańskie niejednokrotnie rozwijały się w niesprzyjających warunkach, często nawet wrogich Kościołowi i samej rodzinie. Pomimo tych trudności wykazały się dużą odpornością stając się nierzadko jedynym miejscem, w którym można było głosić i wcielać w życie Ewangelię, modlić się i praktykować miłosierdzie. Wystarczy tylko przywołać czasy starożytne, w których chrześcijanie mierzyli się z rozwiniętą kulturą pogańską, licznymi oskarżeniami, a także z prześladowaniami. Podobne sytuacje zdarzały się w całej historii Kościoła, kiedy do głosu dochodziły ideologie marginalizujące lub wrogo nastawione do chrześcijaństwa. Ostatnie lata, naznaczone pandemią COVID-19, a w konsekwencji przymusowym ograniczeniem aktywności i kontaktów, zdają się potwierdzać niezastąpioną rolę rodziny w podtrzymywaniu wiary. Zresztą dla wielu chrześcijan była to także okazja, aby uświadomić sobie, czym jest Kościół domowy, który winien urzeczywistniać się w rodzinie.

3. Duszpasterstwo skoncentrowane ma małżeństwie i rodzinie

W odpowiedzi na pytanie o strategię Kościoła wobec różnych przejawów sekularyzacji trzeba wskazać na możliwości małżeństwa i rodziny. Jest to środowisko o bardzo dużych możliwościach ewangelizacyjnych, zdolne przekazać wiarę przyszłym pokoleniom, a także ustrzec ją przed wypaczeniami i osłabieniem. Wykorzystując łaskę sakramentu małżeństwa, jest zdolne oprzeć się rozmaitym trudnościom i przeszkodom, mając także potencjał budowania małego Kościoła. Jak już wspomniano, wykazuje ono również dużą odporność na rozmaite trudności. Mimo różnych kryzysów, rodzina i posiadanie własnych dzieci, szczęśliwe życie małżeńskie i rodzinne, wciąż są dla większości Polaków istotnymi wartościami (zob. Mariański 2021, 619–64).

Taka sytuacja skłania do przeorientowania duszpasterstwa na małżeństwo i rodzinę. Ten wysiłek, szczególnie zaś formacja do odkrywania sakramentu małżeństwa jako fundamentu rodziny oraz systematyczne budowanie jej jako domowego Kościoła, zaowocuje większą aktywnością na innych polach posługi Kościoła. Nie ujmując nic z wysiłków i dużego nakładu pracy na polu duszpasterstwa młodzieży i dzieci, nietrudno zauważyć, że nie zawsze przynoszą one oczekiwane skutki. Najlepsze bowiem rozwiązania, środki i metody stosowane w ramach takiej posługi Kościoła muszą znaleźć wsparcie w najważniejszym dla dzieci i młodzieży środowisku, jakim jest rodzina. Jeżeli nie rozwija się ona jako Kościół domowy, młody człowiek nie ma środowiska i zaplecza, gdzie mógłby wzrastać i rozwijać w sobie przekazane mu wartości. Jeżeli jeszcze jego środowisko rówieśnicze nie przyjmuje wartości chrześcijańskich, będzie mu bardzo trudno przyjąć je za swoje i nimi żyć.

Każdy z wierzących, aby żyć autentycznie po chrześcijańsku, potrzebuje otoczenia, w którym wiara jest otwarcie akceptowana, gdzie o niej się mówi i nią żyje.

Coraz liczniejsi chrześcijanie wychowują się i pracują w środowiskach, które nie podzielają ich wiary w Boga. Chodzi więc o budowanie w rodzinie takiej przestrzeni, w której domownicy nie tylko wyznają tę samą wiarę w Boga, ale starają się nią dzielić, swobodnie o niej mówić, spotykając się równocześnie ze zrozumieniem i wsparciem ze strony innych członków rodziny. Ma to obecnie szczególne znaczenie, bo we współczesnym świecie nierzadko dominuje postawa ukrywania swoich przekonań religijnych, które ewentualnie się toleruje jako prywatne, ale ich publiczne wyrażanie jest w niektórych miejscach uważane za nietakt, a nawet za przejaw obrażania wyznawców innych religii lub niewierzących (Ratzinger 1999, 78; zob. Fiałkowski 2014, 216).

Członkowie rodziny mogą także spotkać w niej autentyczny, żywy Kościół, a w bezpośrednich i osobowych relacjach doświadczyć wspólnotowości Kościoła. Sprzyja to głębszemu i bardziej osobowemu przeżywaniu wiary. Ponadto wpływa to na budowanie lepszych stosunków międzyludzkich, które pozwalają na owocniejsze przyjęcie słowa Bożego, rewizję życia i refleksję nad nim w świetle Ewangelii (Śmigiel 2015, 39–41).

Wobec trudności, jakie przynosi postępujące zjawisko sekularyzacji, należy myśleć o tworzeniu elit chrześcijańskich, które mogą mieć zasadniczy wpływ na kształtowanie się postaw i idei w społeczeństwie. Nie chodzi przy tym o grupy odgradzające się od innych, lekceważące świat i jego sprawy, czy też przekonane o swojej wielkości, co stanowi raczej przejaw sekciarstwa. W dobie upadku i kwestionowania autorytetów, w atmosferze szerzącego się relatywizmu konieczne jest tworzenie swoistych punktów odniesienia, jasno i klarownie prezentujących prawdę i stanowiących coś na kształt drogowskazu pokazującego właściwy kierunek i cel ludzkiego życia.

Takie elity można budować na fundamencie rodzin żyjących autentycznie wiarą, podejmujących wysiłek budowania domowego Kościoła. One same mogą łączyć się w we wspólnoty tworzące swego rodzaje elity zdolne do podejmowania apostolstwa w środowisku, w którym żyją. Z nich także będą się rekrutować świadomi i odpowiedzialni katolicy, podejmujący niezbędne aktywności w Kościele i świecie. To właśnie odpowiednia troska Kościoła o małżeństwo i rodzinę daje szansę na uformowanie dojrzałych i odpowiedzialnych katolików, którzy mogą skutecznie podjąć dzieło ewangelizacji, przyczyniając się równocześnie do owocnego rozwoju innych duszpasterstw, np. dzieci, młodzieży (zob. Fiałkowski 2018, 243–45).

Z tym łączy się inna ważna kwestia – formacji dorosłych, którzy będą w stanie podjąć się zadania budowania Kościoła w swoich rodzinach. Fundamenty takiej formacji otrzymują oni właśnie w rodzinach. Niestety chyba zbyt łatwo zakłada się dziś, że dorośli jakoś sobie sami poradzą, korzystając z tego, co już nabyli. Tymczasem nie wynoszą oni ze swoich rodzinnych środowisk należytej formacji, którą później próbuje się uzupełnić, co nie jest zadaniem łatwym. Duszpasterze skupieni na katechizacji dzieci i młodzieży nie zawsze mają dobrze przemyślaną strategię dla dorosłych, którzy łączą się w małżeństwa i budują rodziny (Fiałkowski 2016, 317–18).

Koncentracja na duszpasterstwie rodzin sprzyja także budzeniu świadomości, że ona sama jest podmiotem duszpasterstwa. Papież Franciszek podkreśla, że rodzina staje się podmiotem działalności duszpasterskiej poprzez bezpośrednie głoszenie Ewangelii i różnorodne formy świadectwa, np. solidarności z ubogimi, otwarcia na różnorodność osób, ochrony stworzenia, solidarności moralnej i materialnej wobec innych rodzin, zaangażowanie na rzecz promocji dobra wspólnego, przemianę niesprawiedliwych struktur społecznych. Doświadczenie miłości Ojca, który wspiera i umożliwia rozwój, oraz obecności Jezusa Chrystusa uzdalnia rodzinę do stawienia czoła wszystkim burzom i wszystkim etapom życia. „Tylko na podstawie tego doświadczenia, duszpasterstwo rodzinne będzie mogło sprawić, aby rodziny były równocześnie Kościołami domowymi i ewangelicznym zaczynem w społeczeństwie" (*AL* 290).

W duszpasterskiej posłudze Kościoła w Polsce należy wykorzystać aktywność samych rodzin. Wymaga to wysiłku formacyjnego, który powinien wskazać liczne pola i możliwości zaangażowania apostolskiego rodziny w społeczności lokalnej. Chodzi o to, aby rodzina poczuła się podmiotem apostolstwa i odnalazła swoje miejsce na współczesnych areopagach kultury, gospodarki i polityki. Jest to szczególnie ważne w dziedzinie polityki, w której widoczna jest absencja katolików świeckich, a zwłaszcza członków chrześcijańskich rodzin, których znaczenie w kreowaniu polityki prorodzinnej trudno przecenić. Apostolstwo we wskazanych, niełatwych obszarach współczesnego świata jest przecież domeną katolików świeckich, którzy mają się uświęcać, realizując swoje powołanie w świecie.

Konieczne jest także formowanie rodziny do czynnego zaangażowania w Kościele. Można niekiedy odnieść wrażenie, że bardzo dużo wkłada się wysiłku w rozmaite działania duszpasterskie służące rodzinie, co jest potrzebne, ale równocześnie zbyt mało pobudza się samą rodzinę do zaangażowania się w życie Kościoła. Może to konserwować bierność i roszczeniowość, zamiast kształtować poczucie podmiotowości i odpowiedzialność za Kościół. Rodzi to postulat wspierania i wzmacniania rozmaitych zrzeszeń skupiających rodziny, wskazywanie możliwości apostolskiego zaangażowania się rodziny w życie parafii i diecezji oraz powierzanie odpowiedzialnych zadań we wspólnocie Kościoła. Wszystkie wymienione działania służą uświadomieniu sobie przez rodzinę jej zadań apostolskich, a także wskazywaniu jej konkretnych zadań apostolskich tak, aby stawała się ona życiodajną komórką społeczeństwa i wspólnoty kościelnej (Fiałkowski 2016, 166–67).

Zakończenie

Przyjmując założenie, że sekularyzacja nie musi być nieuchronną siłą, której trzeba się podporządkować poprzez przystosowanie się do jej skutków, warto skoncentrować się w duszpasterstwie na małżeństwie i rodzinie. Instytucja rodziny zbudowanej

na fundamencie sakramentu małżeństwa posiada bowiem duży potencjał, który odpowiednio wykorzystany, może stanowić znaczącą odpowiedź na wyzwania procesów sekularyzacyjnych. Płynące z wiary przekonanie, że sakrament udziela małżonkom potrzebnej łaski do wspólnego życia i realizowania swojej niepowtarzalnej drogi do świętości, domaga się wysiłku odkrycia, zrozumienia i wiary w ten szczególny dar Bożej miłości. Jego rozpoznanie i wykorzystanie stanowi fundament budowania rodziny jako domowego Kościoła, w którym członkowie rodziny zostają wprowadzeni w wiarę, uczą się nią żyć, oddawać cześć Bogu, służyć drugiemu człowiekowi i rozpoznawać swoje powołanie. Wobec rozmaitych nacisków i niebezpieczeństw płynących ze strony współczesnych nurtów sekularyzacyjnych właśnie rodzina jako Kościół domowy stanowi ważne miejsce, które należy wzmacniać i otoczyć szczególną troską duszpasterską. Wszystkie inne duszpasterstwa trzeba w pewnym stopniu podporządkować szeroko rozumianemu duszpasterstwu małżeństw i rodzin, zarówno w fazie przygotowania do sakramentu małżeństwa, jak i podczas budowania domowego Kościoła. Skuteczność wszelkich działań duszpasterskich Kościoła jest bowiem zależna od kondycji małżeństwa i rodziny rozumianej jako domowy Kościół.

Bibliografia

Anderson, Carl Albert. 2023. "Wykład. Jan Paweł II w XX wieku." In *Profesor Carl A. Anderson: doktor Honoris Causa Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II*, 51–63. Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II.

Balthasar, Hans Urs von. 2005. *Teologika*. Vol. 3, *Duch prawdy*. Kraków: WAM.

Beinert, Wolfgang. 1980. "Ehe und Kirche." *Una Sancta* 35: 271–78.

Benedykt XVI. 2005. "Rodzina chrześcijańska wspólnotą wychowania i wiary. Przemówienie do uczestników Kongresu Diecezji Rzymskiej." *L'Osservatore Romano* 26 (9): 30–33.

Berger, Peter L. 1997. *Święty baldachim: Elementy socjologicznej teorii religii*. Translated by Włodzimierz Kurdziel. Kraków: Nomos.

Czaja, Andrzej. 2009. "Rodzina jako «Kościół domowy». Specyfika i uwarunkowania eklezjalności rodziny chrześcijańskiej." In *Rodzina wobec współczesnych wyzwań społeczno-kulturowych*, edited by Julia Gorbaniuk and Beata Parysiewicz, 131–40. Wydawnictwo KUL.

Fiałkowski, Marek. 2010. *Formacja chrześcijańska katolików świeckich w świetle nauczania Kościoła Współczesnego: Studium teologicznopastoralne*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Fiałkowski, Marek. 2013. "Rodzina jako Kościół domowy." In *Duszpasterstwo rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, edited by Ryszard Kamiński, Grzegorz Pyźlak, and Jacek Goleń, 703–17. Lublin: Bonus Liber.

Fiałkowski, Marek. 2014. "Małe grupy religijne środowiskiem ewangelizacji młodzieży." *Warszawskie Studia Pastoralne* 9 (1): 213–28.

Fiałkowski, Marek. 2016. "Działalność apostolska rodziny w środowisku lokalnym." In *Duszpasterstwo rodzin w parafii*, edited by Jacek Goleń and Dariusz Lipiec, 153–67. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Fiałkowski, Marek. 2018. "Rola zrzeszeń religijnych we wspólnotowym towarzyszeniu młodzieży w rozwoju wiary." In *Duszpasterstwo młodzieży w Polsce wobec współczesnych przemian*, edited by Piotr Ochotny, Mateusz Jakub Tutak, and Tomasz Wielebski, 235–58. Gotów.

Franciszek. 2016. Adhortacja apostolska *Amoris laetitia* (= *AL*).

Gnilka, Joachim. 2002. *Teologia Nowego Testamentu*. Translated by Wiesław Szymona. Kraków: Wydawnictwo M.

Jan Paweł II. 1981. Adhortacja apostolska *Familiaris consortio* (= *FC*).

Kasper, Walter. 1977. *Zur Theologie der christlichen Ehe*. Mainz: Grünewald.

Katechizm Kościoła Katolickiego. 2002. Poznań: Pallottinum (= *KKK*).

Koch, Kurt. 2010. "Rodzina jako Kościół domowy w myśli Benedykta XVI." In *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, edited by Antoni Tomkiewicz and Włodzimierz Wieczorek, 207–30. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Krzywda, Józef. 2002. "Sakramentalność przymierza małżeńskiego w świetle nowego prawa." In *Sakramentalność małżeństwa*, edited by Zdzisław Józef Kijas and Józef Krzywda, 37–52. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PAT.

Longosz, Stanisław. 2004. "Rodzina wczesnochrześcijańska Kościołem domowym." *Roczniki Teologiczne* 51 (10): 27–56.

Longosz, Stanisław. 2010. "Geneza pojęcia «rodzina Kościołem domowym» w tradycji patrystycznej." In *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, edited by Antoni Tomkiewicz and Włodzimierz Wieczorek, 35–45. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Mariański, Janusz. 2021. "Dom rodzinny w opinii młodzieży polskiej." In *Małe Miasta. Dom polski w refleksji badawczej*, edited by Mariusz Zemło, 619–64. Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku.

Miras, Jorge, and Juan Ignacio Bañares. 2009. *Małżeństwo i rodzina: Wprowadzenie teologiczne*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Świętego Wojciecha.

Papieska Komisja do spraw Rodziny. 1976. "Małżeństwo sakramentem." *Życie i Myśl* 25 (6): 98–99.

Poręba, Piotr. 1991. "Rodzina chrześcijańska «małym Kościołem»." In *Wychowanie w rodzinie*, edited by Franciszek Adamski, 93–110. Kraków: WAM.

Rada do spraw Rodziny Konferencji Episkopatu Polski. 2009. *Służyć prawdzie o małżeństwie i rodzinie. Dokumenty Konferencji Episkopatu Polski*. Warszawa: Biblos.

Ratzinger, Joseph. 1999. "Ruchy kościelne i ich teologiczne miejsce." *Communio* 19 (6): 78–102.

Skowronek, Alfons. 1996. *Małżeństwo i kapłaństwo jako spotęgowanie chrześcijańskiej egzystencji*. Włocławek: Włocławskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne.

Sobór Watykański II. 1965a. Deklaracja o wychowaniu chrześcijańskim *Gravissimum educationis* (= *DWCH*).

Sobór Watykański II. 1965b. Konstytucja duszpasterska o Kościele w świecie współczesnym *Gaudium et spes* (= *KDK*).

Śmigiel, Wiesław. 2015. *Eklezjalność zrzeszeń religijnych*. Pelplin: Bernardinum.

Wysocki, Józef. 1990. *Rytuał rodzinny. Aby rodzina była bardziej Kościołem*. 9th ed. Olsztyn: Warmińskie Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne.

Zarembski, Zbigniew. 2010. "Kościół domowy w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II." In *Rodzina jako Kościół domowy*, edited by Antoni Tomkiewicz and Włodzimierz Wieczorek, 189–204. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Żurowski, Marian. 1978. "Rodzina «domowym Kościołem»." *Chrześcijanin w Świecie* 10 (12): 44–70.

Discovering the Child? Individualization Processes of Catholic Religious Education in the Horizon of Secularization since 1900

ALEXANDER MAIER ID

Saarland University, alexander.maier@uni-saarland.de

Abstract: At the beginning of the 20th century, early processes of secularization – especially in working-class families living in large cities – and inadequate teaching methods led to a crisis of Catholic religious education. Teachers and professors highlighted that it was becoming more and more difficult for religious education to reach students and to ensure that they become devoted members of the Church. In this situation, a catechetical movement was established, which was mainly situated in Munich and Vienna, where teachers, catechists, and academics discussed reforms of the commonly used teaching methods in religious education. Conferences and the foundation of journals followed. It is at least from this point that the process of modernization in the field of religious education in the German-speaking context begins. This modernization gained traction after the Second Vatican Council and was also promoted by the phenomenon of secularization and pluralization after the 1960s. Against this background, the essay will address the following questions: What led to the modernization of religious education that began around 1900? What role was played by the new openness of catechists and theologians for education science and the (religious) pluralization of society? To answer this question, the article will focus on developments between 1900 and the 1920s, during the 1970s, and the more or less topical discussion about the concept of 'theology of children' since the late 1990s. This study will also ask whether this development can be described as the discovery of the child in theology and religious education. Finally, this paper asks what consequences this development has for a denominational religious education in state schools today and in the future.

Keywords: Munich method, secularization, individualization, religious education, theology of children, dogma, non-denominational students

Nowadays, religious education in German-speaking countries is characterized by a high degree of individualization. This does not only apply to the protestant context but also to the Catholic one, as remarked by Werner Simon (2001, 221). This individualization of denominational religious education can certainly be explained by secularization processes in society. However, it is argued here that individualization can also be understood as a consequence of a gradual pedagogical modernization of the school subject religious education. According to this view, catechetics and scientific religious education itself initiated and advanced this process. This contribution of religious education teachers and religious educationalists at universities to the individualization of religious learning processes in schools was not only a reaction to secularization, but also an effort to facilitate the religious education

and religiousness of adolescents and – at least in the further course – also a form of advocacy for the interests of the students vis-à-vis the doctrine of faith. This placed the students at the center of religious education processes and ultimately resolved the ambivalence of Christianity toward the subject in its favor. Although there is still a critical glance concerning religious individualization on the part of Church representatives or theologians, it can be stated that religious learning processes cannot deny the individuality of students, or also adult learners. Religious educationalists who emphasize this are no longer called 'subjective theologians,' as Johann Baptist von Hirscher (1788–1865), one of the forefathers of modern religious educational science at the beginning of the 19th century (Biesinger 1989). Because this was a 'dirty word' for him, he felt compelled to defend himself against it.[1] Those days are over, but religious educationalists and the school subject religious educations is faced with new challenges in the context of individualization and secularization.

The subsequent analysis is intended to address the following questions: What led to the modernization of religious education that started around 1900? What role was played by the new openness of catechists and theologians toward pedagogy and didactics? To answer these questions, the article will focus on developments between 1900 and the 1920s, during the 1970s, and the more or less topical discussion about the concept of 'theology of children' (*Kindertheologie*) since the late 1990s. This leads to the question, of whether one can describe these processes of development in the field of religious education as a discovery of children. Finally, the problem that arises is – what does the actual advanced individualization of religious education and the secularization of society mean for the field of religious learning in the future? This article focuses on the development and discussion of religious education in German-speaking countries. Even though there are different forms of organization of religious education here, the situation is comparable and there is a close exchange of scientific knowledge. In other countries, the development looks different in some cases and ranges from a very strong secularization such as in France or the Netherlands to a rather slower secularization process such as in Poland (Joas 2004, 14–15; Schreiner 2015, 122; Mąkosa 2017, 21).

The relationship between Christian revelation and the human subject has always been ambivalent. Although, as Charles Taylor notes, one of the characteristics of Christianity is personality orientation, it was precisely those who cultivated

---

[1]   Hirscher's reviewer accused him of questioning the Church's objective faith through an individualized theology or catechetics. He countered his opponents: "Ich habe … die Lehre, welche mir die Kirche zu glauben vorstellt, so gut zu fassen gesucht, als es gehen wollte; ich habe sie in meine Sprache übersetzt …; ich habe sie in dieser Weise dann Andern wiedergegeben, und viele haben sich dadurch unterrichtet und angeregt gesehen. Gewiß habe ich damit das objective, d.h. formulierte Wort der Kirche nicht schmälern wollen. Deßungeachtet haben Menschen mir mißtraut, ob ich auch der Kirchenlehre treu? Und haben mich einen subjectiven Theologen genannt." (Simon 1997, 9–10)

a particularly individual relationship with God, i.e., above all the mystics or those who also wanted to make such a relationship possible for lay people – Taylor calls them religious virtuosos – who were quickly exposed to the suspicion of heresy (Taylor 2013, 30–31). Examples include the medieval mystic and scholar Meister Eckhart (around 1260–1328), who is a central reference for the concept of education, or Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), the founder of the Jesuit congregation, who offered spiritual exercises for ordinary rural people after his conversion, which made him a suspect for the Inquisition (Kiechle 2001, 36). However, even apart from such rather elitist figures in the history of piety, subjectiveness has marked its presence in Christianity – sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker – especially in the field of religious education. This applies to the catechumenate in antiquity, the Middle Ages with its cathedral schools and the annual obligation to confess and take communion at Easter, as well as the Reformation and Enlightenment in the early modern period (Gemeinhardt 2022, 9; Maier 2022, 17; Gronover 2012, 101–5; Taylor 2013, 27–30; Simon 1997, 11). The relationship between revelation and subject had to be constantly rebalanced in religious education. Also, during the ultramontane and antiliberal period of the Catholic Church, aspects of individualized piety were possible (Bucher 1998, 48–50 and 210). The fact that dogma always remained the decisive point of reference for the subject was hardly questioned because faith and the Church had a stabilizing effort on society. In addition, Christianity was also part of the state order or even guaranteed it, as can be seen, for example, from the fact that the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795–1861) blamed the 'irreligious wisdom of the masses' taught in schools for the 1848 revolution (Maier 2018, 315).

It was around 1900 that this role of the Church began to falter, when religious teachers and catechists, particularly in large cities and especially with regard to children from the working class, realized that religious education was increasingly less able to reach students and that it was also more difficult to educate children religiously. This situation led to a catechetical movement that was committed to the modernization of religious education and whose centers were Munich and Vienna. This was the start of a modernization process that not only changed religious education and raised questions about the setting of religious education as a whole, but also marked the successive transition from the academic discipline of catechetics to religious education science and was therefore crucial for the relationship between religious pedagogy and educational science.

1. The Catechetical Reform Movement and the Münchner Methode between around 1900 and 1920

Catholic religious education and catechism lessons around 1900 were characterized by the tripartite scholastic learning scheme of 'lectio,' 'memoria' and 'imitatio.' The first step was to read out and memorize questions from the catechism. These questions and topics were then explained by teachers using examples, usually with biblical references. Finally, the aim was to point out the useful application of the aspect of the catechism that had been discussed. In the background was the idea that the content of the faith was presented to the students and that they would also come to believe in it in the course of memorization. The believer was, therefore, the recipient of the revealed, finalized faith formulated in dogmas. Faith was thus regarded as 'holding doctrines to be true' (Ziebertz 1997, 197–98).

Already in the Enlightenment age, Catholic catechists had criticized and modified such an understanding of faith or model of mediation, but the anti-modernism that had set in since the 1850s in the Catholic Church ensured that these departures could no longer be pursued. As long as the parental home and parish continued to function as instances of religious socialization, children and young people grew into a religious practice here so that catechism lessons seemed plausible. However, around 1900, a fairly large number of catechists – especially in large cities – realized that the scholastic model of teaching was reaching its limits. The reason was that the contact with the parish and the religious context in the family, particularly among working-class families, was often no longer present. In addition, religious education teachers found that their colleagues in 'secular' school subjects such as German or history were not only better received by the students with their lessons, but also achieved significantly better learning outcomes. This was attributed to the use of newer pedagogical and didactic concepts that had not previously played a role in catechism lessons (Läpple 1981, 131 and 179).

Religious education teachers and catechists in Munich and Vienna were particularly active in reforming Catholic religious education. In the following part, this paper must restrict itself to the developments in the Munich circle and the Münchner Methode that was developed there.

The reform efforts aimed at religious education as a school subject that would be able to educate children and young people to develop morally and religiously. This called for new didactic approaches and made it necessary to take a look at pedagogy and psychology. The people of the Munich circle – above all Heinrich Stieglitz (1868–1920), Anton Weber (1868–1947), and Josef Göttler (1874–1935) – orientated themselves toward the concepts of the educationalists Otto Willmann (1839–1920) and Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster (1869–1966). The protagonists of the Munich method, members of the Munich and German Catechists' Association, formed on November 26, 1900, a special group, the so-called 'Pädagogisches Kränzchen' ('Pedagogical

Circle'), and worked out a psychologically based teaching method for religious education: the Münchner Methode, also known as the psychological or inductive method (Kropač 2006, 40–46; Ziebertz 1997, 198; Läpple 1981, 181–82).

In this respect, the Munich method represents an attempt to structurally incorporate a focus on students into religious education lessons. From a didactic point of view, the protagonists of the new method postulated a focus on previous knowledge or connecting factors in the students' environment and experience, as Foerster, for example, had demanded. In his opus *Jugendlehre* (Theory of the Youth) he stated: "The first wisdom of all pedagogy is that the teacher should seek a link to the child's circle of interests for his or her subject matter"[2] (Foerster 1917, 11). In addition, they focussed on findings from the psychology of learning, i.e., on the one hand on the child's reception structure, which does not begin with the concept but with the experience or perception and only leads from there to the concept. On the other hand, the development of children played a role, as Otto Willmann had already pointed out: "The growth of human powers is, up to certain limits, a continuous process and, on the whole, is more similar to walking along a gradually ascending path than to climbing steps; only nature and, following it, society has divided this path into certain stages, the achievement of which can be compared to climbing steps" (Willmann 1909, 436). According to this, Göttler, for example, demanded that lesson planning must follow the 'nature' of the students: "The teaching stages must be nothing other than a stimulation and guidance of the necessary learning stages based on the psychology of the natural learning process" (as quoted in Ziebertz 1997, 199).

The Munich method divided teaching into five stages (Kropač 2020; Läpple 1981, 182): (1) *preparation* (attunement or accommodation, designed to arouse the students' interest), (2) *presentation* (using a story, a picture, etc.), (3) *explanation* (the essentials should be extracted and explained), (4) *summary* (reference to the catechism) and (5) *practical application* (e.g., for religious life, the liturgy, the church year or a specific task).

The following passage will illustrate the teaching steps using the example of a draft lesson by Anton Weber on St. Monica, the mother of the Doctor of the Church St. Augustine, and the importance of prayer (Weber 1905, 289–95). The *preparation* here is fairly brief, reference is made to the last lesson, in which some characteristics of prayer have already been addressed. However, there are other aspects of prayer that can be learned from St. Monica. The *presentation* describes the relationship between Monica and her son. The focus is on her wish for him to convert to Christianity. She prays for this. However, Augustine wants to devote himself to a secular career and secretly travels from North Africa to Italy. Monica comes crying to the bishop, who encourages her to continue praying. He says that Augustine's hour of grace will come.

---

2   Quotations in German have been translated into English by the author to ensure a better understanding in an international context.

She finally follows Augustine on his journey and he later actually converts. In the *explanation*, the nature of the prayer is worked out. Monica is taken as the prototype of a prayerful woman. Among other things, when praying, one should not think that it is useless but should pray with confidence. In the short *summary*, key points are repeated, e.g., a person prays confidently (which is important) when she fondly hopes that God will answer the prayer. In the *application*, a task is set here. The students are encouraged to read the biblical story about the Canaanite woman and her daughter (Matt 15:21–28) and work out to what extent this mother's way of praying corresponds to the characteristics of prayer (with humility, trust, and perseverance).

This marked a turning point – at least at the didactic and conceptual level: religious knowledge was no longer taught as an end in itself, but as an instrument that should enable a religious lifestyle. Göttler states: "Rather, the actual goal of catechesis and the specific goal of religious education . . . is the ability to lead an independent religious life based on a convinced Christian Catholic faith" (as quoted in Ziebertz 1997, 201). In the lesson plan presented here, this becomes clear, for example, in the fact that students are motivated to adopt certain attitudes when praying and that they should independently test what they have learned from the activity with the passage from the Bible.

With Rudolf Englert, it can be concluded that the Munich protagonists of the catechetical renewal have provided a significant impetus for the modernization of religious education in three respects: There was a new perspective on the students, insofar that their learning prerequisites became relevant and they were seen in a more active role in the learning process itself. There was also a new understanding with regard to the content: by moving away from pure memorization, the pedagogical structure of the religious education subject was initially recognized. Above all, catechists began to leave an exclusively theological perspective when they thought about new concepts of religious education. This led to an opening up to pedagogy and psychology, so that pedagogical references – alongside theology – became more important (Englert 2011, 145). This is expressed organizationally in the fact that many chairs of catechetics have been expanded to include 'pedagogy.' The term 'religious education' (*Religionspädagogik*), although first formulated in 1889 by the Protestant theologian Max Reischle (1858–1905), was not yet used in the Catholic context at this time (Kropač 2006, 90).

The Munich proponents of a catechetical renewal have spread their ideas very successfully through conferences, teaching materials, and publications. However, this soon attracted critics who feared that the new catechetical method was betraying the Christian faith. In this context, the question of 'dogma or child' arose, which also characterized the further development of religious education. In the following part, this criticism and the reaction to it will be briefly described.

2. Dogma or Child?

One of the most vehement opponents of the Munich method was the theologian Johann Schraml (1855–1925). It is interesting to note that Schraml understood the new method as a synthetic approach based on the students and therefore criticized it (Ziebertz 1997, 203). He states:

> Our holy religion, the individual articles of faith, orders, and sacraments are something positively given. The way in which they are presented is based on this. Faith as a doctrinal discipline, by its very nature, principally demands dissection, not composition. Only synthesis, or at least guiding synthesis, ensures, that the truth is no longer seen as a phenomenon without presuppositions, and allows it to emerge through composition "from the students and with the co-operation of the students." Here is the clear methodological trace of modern pedagogy. . . . Synthesis as the basis and starting point of teaching means in the last analysis nothing other than methodically composing the presupposed truth. Even a Catholic methodologist is not permitted to compose in this way. (as quoted in Ziebertz 1997, 204)

Schraml's criticism focuses on the accusation that the Munich method leads to individualization of the faith, though it is, in the opinion of the critics, in fact, given by God. This formulates a fundamental problem in religious education that still has an impact today, but is not always recognized in specialist discussions. The question is whether a child subjectively formulates its personal truth of faith or whether the truth of faith is objectively given and there can only be subjective approximations to it.

The way in which the proponents of the Munich method have dealt with the criticism shows that it was not their intention to allocate the Catholic faith to the construction of the students. For Anton Weber, the new method was a didactically well-thought-out way of presenting the content of the faith and at the same time presenting it for faithful acceptance. Joseph Göttler emphasized that the catechism would not lose its previous status and significance (as cited in Ziebertz 1997, 201 and 207). In other words, despite all the appreciation of the Munich method as an opening of religious education to students and to pedagogy and psychology, the question of 'child or dogma' is resolved by its proponents in favor of dogma. It was only later that an anthropological turning point occurred, in which the 'child' increasingly became the authority of faith. It must be stated that Schraml's criticism of the Munich method was exaggerated, but at the same time, he recognized where such a methodological opening could lead. The individualization of religious education in the present day could be read as the fulfillment of Schraml's fears.

3. Radicalizations around the 1970s and since the 1990s

After more than a hundred years of anti-modernism, the Catholic Church reacted to modern society, which had become more secular and pluralistic, at the Second Vatican Council with a clear focus on people and their questions and a long overdue appreciation of the human sciences. Against this backdrop, religious educators now also dared to question a primarily promulgating and catechizing religious education openly. In 1970, for example, Eugen Paul (1932–1995) called for catechetics to open up to the findings of educational science and general research on didactics and to adopt its methods (Mendl 2001; Paul 1970, 226–28). What is thematized in religious education and in what way it cannot continue to be designed exclusively from a theological perspective. To put it bluntly: "Catechetics that is designed in a one-sided fashion (e.g., from a theological perspective) no longer deserves the name, and above all: it stands no chance" (Paul 1970, 228). This was the final step towards pedagogy and the opening up to other sciences and the term 'religious pedagogy' (*Religionspädagogik*) was accepted. Irrespective of its affiliation with theology, it is now equally part of educational science – just like other didactic disciplines (Scheunpflug 2011, 207).

The discussion about religious education which was initiated by Paul and others was continued at the Würzburg Synod. In the Synod's Resolution on Religious Education, which was passed on November 22, 1974, the Synod members justified the subject for the first time in pedagogical terms, i.e., in terms of its contribution to the educational goals of the school – followed by contribution from a theological point of view. This must be seen as a double turning point: On the one hand, religious education would have moved away from its missionary character in favor of a diaconal orientation. On the other hand – and related to this – the students would have moved to the center (Mendl 2010, 257).

Religious education now saw itself as a service to children and young people who were believers, seekers or struggling for faith, as well as non-believers, so that there was often talk of an anthropological turn or a turn towards the subject. This becomes particularly clear in the anthropological and societal justification of religious education enacted by the synod:

> There must therefore be religious education at school . . . because school should help young people to become themselves and because religious education, through its questions about the bottom of meaning, helps them to see and perceive their own role and task in the community and in life appropriately; because school cannot be satisfied with the adaptation of the student to the administered world and because religious education is designed to relativize unjustified claims to absoluteness. (Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz 1998, 159–60)

It also refers to the aspect of maturity and the ability to make decisions in the area of religion: "Religious education should enable responsible thinking and behavior with regard to religion and faith" (Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz 1998, 163). The Synod already linked the turn to the subject – albeit not exclusively – with a broader concept of religion, in which it saw religious education as a privileged place for addressing the question of meaning.

In view of the rapid de-confessionalization and religious pluralization, the scientific mainstream in religious education consistently pursued subject orientation or child orientation in order to ensure connectivity to the denominational Catholic faith or at least to transcendence. This subject-orientated religious education is particularly evident in the concept of a theology of child and youth (*Kinder- und Jugendtheologie*), which discovered that students are independent and theologically productive protagonists (Knoblauch 2011). When Anton A. Bucher, one of the early pioneers of children's theology, relates religious educational science to the theological achievements of children and stimulates the development of a 'theology of children,' the question of 'child or dogma' is finally resolved in favor of the child. On the one hand, such a 'theology of children' requires a change in the role of the teacher. The teacher steps back and becomes active in the classroom primarily as a source of inspiration for children's thought processes. Originally, there was no correction of unfortunate or theologically incorrect statements, although there is now a heated debate about how to deal with this.[3] On the other hand, from a didactic and methodological point of view, the aim is to exert as little direct influence as possible on children's thought and speech testimonies and artifacts in religious education lessons. In this respect, the lessons are dominated, for example, by conversations, questions, impulses to wonder, or working on dilemma stories. This requires that children are seen as largely equal theological dialogue partners and that the boundaries between experts and laypeople are fluid. The fact that this has also led to romanticized notions of children as 'better or actual theologians' – for example, because they approach religious questions more intuitively – has since been self-critically considered within the child theology debate (Zimmermann 2016, 66). It should be mentioned that in addition to the 'radical' 'theology of children,' there are also forms of 'theology with children' – where the teacher is more in demand as a dialogue partner – as well as 'theology for children.' The latter sees itself more as a child-orientated teaching of theology in religious education (Zimmermann 2015).

---

3   Zimmermann argues that in the case of children's theology, it should be checked whether children's statements fulfill at least a minimum of the criteria of theological thinking (e.g., reflection, reference to faith). In addition, coherence, consensus, or the practical use of children's statements would be important factors for determining whether they are valid arguments with a theological character. Ultimately, Zimmermann argues that not all statements made by children in the context of religious education should be categorized as children's theology (Zimmermann 2016).

4. Consequences

The individualization of denominational religious education is a result of the didactic prioritization of the child. This development was ultimately without alternative in the course of a necessary professional integration into educational science and in view of social developments, such as increasing secularisation and pluralization, associated with a break with tradition with regard to Christianity (Halbfas 2007). Referring to Charles Taylor, Jorge B. Moniz points out the coincidence of pluralization and secularization: ". . . mutual fragilization, as a feature of societies with a high level of diversity, 'certainly,' causes a decline in religion – 'as a consequence, the proportion of belief is smaller and that of unbelief is larger than ever before.' This is because the arena where religious and secular choices compete is unbalanced in favor of the latter" (Moniz 2023, 8). But this individualization of religious education can also be affirmed from a theological perspective because the communication of faith is always dependent on the personal aspect and faith always requires the consent of the individual. Children's theology is certainly the concept that has most clearly emphasized the focus on the child. However, the religious didactic approach of elementarization (*Elementarisierung*), which is certainly concerned with a balance of theological content and orientation towards the students, has also clearly individualized the question of truth (Schweitzer 2008, 30).

However, this individualization leads to a problem pointed out by Bernhard Grümme. He states that students' faith – or at least their religious search – is a prerequisite for theologizing. However, Grümme continues, both can no longer be assumed in view of the advanced state of secularization. This leads to an engulfment of children by the concept of theology, whereas Children's theology gives up its claimed subject-orientation (Zimmermann 2016, 69). Whatever one thinks of Grümme's position, the more relevant question seems to be whether theologizing without the horizon of faith makes sense at all. Bernhard Dressler's proposal could therefore be helpful here, as calls for a strengthening of the concept of religion in the context of denominational religious education (Zimmermann 2016, 70; Dressler 2014, 239–40). Although Mirjam Schambeck sees the actual "great moments of religious education" in the fulfillment of religion by students, lesson planning in the subject of religion should only aim to 'cognitively' (Schambeck 2012, 92) – and not existentially – fit religion into students' own interpretations of life, their own behavior and actions in the world. She is right in this insofar as faith cannot be produced didactically and – if it were possible – this would not be allowed. However, denominational religious education is not only about building up knowledge and the ability to come to one's own judgement on religious issues but, according to Annette Scheunpflug, it is also always about conveying what cannot be conveyed, i.e., the dimension of faith (Scheunpflug 2011, 109). If the horizon of faith is no longer present or desired on the part of the students and, from the point of view of the intention of the subject,

a cognitive relationship between Christian tradition and the students is sufficient from the perspective of religious educators or the demand for theological discussion already becomes the appropriation of the child by tradition, then catholic religious education has in some ways reached its didactic limits (Maier 2020, 132). This can already be seen in the fact that denominational religious education from secondary level I onwards has in fact already changed its character to learning about religion that is more connected to religious studies than to theology (Englert 2014). However, this does not seem to be enough for denominational religious education, which is concerned with "promoting Christian attitudes and behavior," which at the same time are expressly counted among the "quality characteristics of Catholic religious education" (Bischofskonferenz, Katholische Kirche Deutschland 2006, 13). In contrast, it would be helpful for non-denominational (and compulsory) religious education if the students' own life issues were brought into an interrelationship with religious traditions, which could offer them new perspectives for intellectual debate and could also broaden their individual horizon.[4] In addition, the question arises as to what extent it makes sense to continue to offer increasingly factually oriented lessons under the responsibility of the Church, whereby non-denominational students – despite the relevance of religion, especially in the context of increasing migration and globalization – receive virtually no religious education. Whether a clearer opening of catholic religious education for non-denominational students, which of course must be linked to a conceptual development of this school subject in order to offer this group added value, should be discussed (Kropač, König, and Schambeck 2022; Kropač 2018).

Conclusion

The question of the primacy of dogma or child, which arose in the context of catechetical reform, appeared in connection with the opening of catechetics to pedagogy and was increasingly resolved in favor of the child. Reasons for it were the integration of religious education into the educational discourse as well as the pluralization and secularization of society. This development was required in order to avoid a 'special religious world' at school and to enable students to connect with the Christian tradition. This decision also made theological sense for the child, but only made sense as long as the localization in faith, or at least the search for

---

[4]   This was, e.g., considered in Switzerland (Schmid 2016). For this, also the discussion about the English concept of 'learning from religion,' developed by Johan Hull, in the Swiss context seems remarkable (Schmid 2011).

it, was still clearly perceptible.[5] Students were able to relate to the Christian faith cognitively and existentially and thus they also shaped the Christian faith. In this respect, it can be said that Catholic religious education has also discovered the child in the context of secularization processes and conscious decisions in the field of religious educational science. This is perhaps less true in the sense of an anthropology of religious education (Blum 2013, 298–99), because – with a few exceptions[6] – there is little reflection in religious educational science on who or what the child is. For the most part, since the 1960s, the German pedagogy of the subject has served as an orientation model, but without deeper reflection (Binder 2009). From a didactic point of view, however, the orientation towards the child is so clear that one can doubtless speak of a discovery of the child through religious education, insofar as it has been transformed from a rather passive addressee of religious education into a constructor of its own faith. References to developmental models, for example, ensure the connection to theories of childhood education, which is an important characteristic of child orientation.

If denominational religious education can no longer provide this correlation between students and faith in light of the loss of faith (*Glaubensverlust*) – to draw on a phrase from Hubertus Halbfas (2012) – then new ways must be sought for religious education – also in the interests of all students and their right to form their own views on religion. It is interesting to note here what the Chairman of the German Bishops' Conference, Bishop Georg Bätzing (2023) of Limburg, made clear in his New Year's Eve sermon on December 31, 2023. He said that the majority of people in Germany would no longer be approachable in terms of religion. This shows that secularization has reached a new level because until now, the idea still persisted that one only had to demonstrate the relevance of faith to life in order to establish this receptiveness. This is precisely what Catholic religious education has been committed to in recent decades.

In a way, Bishop Bätzing's statement sounds like a declaration of bankruptcy, which can also be empirically proven, because for around 60% of young people, the church as an institution is irrelevant and, above all, it is its social commitment in society that saves it from a complete loss of significance (Kropač 2022). Around half of all those confirmed in the Protestant Church say that they did not learn anything relevant for them while preparing for their confirmation (Handke 2022, 82). In this respect, the question arises whether secularization at its core – in relation to

---

5   The Shell Youth Study from 2019 states that only for 39% of catholic youth God has an important role in their life. For 41% of the same group, faith in God is not important (Kropač 2022).

6   Once in a while, educationalists point out that students are in need of religious education, because of the dangers of a consumer society (Meurer 2002). There is – in the context of religious Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) – also the demand to guide children and youth to a sustainable lifestyle, because the majority of them would not live in this way by themselves (Krahn and Schimmel 2021). This shows perhaps some relics of the motive of sin and therefore elements of a theological anthropology.

the commitment to religious institutions and teachings – is perhaps more than a loss of relevance of religion, as Jorge B. Moniz notes: "Religion has lost its unquestioned status. In my view, this is the main phenomenon of secularization that should be emphasized" (Moniz 2023, 8).

On the other hand, the decline in church attendance among young people should not lead to the hasty judgment that religion no longer plays a role for them (Kropač 2022). In addition, religion is still present in a secular context, i.a., through secular principles such as diversity, gender mainstreaming, climate protection, or the demand for social cohesion. These principles have even achieved a hegemonic status previously held by dogmas. Many decisions that people make – especially with regard to secular principles – have a lasting religious-normative character (Moniz 2023, 8–9). Finally, religious belief can also intensify conflicts (van Dellen 2016, 164). Against this background, it can be stated that religion is still relevant as a topic and that schools should therefore remain a "place of reflective engagement with the controversial phenomenon of religion" (Schambeck 2021, 222). This raises questions and challenges for future religious education, which have recently been addressed in some European countries through the establishment of new subjects that have replaced or supplemented the previous denominational religious education – most recently in Luxembourg in 2015 (Maier 2018).

Denominational religious education will have to change in order to remain relevant and attractive. Further questions will have to be asked about its organization and content: for example, whether the discussion about the usefulness of religion for personal life should be given greater weight (Schambeck 2021, 222 et seq., 227–28), whether the Church and theology need to make a 'radical change of perspective' toward students who are no longer religiously socialized – whether baptized or not (Handke 2022, 83) or whether the focus should be more on the individual religiousness of the students – an aspect that is mentioned in the more recent discussion about religious education in England, although this is also associated with problems, as Paul Smalley notes: "There is a question to be explored about how 'personal' a worldviews approach to RE is. The object of study clearly cannot be the personal beliefs of a quarter of a million children in each school year, or even of the 30 individual opinions about existential matters in a particular classroom" (Smalley 2023, 215). Perhaps the concept of 'self-transcendence' developed by the social philosopher Hans Joas can be a clue that takes the personal experience of transcending oneself as a basis and brings it in contact with religious traditions as potential interpretations of such experiences (Joas 2004). These questions will occupy religious educators in the future. Smalley has formulated guidelines that are central to this discussion. It must be a vision that begins "with the world of the pupils, helps them consider existential questions and reflect on their own position in regard to them, having studied the fluid and multiple ways of being that exist in the world" (Smalley 2023, 222). This will

change denominational religious education – perhaps even toward an obligatory and exclusively state-run subject.

However, concrete considerations with regard to establishing a new school subject are probably rather unlikely in Germany at the moment. In fact, the fusion of Protestant and Catholic religious education in the sense of denominational cooperation or 'Christian religious education' is being promoted in the present. Nevertheless, if new ways of religious learning were to be considered, care would have to be taken to ensure that such a new subject is not understood in terms of civil religion. If it were, it would be orientated primarily towards social cohesion within a religiously and culturally heterogeneous society and the internalization of socially or politically desirable attitudes and beliefs. It would thus fulfill functions that the Church had assumed before the secularization processes. This new subject would then merely be a modernized version of traditional ecclesiastical religious education, which would be far more problematic because it would be almost impossible for students to avoid it. Unfortunately, this tendency can be clearly observed in the modernization of religious education in the recent past (Maier 2018). In this respect, the current denominational, perhaps ecumenically organized subject of religious education, which is decidedly orientated toward the students and whose religious denomination is to be understood as the starting point and not the goal of religious learning processes, remains not only a more realistic but also a better way for this moment (Englert 2015, 20).

Bibliography

Bätzing, Georg. 2023. "Bischof Bätzing predigt zum Jahresabschluss. *Pressemitteilung der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz.*" *Pressemeldung*, December 31. Accessed January 12, 2024. https://www.dbk.de/presse/aktuelles/meldung/bischof-baetzing-predigt-zum-jahresabschluss.

Biesinger, Albert. 1989. "Zur Relevanz des katechetischen Ansatzes Hirschers für die gegenwärtige katechetische Situation." In *Glaube als Lebensform. Der Beitrag Johann Baptist Hirschers zur Neugestaltung christlich-kirchlicher Lebenspraxis und lebensbezogener Theologie*, edited by Gebhard Fürst, 115–27. Mainz: Matthias Grünewald.

Binder, Ulrich. 2009. *Das Subjekt der Pädagogik – Die Pädagogik des Subjekts. Das Subjektdenken der theoretischen und der praktischen Pädagogik im Spiegel ihrer Zeitschriften*. Bern: Haupt.

Bischofskonferenz, Katholische Kirche Deutschland. 2006. *Kirchliche Richtlinien zu Bildungsstandards für den katholischen Religionsunterricht in der Grundschule, Primarstufe*. Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz.

Blum, Matthias. 2013. "Pädagogischer Messias oder Scharlatan? Zur Rezeption und Bedeutung Rousseaus in der deutschen katholischen Katechetik und Religionspädagogik." In *Zwischen Vielfalt und Imagination: Praktiken der Jean-Jacques Rousseau-Rezeption*, edited by Jesko Reiling and Daniel Tröhler, 281–99. Genève: Slatkine.

Bucher, Rainer. 1998. *Kirchenbildung in der Moderne: Eine Untersuchung der Konstitutionsprinzipien der deutschen katholischen Kirche im 20. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Dellen, Alexander van. 2016. "Ist der konfessionelle Religionsunterricht in Österreich zukunftsfähig? Einblicke in die Situation, in aktuelle Herausforderungen und mögliche Perspektiven religiöser Bildung an öffentlichen Schulen." *Theo-Web. Zeitschrift für Religionspädagogik* 15 (1): 153–72.

Dressler, Bernhard. 2014. "Zur Kritik der »Kinder- und Jugendtheologie«." *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 111 (3): 332–56.

Englert, Rudolf. 2011. "Gibt es einen religionspädagogischen Erkenntnisfortschritt?" *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie* 63 (2): 137–49. https://doi.org/10.1515/zpt-2011-0206.

Englert, Rudolf. 2014. "Wird aus dem Religionsunterricht eine Sachkunde ‚Religion'?," Jahrbuch der Religionspädagogik, 30: 207–17.

Englert, Rudolf. 2015. "Connection Impossible? Wie Konfessioneller Religionsunterricht Schüler/Innen ins Gespräch mit Religion Bringt." In *Konfessionell – Interreligiös – Religionskundlich. Unterrichtsmodelle in der Diskussion*, edited by Eva-Maria Kenngott, Rudolf Englert, and Thorsten Knauth, 19–30. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Foerster, Friedrich Wilhelm. 1917. *Jugendlehre*. Berlin: Reimer.

Gemeinhardt, Peter. 2022. "Glauben – Wissen – Denken. Das frühe Christentum als Bildungsreligion." *Zur Debatte. Zeitschrift der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern* 52 (4): 9–14.

Gronover, Matthias. 2012. *Katechese als Übung: Eine Grundlegung*. Münster: LIT.

Halbfas, Hubertus. 2007. "Die Vermittlung des Glaubens in einer Zeit weitreichender Traditionsabbrüche." *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift* 155 (3): 294–304.

Halbfas, Hubertus. 2012. *Religionsunterricht nach dem Glaubensverlust: Eine Fundamentalkritik*. Ostfildern: Patmos. https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord. aspx?p=5593694.

Handke, Emilia. 2022. "Radikaler Perspektivwechsel. Jugend und Kirche im säkularen Kontext." *Zeitschrift für Pastoraltheologie* 42 (1): 73–85.

Joas, Hans. 2004. *Braucht der Mensch Religion? Über Erfahrungen der Selbsttranszendenz*. Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder.

Kiechle, Stefan. 2001. *Ignatius von Loyola: Meister der Spiritualität*. Freiburg: Herder.

Knoblauch, Christoph. 2011. "Kinder als theologisch kompetente Akteure. Kindertheologie und theologische Kompetenz von Kindern im aktuellen religionspädagogischen Diskurs." *Theologische Quartalschrift* 191 (1): 101–12.

Krahn, Annika, and Alexander Schimmel. 2021. "‚Klima nervt!' – Zum didaktischen Umgang mit Widerständen bei der Thematisierung des Klimawandels im Religionsunterricht." *Religionspädagogische Beiträge* 44 (2): 85–96. https://doi.org/10.20377/rpb-154.

Kropač, Ulrich. 2006. *Religionspädagogik und Offenbarung: Anfänge einer wissenschaftlichen Religionspädagogik im Spannungsfeld von pädagogischer Innovation und offenbarungstheologischer Position*. Berlin: LIT.

Kropač, Ulrich. 2018. "Konfessionslosigkeit: Religionsunterricht vor einer unterschätzten Herausforderung." *Religionspädagogische Beiträge* 79: 33–44.

Kropač, Ulrich. 2020. "Münchener Methode." In *WiReLex – das wissenschaftlich-religionspädagogische Lexikon im Internet*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. https://doi.org/10.23768/ wirelex.Mnchener_Methode.200626.

Kropač, Ulrich. 2022. "Religiosität, Jugendliche." In *WiReLex – das wissenschaftlich-religionspädagogische Lexikon im Internet*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. https://doi.org/10.23768/ wirelex.Religiostt_Jugendliche.100087.

Kropač, Ulrich, Klaus König, and Mirjam Schambeck. 2022. "Herausforderung Konfessionslosigkeit. Religiöse Bildung im Horizont wachsender Entkonfessionalisierung." *Communicatio Socialis* 55 (3): 400–10. https://doi.org/10.5771/0010-3497-2022-3-400.

Läpple, Alfred. 1981. *Kleine Geschichte der Katechese*. München: Kösel.

Maier, Alexander. 2018. "Bunte Einheit!? Neuere säkular-sakrale Konzeptionen und Äquivalente des Religionsunterrichts als ambivalente Modernisierungsstrategien." In *Modernisierung und Pädagogik – ambivalente und paradoxe Interdependenzen*, edited by Ulrich Binder, 311–29. Weinheim: Beltz.

Maier, Alexander. 2020. "Die Emanzipation des Subjekts. Religionsunterricht nach der Aufklärung." In *Bildung als Aufklärung. Historisch-anthropologische Perspektiven*, edited by Anne Conrad, Alexander Maier, and Christoph Nebgen, 119–36. Wien: Böhlau.

Maier, Alexander. 2022. "Von der Gottesebenbildlichkeit zur Perfektibilität. Transformationsprozesse des Bildungsbegriffs in Humanismus, Aufklärung und Neuhumanismus." *Zur Debatte. Zeitschrift der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern* 52 (4): 15–20.

Mąkosa, Paweł. 2017. "Zwischen orthodoxem Katholizismus und Individualisierung der religiösen Überzeugungen der Polen." *Religionen unterwegs* 23 (3): 18–21.

Mendl, Hans. 2001. "Streit um die ,deduktive Katechetik': Vom Umgang mit Tradition in der Religionspädagogik." In *Tradition – Korrelation – Innovation: Trends der Religionsdidaktik in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, edited by Hans Mendl, Markus Schiefer Ferrari, and Fritz Weidmann, 52–72. Donauwörth: Auer.

Mendl, Hans. 2010. "Katholischer Religionsunterricht – ein Längsschnitt." In *Geschichte des evangelischen Religionsunterrichts in Deutschland*, edited by Rainer Lachmann and Bernd Schröder, 235–63. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.

Meurer, Thomas. 2002. "Begegnungen mit der fremden Bibel." *Katechetische Blätter* 127 (1): 19–24.

Moniz, Jorge Botelho. 2023. "Secularization in Europe: Causes, Consequences, and Cultural Diversity." *Religions* 14 (3): article no. 423. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14030423.

Paul, Eugen. 1970. "Das Ende einer theologisch deduzierten Katechetik." *Theologische Quartalschrift* 150 (2): 214–28.

Schambeck, Mirjam. 2012. "Warum Religion Bildung braucht. Konsequenzen für religiöse Bildungsprozesse." In *Religionsunterricht und der Bildungsauftrag der öffentlichen Schulen*, edited by Ulrich Kropač and Georg Langenhorst, 84–96. Babenhausen: Lusa.

Schambeck, Mirjam. 2021. ",Also Oskar ist ohne Religion groß geworden'. Herausforderungen und Chancen eines Religionsunterrichts mit konfessionslosen Schülerinnen und Schülern." *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie* 73 (2): 217–31. https://doi.org/10.1515/zpt-2021-0024.

Scheunpflug, Annette. 2011. "Die Religionspädagogik aus der Perspektive Allgemeiner Pädagogik." *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie* 63 (2): 107–16. https://doi.org/10.1515/zpt-2011-0203.

Schmid, Kuno. 2011. *,Religion' lernen in der Schule: didaktische Überlegungen für einen bekenntnisunabhängigen schulischen Religionsunterricht im Kontext einer Didaktik des Sachunterrichts*. Bern: Hep.

Schmid, Kuno. 2016. "Stichwort Lebenswelt. ERG-Unterricht an der Lebenswelt der Kinder und Jugendlichen orientieren." *erg.ch – Materialien zum Fach Ethik, Religionen, Gemeinschaft (Online-Publikation)*, accessed January 12, 2024. https://www.ethik-religionen-gemeinschaft.ch/schmid-stichwort-lebenswelt.

Schreiner, Peter. 2015. "Entwicklungen des Religionsunterrichts in Europa: Eine Übersicht." In *Konfessionell – interreligiös – religionskundlich: Unterrichtsmodelle in der Diskussion*, edited by Eva-Maria Kenngott, Rudolf Englert, and Thorsten Knauth, 119–34. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Schweitzer, Friedrich. 2008. "Elementarisierung als Weg zum Kompetenzerwerb." In *Elementarisierung und Kompetenz*, edited by Friedrich Schweitzer, 23–34. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagshaus.

Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz. 1998. "Der Religionsunterricht in der Schule. Ein Beschluss der Gemeinsamen Synode der Bistümer in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (1974)." In *Texte zu Katechese und Religionsunterricht*, edited by Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 4th ed., 145–79. Bonn: Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz.

Simon, Werner. 1997. "'…und haben mich einen subjectiven Theologen genannt'. Johann Baptist Hirschers ‚Katechetik': Eine ‚subjektorientierte' Theorie des katechetischen Handelns in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts." *Pastoraltheologische Informationen* 17: 3–13.

Simon, Werner. 2001. "Religionsunterricht im Prozess der Individualisierung." In *Im Horizont der Geschichte: Religionspädagogische Studien zur Geschichte der religiösen Bildung und Erziehung*, edited by Werner Simon, 221–37. Münster: LIT.

Smalley, Paul. 2023. "English RE: Under Pressure?" *Journal of Religious Education* 71 (3): 213–24. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-023-00207-y.

Taylor, Charles. 2013. *Die Formen des Religiösen in der Gegenwart*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Weber, Anton. 1905. "‚Die heilige Monika' (55. Katechese)." In *Ausgeführte Katechesen über das dritte Hauptstück für das 5. Schuljahr*, 2nd ed., 289–95. Kempten: Kösel.

Willmann, Otto. 1909. *Didaktik als Bildungslehre*. Braunschweig: Vieweg.

Ziebertz, Hans-Georg. 1997. "Die Foerstergefahr. F. W. Foerster und die Reform der Katechese zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts." *Religionspädagogische Beiträge* 39: 195–214.

Zimmermann, Mirjam. 2015. "Kindertheologie." In *WiReLex – das wissenschaftlich-religionspädagogische Lexikon im Internet*. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. https://doi.org/10.23768/wirelex.Kindertheologie.100020.

Zimmermann, Mirjam. 2016. "Kann Kindertheologie auch unwahr sein?: Ein Plädoyer für differenzierte Bewertungskriterien in der Kindertheologie." *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie* 68 (1): 58–72. https://doi.org/10.1515/zpt-2016-0007.

Aspects of Synodality in Recent Catechetical Documents: The *Directory for Catechesis* and *Antiquum Ministerium*

CARL-MARIO SULTANA (ID)
University of Malta, carl.m.sultana@um.edu.mt

Abstract: This article seeks to draw out the implications of synodality as journeying together in some aspects of the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) and of *Antiquum Ministerium* (2021). These notions of synodality cannot be fished out of these documents in an immediate way. The method which will be adopted is a bibliographical one where several texts will be analysed. The first part will seek to give a working definition of synodality. For a balanced view, this will be supplemented by some difficulties in synodality today. This will be followed by a very brief outline of how catechesis changed as a result of the Second Vatican Council. The *Directory for Catechesis* and *Antiquum Ministerium* will then be presented in terms of contents within them which point at or call for synodality. Finally, specific aspects of the contents of these two documents will be studied in view of their practical implications to catechesis in the contemporary secularised world, namely synodality within the structures of the Church entrusted with catechesis; accompaniment; listening and speaking, and discernment.

Keywords: catechesis; synodality; *Directory for Catechesis*; *Antiquum Ministerium*; discernment; listening and speaking

This paper seeks to draw out some aspects of synodality which can be traced in the *Directory for Catechesis* (2020) and in the Motu Proprio *Antiquuum Ministerium*. These notions of synodality cannot be fished out of these documents in an immediate way, but they are to be seen as a corollary to the synodal process as journeying together which Pope Francis is seeking to instil in the Church. Still, these aspects of synodality cannot be considered as a coincidental insertion in these latest documents of the Church, but they must be specifically pointed out as part of the journeying together of the Church and of its pastoral operators in their venture together towards the Kingdom of God. These aspects will help us to see how synodality as journeying together can be seen and lived in catechesis as a contemporary activity of the Church. Still, synodality in catechesis is not without its setbacks and challenges.

The method which will be adopted to draw out these aspects of synodality in these two documents will be a bibliographical one, where several texts will be analysed and used as sources to substantiate the arguments presented. These texts will be made up of both documents of the Church and other texts of an academic and scholarly nature. The journey commences by seeking to develop a working definition of what is intended by synodality. Moreover, some difficulties in synodality in

the contemporary Church will also be highlighted. This will be followed by a very brief excursus of the path which catechesis has taken after the Second Vatican Council. This will bring us to the presentation of the two contemporary documents: the *Directory for Catechesis* and *Antiquum Ministerium*. Finally, specific aspects of the contents of these two documents will be studied in view of their practical implications to catechesis in the contemporary secularised world.

1. Synodality...and Some of Its Limitations

One of the most frequently used words in ecclesial circles and milieus today is the word 'synodality'. This is so much so that many are considering this term as a buzz word. There are many who have the impression that this word was coined in these last decades, or more specifically that it has been invented by Pope Francis who not only likes to use this word, but also has it at the back of his mind in whatever he says and does (Faggioli 2020, 354–59, 361–64; Marmion 2021, 448). We would be seeing things in a very simple way had we to see synodality in this way only, and as if this term was invented by contemporary human beings in their endeavours to understand things around them. In actual fact, although the word 'synodality' as a specific word with a very particular meaning was not always in frequent use as we know it today, still the process to which it refers has existed side by side with the Church from its very inception.

Synodality dates back to the origins of the Church, with some of the most important synodal moments dating back to the early Christian community and recorded in the book of the Acts of the Apostles (International Theological Commission 2014, 17; Marmion 2021, 444–45; Pierre 2021, 4). Amongst these moments, we find the episode when the apostles together decided that they should hand over their socio-charitable ministry to the seven specifically chosen persons and who "are men of good standing, full of Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3); and when the apostles together discerned on whether to take on the mission of proclaiming the Good News to those who were coming from beyond the Jewish world and religion, and were coming from the Greek and Hellenistic world of influence grounded in the polytheistic worldview (see Acts 10) (International Theological Commission 2018, 19). This type of discernment on matters pertaining to the Church and to the faith has continued throughout the epochs, ages, and centuries through the time of the Fathers of the Church (Marmion 2021, 444; Czerny 2022, 68). It did indeed find it apex during the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council which can be considered as the biggest expression and experience of discernment and synodality in the modern and contemporary times (International Theological Commission 2018, 24–42; Marmion 2021, 445; Czerny 2022, 68).

But what is synodality? For this very important question, there is no one straight forward answer since it seems that there are different interpretations of this word and to what it refers (Blanchard 2023). "A term as abstract or theoretical as synodality" (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 18) is not easy to define in a clear and unambiguous way. "Technically, 'synod' is a synonym for 'council,' though today we almost always use 'council' to denote only a general or ecumenical council (Nicaea, Trent, etc.), while 'synod' typically refers to something smaller or less authoritative. The Greek 'synod' has a biblical, patristic, and Eastern flavor; the Latin 'council' is distinctly Western. However, until very recently, 'synod' was often used interchangeably with 'council'" (Blanchard 2023).

The Preparatory Document for the Synod on Synodality never attempts at defining synodality, but it simply expresses synodality as communion, participation and mission "by journeying together and reflecting together on the journey that has been made." (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 2). This idea of synodality as journeying and walking together features prominently in both the Preparatory Document for the Synod on Synodality (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 2, 4–11, 30) and in the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the October 2023 session of the Synod on Synodality (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 5–6, 18). In view of the lack of an agreed definition, for the purpose of this paper, we will be taking synodality to refer to this journeying together and walking together as a Church.

> Synodality, in this perspective, is much more than the celebration of ecclesial meetings and Bishops' assemblies, or a matter of simple internal administration within the Church; it is "the specific modus vivendi et operandi of the Church, the People of God, which reveals and gives substance to her being as communion when all her members journey together, gather in assembly and take an active part in her evangelizing mission" (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 10).

> What is at stake is the ability to proclaim the Gospel by walking together with the men and women of our time, wherever they are, and practising the catholicity that emerges from walking together with the Churches that live in conditions of particular suffering (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 5).

Synodality is truly constitutive of the Church and of its mission if it seeks to remain in touch with the human being and the world throughout the ages, and if it seeks to communicate with the human being in the same way in which the Trinity did reveal the message of salvation to humanity (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 26). In the words of *Lumen Gentium*, "the whole Church appears as 'a people gathered together by virtue of the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'" (*LG* 4).

"Synodality is the free and logical human response, expressed in the shape of the Church (forma ecclesiae), to the grace of the triune God who calls his People

together…it expresses in the life of the Church something of the nature of the God whom she proclaims to the world, thus testifying to the correspondence between what she is and what she does, starting from the revelation of God in Christ" (Czerny 2022, 74).

The direct link between synodality in the Church and the Trinitarian communion clearly shows that synodality within the Church arises out of its very essence and constitutive reality of being Church. It is "a return to the Church's true origins and sources" (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 26; Czerny 2022, 74). It calls the Church to live and to transmit the faith in a permanent way and not only in some aspects of it.

Through synodality, the Church is called to continue the mission for which she exists: to evangelise. It therefore constitutes its very essence and a fundamental way of being in the world. It is a prophetic way of serving everybody in our contemporary society as well. Taking a synodal outlook, the Church is enriched with a missionary spirit. It does not close in on itself, but it opens its door to all people and to other Churches. This renders the Church one of the signs of the time in that it becomes the sacrament of salvation to all the human race (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 15). It constitutes listening to the Word of God today and transmitting it as it is under the direct influence of the Holy Spirit, so that this Word may be a light and a guide to contemporary human beings (Pierre 2021, 5; Czerny 2022, 68, 80).

Synodality is typical of the action of the Holy Spirit who urges individuals who make up the Church to be united in the Holy Trinity, no matter what their outlook on particular issues may be (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 6). According to Pope Francis, "We must continue along this path. The world in which we live, and which we are called to love and serve, even with its contradictions, demands that the Church strengthens cooperation in all areas of her mission. It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium" (Francis 2015). In this respect, synodality

> denotes the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the Church, expressing her nature as the People of God journeying together, gathering in assembly, and putting into practice ways of fulfilling its mission. In other words, synodality is lived out in the Church in the service of mission.
>
> Synodality is also an expression of the ecclesiology of communion and the 'pilgrim' character of the Church (Marmion 2021, 445).

For Pope Francis, synodality is not just a way in which the Church can be governed, but a way of being Church. The Church must not be interested in results only but in the process of achieving those results (Faggioli 2020, 365–66). Therefore, for Pope Francis synodality is more a process than a goal.

Still the concept, practice, and reception of synodality as the way forward for being Church is not without its limitations. These stem from both human limitations and human resistances to synodality. Without seeking to be exhaustive and outline all the limitations in this part of the research, since this is not the focus of this study, it is important to summarise the most important and pertinent ones. "While, on the one hand, it is hard to be 'against' synodality given its roots in our tradition, on the other hand, there are voices within the Church who believe the term can be misinterpreted and presented as a kind of parallel authority, separate to the hierarchy, which leads to a 'flattening' of the Church" (Marmion 2021, 443).

This is one of the main issues which those who oppose synodality bring about to support their claim. Phrases such as "the introduction of a 'lay parliamentarism' under the guise of synodality" (International Theological Commission 2014, 113–19; Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 48–49; Czerny 2022, 74), a *sensus fidelium* which is used as a lobbying tactic or a pressure group when this should be a result of discernment in a collective process of seeking the truth (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 14; Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 33–38; Marmion 2021, 451), and that "the *sensus fidei* is not a synonym for public opinion – it must be the truth rather than majority opinion that prevails" (Marmion 2021, 453) are often used as a form of argument to counteract the synodal climate which Pope Francis is seeking to instil in the Church as a return to the grassroots (Chapp 2022). The often-quoted episode is that of the German synodal way (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz and ZdK 2019) which is seen by those who seek to focus more on the limitations of synodality rather than on its benefits as a way which will lead to a deviant Catholicism which seeks to do away with any form of authority or centralised directions (International Theological Commission 2014, 71; Garth 2021; Liedl 2022). Thus, one cannot see synodality just as a strategy which aims to eradicate clericalism in the Church, or to undermine the authority of those who have been called to be its pastors, or even a strategy for organising the Church (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 49; Czerny 2022, 74). Still, considering synodality as unanimity in the expression of the faith is restricting synodality too much (Faggioli 2020, 367).

One of stumbling blocks for the process of synodality is the clerical mindset which can be found in particular areas of the Church. This hinders the process of walking together to seek the truth since clericalism is the direct opposite of synodality (Marmion 2021, 446–47). This clericalism is often demonstrated in very evident ways in the form of a very limited participation or at times even a total lack of it – of the lay faithful, especially female lay faithful who are barred from positions of responsibility and of governing and jurisdiction in the Church (Faggioli 2020, 367; Domingues 2022; Hatt 2022). This clericalism has led to two different situations in the Church. The first is the total marginalisation of women in the Church and the second is that the laity in general are negated their active role in the Church which is a result of the Sacrament of Baptism. Through clericalism, the laity have

often been treated as second class Catholics who are only given some space when there is a true lack of ordained ministers to do the task. Overcoming this clericalist mentality is not an easy feat.

A further limitation to synodality is more related to the process itself, and to what is necessary to embark on a truly synodal process than to the way in which third parties see and consider synodality. This limitation has to do with the general over-optimistic view of synodality which is being projected (Faggioli 2020, 360). Synodality is not just another way of simply implementing how to be Church and living as Church, but it may call for new structures which support this new way of being. The question that comes to mind is: Are the structures which currently exist in the Church fit for a synodal Church? The answer to this question is quite clear since a synodal Church requires new institutions which are in syntony with synodality. As a corollary to this, the current Church institutions cannot just be adapted to suit the new vision of communion and synodality (Faggioli 2020, 368). This means that new structures need to be in place for a synodal Church. This is something which to date has not yet occurred, thus limiting the process of synodality.

2. Catechesis in an Emergent Ecclesiology – Towards Synodality in Catechesis

What was concluded earlier on synodality as constitutive of the Church and linked to its very essence means that "if synodality is an essential dimension of the Church, then it ought to be expressed in the Church's ordinary way of living and working" (Marmion 2021, 446). Therefore, since the Church "exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God, and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of His death and glorious resurrection" (Paul VI 1975, 14), then it stands to reason that catechesis which is one of the major ways in which the Church evangelises, also needs to be synodal in its essence. In a letter to the faithful in Germany in 2019, Pope Francis emphasised that the synodal path of the Church must be linked to the essential mission of the Church. This mission constitutes the task of evangelisation (Francis 2019).

Catechesis is intrinsically linked to evangelisation. It is indeed one of the ways in which the action of evangelisation of the Church still unfolds in our contemporary times. It is at the service of the new evangelisation (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 38–41). This new evangelisation incorporates and is founded on synodality in that it is a missionary call to go forth and proclaim the Good News by proclaiming mercy and establishing dialogue among the nations (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 48–54). Therefore, for

an effective catechesis by the Church whose constitutive element is synodality, catechesis cannot be less than synodal in nature.

The pre-Second Vatican Council ecclesial outlook was characterised by a very rigid hierarchical structure. It was primarily a top-down approach in the form of a pyramid, and the role of lay people was minimal and restricted only to those aspects and things which the hierarchy, due to its nature and role, could not perform (International Theological Commission 2018, 35; Alberich 2002, 171–72; Alberich and Vallabaraj 2004, 164–66). The Second Vatican Council proposed a Church which was founded on a totally different ecclesiology where every form of ministry and charism in the Church was to be an aid to the entire believing community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (International Theological Commission 2018, 46; Alberich 2002, 172–75; Alberich and Vallabaraj 2004, 166–68). In this model of being Church, the lay faithful had a much more pronounced ministry to serve within the Church in virtue of the common priesthood of the baptised, everybody according to his/her own specific calling (*AA* 2–4; *LG* 30–38). This was an echoing of St Paul's words in his First Letter to the Corinthians: "There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work" (1 Cor 12:4–6).

This ecclesiological shift and the emergence of the new way in which the Church was now looking at itself at the service of the contemporary human being was a very radical change: from an institutional Church to a Church which was charismatic and animated by the Holy Spirit (*LG* 39–42). This transformation has not taken place completely and we can still see tensions between the two models of how the Church presents itself in the world. Notwithstanding this, the new way of being a Church has still left an imprint on the different ministries and pastoral activities of the Church, amongst which we find catechesis. It is in this light that we need to consider the catechetical ministry which has developed in the Church after the Second Vatican Council. It is in this new context that the ministry of the catechist as a pastoral operator emerges more clearly, and it is in this particular perspective that one has to look at catechesis in the light of synodality in our contemporary world.

3. Aspects of Synodality in Very Recent Official Documents on Catechesis

In these last years, two very important documents strictly related to catechesis have been promulgated by the Universal Church. These are the *Directory for Catechesis* (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020) and the Motu Proprio in the form of an Apostolic Letter *Antiquum Ministerium* (Francis 2021). Indeed,

aspects of synodality can be found in these two documents not in a direct way but in a very latent and indirect way as a corollary to catechesis being an integral part of the mission of evangelisation of the Church. These two documents, each in a particular way pave the way to allow synodality to take a more central place in catechesis.

The *Directory for Catechesis* which was promulgated on March 23, 2020 by the then Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation has many aspects which augment synodality in catechesis. In this paper we are going to limit the discussion to structures set up to organise catechesis; accompaniment as a way forward for catechesis; and the catechists and their formation.

The *Directory for Catechesis* dedicates an entire chapter to explain those structures, setups and offices in the Church which are responsible for catechesis. This is done in chapter 12 of the *Directory* which is solely reserved to speaking about those structures within the Church which have been explicitly set up to organise catechesis for a fecund ministry. The chapter takes a top-down approach and commences from the highest level where we find the top-most institution – the Holy See, and then continues narrowing down the physical space to the local churches (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 416–25; Bissoli 2022, 105–6; Willey and White 2021, 179–81). The *Directory* then speaks about the role of the Synod of Bishops and of the Councils of the Eastern Churches and of their role in catechesis (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 411; Bissoli 2022, 104–5; Willey and White 2021, 177). The next level treated is the level of Episcopal Conferences which are active in particular nations and territories (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 412–15; Bissoli 2022, 105–6; Willey and White 2021, 178–79). The grassroot level which the *Directory for Catechesis* speaks about is the diocesan level. It is here that we find the structures and setups which are the front offices of catechesis. The *Directory* speaks specifically of the diocesan office for catechesis which is responsible for the catechesis being imparted in the diocese (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 416–25; Bissoli 2022, 105–6; Willey and White 2021, 179–81). It is within these structures, in an indirect way, that synodality is proposed as a way of being Church and of journeying together which can be fostered and lived in the Church today.

The catechesis based on witnessing which the *Directory for Catechesis* proposes for our contemporary times is not one which is only based on the transmission of the contents of the faith, but it is more explicitly founded on accompaniment (Bissoli 2022, 37–41; Willey and White 2021, 85–91). The theme of accompanying others in the process of discovering, of adhering to and of living the faith is a central one in the *Directory for Catechesis*. It is enough to state that there are at least 31 references to the theme of accompaniment in the entire *Directory* (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 3, 50, 55, 64, 68, 85, 111, 113, 118, 132, 135, 139, 155, 179, 203, 234–35, 244, 252, 259, 261, 263–65, 271, 352, 370–71, 404, 419, 423). These paragraphs are scattered throughout the entire document, from the beginning

to the end. The concept and method of a catechesis based on accompaniment is inspired from the spirit of synodality, that is, from the call to a journey together of all the faithful, whilst keeping in mind that no one is alone on this journey, but all are moving together towards one common destination (International Theological Commission 2014, 1–3, 44–45, 70; Pierre 2021, 22).

The catechist as one of the major stakeholders in catechesis is also given a prominent position in the *Directory for Catechesis*. The *Directory* dedicates two separate chapters for the catechist. In chapter 3 of the *Directory*, the distinctiveness of the catechist is presented, starting from the identity of the catechist which emerges as a result of his/her particular calling to the mission of evangelisation at the service of the Word of God (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 110–13). It then elaborates upon different types of catechists, commencing with bishops as the primary catechists who are helped by priests, deacons and consecrated persons (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 114–20). The final part of the chapter is dedicated to lay catechists in all the different ways and forms of catechists starting from parents and grandparents to catechists who are specialised with different categories of people (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 121–29). The latter must be seen in line with chapter 8 of the *Directory for Catechesis* which speaks about catechesis with specific categories of interlocutors (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 224–82).

Chapter 4 of the *Directory for Catechesis* is dedicated entirely to the formation of catechists. The theme is introduced by outlining the nature and the goals of the formation of catechists (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 130–32). It then expounds on the three dimensions of catechist formation, namely formation in being and knowing-how to be with; formation in knowledge; and formation in savoir-faire or knowing how to (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 136–50).

The catechist, especially the lay catechist, is so important in the unfolding of catechesis in our contemporary world that Pope Francis issued a Motu Proprio in the form of an Apostolic Letter entitled *Antiquum Ministerium* (May 10, 2021). In this document, Pope Francis instituted the official Ministry of the Catechist as one of the recognised ministries within the Church together with that of the acolyte and of the lector (Francis 2021). *Antiquum Ministerium* rightly gives a lot of weight to the ministry of the catechist in the life of the Church. In this Apostolic Letter Pope Francis also draws a list of the qualities with which catechists need to be endowed.

Amongst the qualities which he mentions we find that catechists need to have a firm faith, and that they are mature as human beings so that they are able to work with others and especially to accompany the interlocutors who have been entrusted to their care. Other qualities which are mentioned by Pope Francis are that catechists need to be persons who participate fully in the life of the Church, that they approach others with open hands and hearts, and that they are able to live in communion with

the rest of the community in a practical way (Francis 2021, 8). All these qualities which are outlined in the Motu Proprio converge on the theme of synodality and lead to it if they are taken seriously.

4. Practical Implications for Contemporary Catechesis in a Secular World

Synodality can be seen as the experience of a Church which is able to work and to walk together towards a common goal, and all those who form part of the Church of Christ participate in this wide-ranging ministry in different ways and to different extents (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 27). Catechesis as an ecclesial ministry is a textbook case where synodality can be practiced par excellence. Synodality as a journeying together can be envisioned as the process in which pastoral operators with different ministries, charisms, and even different expertise sit together around the same table to listen to each other with respect, and to appreciate the gift of each other in order to be able to plan a fecund catechetical ministry not from one point of view, but from all the different necessary aspects which the contemporary anthropological stance calls for in view of secularisation. Amongst the different thematic and scientific aspects which form part of the process of catechesis we find: the theological aspect, the biblical aspect, the pedagogical aspect, the didactic aspect and the sciences of education, the communication aspect, and the other different aspects of the human sciences amongst which we find psychology, sociology and pedagogy.

No one human being can boast that s/he has all the necessary competences in all of these different aspects. Consequently, to have a truly effective catechetical ministry one needs to rope in as many individuals as possible coming from different spheres in order to plan and project an effective catechetical ministry. It is in this way that the best human resources are utilised in the pastoral and catechetical ministry in such a way that the aims of catechesis are achieved to the highest degree. It is essential that the synodal way in catechesis takes the form of a deep reflection and analysis of the current situation in which the human being is living in a holistic way so that the discernment which ensues from the study of the contemporary context results in the best possible way in which the Good News can be proclaimed in such a situation.

The different organisational structures outlined in the *Directory for Catechesis* are not isolated one from the other, but all are called to work in a synchronous way both on the local level and on the wider universal level to seek to overcome challenges of a pastoral nature and to seek new ways of enhancing the mission of the Church through discernment (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 27; Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 27; Marmion 2021, 447). They are called to work hand-in-hand for a fecund and effective catechesis, which not only takes care of the result of the process, but also

of the way in which the process is made. It is precisely this that recalls the synodal movement within the Church and how this can be practiced in and through the process of catechesis. The voices of individuals from all levels are necessary and important to safeguard against the temptation of having structures which are higher up in this hierarchy simply seeking to find 'office' solutions to practical problems which they can never understand from their particular stance (Faggioli 2020, 369; Marmion 2021, 442). "The process of discussing and listening leads to concrete or real solutions rather than simply expounding theological ideas" (Pierre 2021, 10) which may lead to nowhere, except more frustration and alienation.

Moreover, those structures which are linked to the wider organisation of catechesis on an international level are called to be at the service of evangelisation and not to be served by the more local organisations (International Theological Commission 2018, 54). As a corollary to this, one may conclude that they should be organisational structures which are constantly called to work together with each other in a synodal accompaniment so that synodality will not only constitute a 'word' which is beautiful and nice to hear, and which they propose, but it will be an experience of a journey together of persons who depart from different points of departure, take different routes but at the same time, they are moving towards the same goal and destination. This synodal spirit at such a universal level, which then trickles down to the local level "requires certain dispositions: 'a trust and openness', a mature sense of faith (*sensus fidei*), and a thinking with the Church (*sentire cum ecclesia*)" (International Theological Commission 2014, 88–105; Marmion 2021, 447–48). These constitute the witness which we as Church are called to bear in our secular world.

"In promoting synodality, Pope Francis wants the whole Church to be engaged in open and honest dialogue" (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 24–25; Pierre 2021, 6). This constitutes the promotion of an ecclesiology of communion on a wider level which becomes the *modus operandi* and the *modus vivendi* of the Church at all levels, starting from the widest to the more local instances (Marmion 2021, 444). It is at the local level, and specifically at the parish level that synodality in catechesis can be put into practice. It is at this grassroot level that synodality can be best experienced and lived in catechesis. Our point of departure is that we cannot take the ministry of catechesis as if this existed in the Church all by itself, and that synodality exists only *ad intra* within all the different structures which are intended to help in the organisation of catechesis. If this were so, we would be denying all the different charisms and ministries within the Church which are all aimed at evangelising the world from different points of view and through different dimensions (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 28).

Synodality in catechesis can be studied from two different points of view: *ad intra* and *ad extra*. Synodality *ad intra* in catechesis can be clearly demonstrated through two particular processes: listening and speaking as one action, and discernment. Listening and speaking, and discernment can be considered as two distinct processes

even though listening and speaking are an intrinsic part of communal discernment (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 22, 28). However, before entering into the process of discernment, one has to have the ability to listen, and to speak up when called to. Listening can be juxtaposed to simply hearing, where hearing is just taking note of the sounds and utterances around you, while listening includes hearing and heeding to what is being said; it is being touched and moved to take action based on what is being said, discussed, and decided upon (Pierre 2021, 9). This includes the boldness to ask questions which for some may mean rocking the boat, whilst the true intention is to change things and to make them much better:

> For true discussion to flourish, we must be moved by eagerness to raise questions that go beyond the apathy and indifference of reason that has given up, which is even worse than reason that is too cautious and ineffectual. We must adopt a stance of dialogue that moves us to seek the truth together, without any pretence of mastering it, without separating ourselves off into categories of opinion, without hiding resentfully behind the walls of pre-established identities.

> The heart of the synodal experience is that of listening for God by listening to each other. We strive to listen to each other, opening our minds and hearts, freeing them from the pre-conceptions and prejudices that arise from ignorance and habit and that often generate division. We are called to set aside attitudes of complacency and convenience that lead us to make decisions purely because of the way things have usually been done (Czerny 2022, 82).

It is after one has listened that one is then called to speak. Speaking is the ability to voice one's position and to state things as one is moved to do so by the Holy Spirit on a particular issue and possibly also to propose some potential way/s forward. This speaking in the Spirit eradicates all forms of speaking with retribution, or with spite about others or what others are saying or doing. It is this type of speaking which is true of a genuine synodal dialogue which ensues when both human actions are present together under the guidance and the influence of the Holy Spirit (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 24–25, 28; Pierre 2021, 6). A setback to this is that not all catechists and pastoral operators are prepared to enter into such a dialogue, and to listen and to speak in a disinterested way.

Like all other ecclesial ministries, all pastoral operators involved in catechesis in our secularised society and especially catechists need to enter into the process of a continual discernment of what they are doing, and in reading the signs of the times in order to plan for a fecund catechesis which is in syntony with the contemporary interlocutor. In terms of what is being done in catechesis, discernment helps all pastoral operators at different levels to see whether they are truly fine-tuned to their interlocutors, or whether they need to adjust to have a more effective catechesis in our contemporary secularised social milieu (International Theological Commission 2014, 127). Such a process of discernment requires the active collaboration and

cooperation of a number of individuals coming from different areas of expertise (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 30). This bringing together of persons coming from different areas with different epistemologies, to a process of discernment may prove to be very difficult or tricky to manage (Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 28). This is because although the people coming from these different areas of specialisation all focus on the same human being or category of individuals, they may still find it difficult to understand each other and to see what the other is saying in the right context and in harmony with their vision. This may lead to a paralysis in discernment or to an exercise which is carried out once and then never repeated due to the seemingly unproductive experience which it proved to be. Moreover, not all discussions and dialogues aimed at discernment may lead to a final consensus. However, this should not discourage catechists and those responsible for catechesis. At times, discernment may require more cooking which in itself "means living with the tensions and conflicts and allowing mature solutions to emerge over time rather than yielding to the temptation of the quick-fix" (Marmion 2021, 454).

Synodality in catechesis can also be demonstrated *ad extra.* This is evident in the participation of catechists and other pastoral operators who labour in the catechetical ministry but are also active in other diocesan bodies and in diocesan life and beyond it. Catechesis can never be considered as an isolated ministry, or as a standalone ministry, but both in the Diocesan Pastoral Council and in the diverse Parish Pastoral Councils, catechesis is seen as an integral part of the evangelisation project of the entire Church, hand-in-hand with other ministries, both local and those on a wider universal level (International Theological Commission 2018, 81–84). In this respect, the process of discernment takes a central place as well (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 30; Segreteria Generalis Synodi 2023, 31, 33–38). "Discernment is a hallmark of synodal spirituality. In a synodal Church, decisions are the result of communitarian discernment. Synodal discernment, before being institutionalized, must be a way of life, involving reciprocal dialogue and mutual exchange of gifts" (Pierre 2021, 15). Synodality in catechesis with other Church organisations and pastoral structures can be described as co-responsibility in the ecclesial action of evangelisation (International Theological Commission 2014, 125–26; Pierre 2021, 21).

The process of catechesis which the different local and universal structures all converge to aid and to impart is therefore not a catechesis which is just lip service, but a catechesis which is a process based on experience and on practice by those who are called to put it into action. Those engaged in catechesis are called to evangelise at a deeper level, and not just by word of mouth. Witness is a type of catechesis which transcends languages and speak much louder than words (Czerny 2022, 79). This is true witness which is faithful to the Christian call and it is very important in catechesis. As an action, it should precede all the words which the catechist may utter. This is the most effective catechesis in our contemporary secularised world since it is based on the advice given by Pope Paul VI in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*

where in paragraph 41 he reminds all those involved in evangelisation and catechesis that "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" (Paul VI 1975, 41).

One of the greatest changes brought about by the Second Vatican Council constituted catechists as the primary pastoral operators who are central to the process of catechesis. Whilst before the Second Vatican Council, catechesis was considered as part of the ministry of priests and of seminarians only, after the Council, the lay faithful started to take on a more significant role in it as catechists. Today, the majority of catechists are lay persons, and the ministry of teaching as catechist is entrusted to lay persons.

The prominent place given to lay persons in the Second Vatican Council is grafted in the majority of the Constitutions, Declarations and Decrees of this Council. Notwithstanding this, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* has the pride of place for lay persons and the ministry of the laity. This Decree centres around the apostolate of the laity not in terms of demand and supply, that is, the laity being present and inserted where there is a lack of human resources and of ordained ministers and religious persons. *Apostolicam Actuositatem* posits that lay persons participate fully in the evangelisation mission of the Church in view of their baptism which makes them co-participants in the priestly, kingly and prophetic mission of Christ (*AA*; International Theological Commission 2014, 67, 70; 2018, 46, 53, 55–56). The Decree goes even further stating that in virtue of the Sacrament of Baptism, lay persons are duty bound to offer their particular share in the mission of evangelisation (*AA* 25).

The fact that the lay faithful have a central role to play in the Church's mission of evangelisation in itself calls for synodality. This is because lay persons are neither called to create missions of evangelisation which counteract each other, nor to embark on so called missions of evangelisation which are not in line with the mission of evangelisation of the entire Church. On the other hand, lay persons are called to work and walk in tandem with the entire Church so that the Kingdom of God reaches to the end of the earth, and especially in those places where it proves difficult to achieve through the endeavours of priests and ordained ministers alone. Catechists as pastoral ministers have access to many different environments and contexts. This gives them the possibility to proclaim the Word of God in many different places linked to the world of work, in private homes and also during moments of rest and recreation (*LG* 33; *AA* 2). Notwithstanding this, catechists do not have a carte blanche, but they have to provide a service in syntony and in synodality with the rest of the Church, seeking to achieve the same goals and mission of the Church. Seen in this perspective, synodality is not only a way in which different pastoral operators can work together towards a common goal, but it is also seen as a particular way in which the Catholic Church lives and puts into practice its ministry today.

All of the qualities mentioned by Pope Francis in *Antiquum Ministerium* are somehow linked to synodality and are central to creating a synodal attitude in

catechesis. All catechists who have and live these qualities in their lives are already on a synodal journey, and it will therefore be easier for them to accompany others on the journey of discovering Jesus in their lives and to help others respond affirmatively to his call (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 30). Still, one must bear in mind that nurturing these very specific characteristics is not always easy for catechists who may have been trained in other ways of helping others to grow in the faith. This state of affairs may at times be a hindrance to synodality. Moreover, it will not be an easy task to change catechists who have been formed and trained in other ways, and who have exercised their ministry in different ways, to change their *modus operandi*. Notwithstanding this, catechists who seek to adapt themselves to the emerging scenario and to the training which is required to achieve these goals have truly embarked on a synodal journey.

Taking a synodal route today means forging our way forward together in harmony under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit through participation and coresponsibility (International Theological Commission 2018, 42, 48, 67). At certain times, this requires obedience and respect towards those who have been specifically chosen to lead the community and can therefore see the entire picture of evangelisation in a more holistic way (*AA* 23). All the diverse forms of evangelisation both as actions of the lay faithful and of ordained ministers can be called ecclesial if they are done in unity with the Church and with the same intentions of the Church.

The catechist's role in accompanying the interlocutors in the process of catechesis is a very important aspect in our contemporary secularised world. This is because the current cultural context does not offer any help to the interlocutors in terms of a religious socialisation. This has to be provided in its entirety by the catechist who is accompanying the person. Accompaniment also denotes the notion that whoever is on a journey, no matter how simple this is, has an important role to play in the same itinerary, together with a contribution which is necessary for the success of the journeying together. Those who are accompanying others on their catechetical journey of discovery of the faith always need to keep in mind that as much as it is important for them to take a proactive role in leading others towards the aims and objectives which they want to achieve, they likewise need to be constantly in tune and listening attentively to the cues which the persons whom they are accompanying may be giving them from time to time. This recalls the synodal activity of listening in order to be able to speak in the Spirit as an integral part of synodality and of walking and being together (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 30). Moreover, those who are in the process of being accompanied do not only listen to their mentors, but they are duty bound to make themselves heard because they are also an important and valuable asset of journeying together (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 30). The positive outcomes of journeying together can be fully and effectively achieved when those who are being accompanied speak up and make themselves heard, while those who are accompanying them listen to them sincerely so that they can offer the best possible service of

accompaniment in our particular circumstances of a secularised world. This listening and speaking evokes once again the notion of dialogue, where both those who are accompanying and those who are accompanied listen and speak to each other thus making the journeying together more fecund (Synodus Episcoporum 2021, 22).

Conclusion

Catechesis is not only that action by which the catechist transmits the faith to others or helps them to live the faith in a more mature way. It is primarily bearing witness. If catechesis is not endowed with witnessing, little will it influence the contemporary interlocutor. Synodality in catechesis is a manifestation of this witness on different levels. It starts from the witness which catechists are called to bear in front of those whom they are accompanying in their walk of faith. This level of witnessing is not only *ad extra*, but it has an *ad intra* aspect since it consists of the witness which catechists are called to give to each other by working harmoniously together and supporting each other in the journey of the Church towards the Kingdom of God whilst still in the world. This is done through listening and speaking, and discernment. This form of communion which denotes a stronger underlying ecclesiology of communion is the best witness one can give. It constitutes the best and most evident act of evangelisation which the Church can perform in the contemporary secularised socio-cultural milieu, where most of the people are more inclined and preoccupied with thinking about themselves rather than joining forces to work towards one goal.

Bibliography

Alberich, Emilio. 2002. *La catechesi oggi: Manuale di catechetica fondamentale*. Leumann (TO): Elle Di Ci.

Alberich, Emilio, and Jerome Vallabaraj. 2004. *Communicating a Faith That Transforms: A Handbook of Fundamental Catechetics*. Bangalore: Kristu Jyoti Publications.

Bissoli, Cesare. 2022. *Direttorio per la catechesi: una guida alla lettura*. Roma: LAS.

Blanchard, Shaun. 2023. "Synodality and Catholic Amnesia. The Conciliarist Tradition Gets a New Name." *Commonweal*, October 9. Accessed October 16, 2023. https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/synodality-catholic-amnesia.

Chapp, Larry. 2022. "The Challenge of Collegiality and the Controversy over Synodality." *The Catholic World Reporter*, September 26. https://www.catholicworldreport.com/2022/09/26/the-challenge-of-collegiality-and-the-controversy-over-synodality/.

Czerny, Michael. 2022. "A Church Which 'Journeys Together': Synodality in the Era of Pope Francis." *Perspectiva Teológica* 54 (1): 67–88. https://doi.org/10.20911/21768757v54n1p67/2022.

Deutsche Bischofskonferenz and ZdK. 2019. "Der Sinodale Weg." Accessed March 14, 2023. https://www.synodalerweg.de/.

Domingues, Felipe. 2022. "Brazilian Bishop: I Hope the Synod Will End Clericalism in the Church." *America* 226 (6): 1–3.

Faggioli, Massimo. 2020. "From Collegiality to Synodality: Promise and Limits of Francis's 'Listening Primacy.'" *Irish Theological Quarterly* 85 (4): 352–69. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021140020916034.

Francis. 2015. *Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops*. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html#:~:text=Your%20Eminences%2C,and%20thanksgiving%20to%20the%20Lord.

Francis. 2019. *Lettera del Santo Padre Francesco al Popolo di Dio che è in Cammino in Germania*. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/letters/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190629_lettera-fedeligermania.html.

Francis. 2021. Apostolic Letter Issued *Motu Proprio Antiquum Ministerium* Instituting the Ministry of Catechist. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20210510_antiquum-ministerium.html.

Garth, Alexander. 2021. "Warning against the Synodal Path." *First Things*, May 13. https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2021/05/a-warning-against-the-synodal-path.

Hatt, Cecilia A. 2022. "Synodality: Catholics Demand a Reform of the Clericalist Priesthood." *La Croix International*, August 20. https://international.la-croix.com/news/religion/synodality-catholics-demand-a-reform-of-the-clericalist-priesthood/15730.

International Theological Commission. 2014. Sensus Fidei *in the Life of the Church*. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html.

International Theological Commission. 2018. *Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church*. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20180302_sinodalita_en.html.

Liedl, Jonathan. 2022. "International Coalition of Bishops Offers 'Fraternal Letter of Concern' to German Episcopacy Over 'Synodal Path.'" *National Catholic Register*, April 12. https://www.ncregister.com/news/breaking-international-coalition-of-bishops-offers-fraternal-letter-of-concern-to-german-episcopacy-over-synodal-path?gclid=Cj0KCQjwtsCgBhDEARIsAE7RYh1-rpGMeJGxRGkwbSaN5wR10v2ITPgR7qh-COfVMwAEwIYBXvBBq7QaAkVpEALw_wcB.

Marmion, Declan. 2021. "'A Church That Listens': Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church." *New Blackfriars* 102 (1100): 442–58. https://doi.org/10.1111/nbfr.12609.

Paul VI. 1975. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

Pierre, Christophe. 2021. "Synodality and Pope Francis: The Church That Walks Together." *The Jurist: Studies in Church Law and Ministry* 77 (1): 3–23. https://doi.org/10.1353/jur.2021.0020.

Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. 2020. *Directory for Catechesis*. London: Catholic Truth Society.

Second Vatican Council. 1964. Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_sp.html (= *LG*).

Second Vatican Council. 1965. Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity *Apostolicam Actuositatem*. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html (= *AA*).

Segreteria Generalis Synodi. 2023. *XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Instrumentum Laboris. First Session (October 2023). For a Synodal Church. Communion – Participation – Mission*. https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/phases/universal-stage/il/ENG_INSTRUMENTUM-LABORIS.pdf.

Synodus Episcoporum. 2021. *For a Synodal Church. Communion – Participation – Mission. Preparatory Document*. https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/common/preparatory-document/pdf-21x21/en_prepa_book.pdf.

Willey, Petroc, and Joseph D. White. 2021. *Companion to the Directory for Catechesis*. Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor. http://public.eblib.com/choice/PublicFullRecord.aspx?p=6425863.

Awaken the Awareness of Transcendence: New Strategies for Catholic Schools in the Netherlands to Deal with Secularization

THEO VAN DER ZEE ![ORCID]
Radboud University, Nijmegen, theo.vanderzee@ru.nl

Abstract: Secularization poses serious challenges for religiously affiliated schools. Catholic schools in the Netherlands find themselves embarrassed regarding their educational endeavor because they are unable or lack the inspiration to talk about this subject in religious terms. This article aims to explore new ways of overcoming this embarrassment. Firstly, an overview is presented of the current situation and of the embarrassment of Catholic schools, in terms of their problematic choice of actions. Based on a critical-dialogical convergence of theological and pedagogical considerations, a Catholic vision on the educational endeavor is subsequently developed that is understood in terms of interruption, the other, and transcendence. From this vision of the educational endeavor, new strategies are presented – at the community level of Catholic schools, and at the individual level of teachers, school leaders, and governors – to promote an openness to receiving new, unexpected insights and possibilities. The receipt of these insights and possibilities is closely related to an awareness of transcendence, in both a secular and a religious sense. The initial findings of recent empirical research on the impact of these strategies are presented.

Keywords: Catholic schools, religious erosion, awareness of transcendence, Catholic vision on education, strategies

The endeavor of Catholic schools is closely connected to the Church's religious mission. While a Catholic school is understood as one "which a competent ecclesiastical authority or a public ecclesiastical juridic person directs or which ecclesiastical authority recognizes as such through a written document" (*Code of Canon Law* 1983, no. 803.1), in reality, a school is Catholic if it aims to employ a Catholic vision in educating students. The Church considers Catholic schools to be "a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed" (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977, no. 8). As Catholic schools are intrinsically connected to the Church's mission, they understand their educational endeavor in terms of the humanization of man and the world, and the formation of the person as a whole, "so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society" (Miller 2007, 454). The 'proprium' of a Catholic school is related to the religious perspective:

> No less than other schools does the Catholic school pursue cultural goals and the human formation of youth. But its proper function is to create for the school community a special atmosphere animated by the Gospel spirit of freedom and charity, to help youth grow according to the new creatures they were made through baptism as they develop their own personalities, and finally to order the whole of human culture to the news of salvation so that the knowledge the students gradually acquire of the world, life and man is illumined by faith (*GE* 8).

By striving for the formation of the whole person, Catholic schools deliver a public good to society and are valued as institutions where one can learn – from a religious perspective – what it means to live well.

The striving of Catholic schools for their educational mission is influenced by societal developments, such as secularization, which is a phenomenon with many shapes and layers. Essentially, secularization refers to the phenomenon that people find meaning in life more in terms of inner-worldly connections and less in terms of transcendence (Bruce 2002; Ester, Halman, and de Moor 1994). 'Secularization' does not necessarily imply a loss of awareness of transcendence; it can also mean a different form of awareness, which confines the meaning of life to inner-worldly connections. 'Religiousness,' on the other hand, refers to the phenomenon that people find meaning in life in terms of the interplay between the world and a transcendent actor: God. 'Transcendence' is a core concept regarding meaning in life 'beyond' inner-worldly connections, and could therefore provide access to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of both religiousness and secularization (Taylor 2007). In this article, a response from Catholic schools to secularization is investigated from the viewpoint of what religion means when interacting with the world, in terms of promoting an awareness of transcendence.

As they are influenced by secularization, Catholic schools are faced with an erosion of their religiously motivated and oriented endeavor; they are challenged to reconsider it and to find new and responsive ways to act. This article investigates strategies used by Catholic schools in the Netherlands to address secularization in a proactive, transformative way; that is, to turn the tide of religious erosion. The obvious question is, which strategies appear to be the most promising in terms of Catholic schools dealing effectively with secularization?

To answer this question, in the first section an overview is presented of the current situation regarding religiousness and secularization in the Netherlands in general, and in Catholic schools in particular. In the second section, theological and pedagogical considerations are brought to the fore, with a view to designing responsive strategies. The third section presents two new clusters of strategies intended to turn the tide. The article ends with a conclusion and discussion.

1. Setting the Scene: Catholic Schools in a Secularized Country

In this section, an overview of the situation of Catholic schools is presented in the contemporary context. First, the societal context of the Netherlands is described in terms of secularization, individualization, and diversity; and second, the author elaborates on how Catholic schools are influenced by these developments.

1.1. Societal Context of Secularization, Individualization, and Diversity

The Netherlands is one of the most secularized and individualized countries in the world. No fewer than 67.8% of the Dutch population regard themselves as not belonging to any religious community or church (Bernts and Berghuijs 2016, 21–31). The Catholic Church in particular has not only been confronted by a decline in church membership – and a sharp one, among young people; the said authors also observe that the participation rate for religious activities such as the Eucharist and prayer is in decline. The Catholic Church is afflicted by double secularization: there are fewer church members, and the participation of those who remain is dwindling. Although immigration from other European countries (as well as from outside Europe) has brought in new members, churches continue to become more and more marginalized in Dutch society.

Other indicators of religiousness are religious belief and experience. While 58% of church members surveyed experience a transcendent actor or God, only 6% of people who consider themselves non-religious and non-spiritual do the same. Most (but not all) church members emphasize their orientation toward or dependence on a transcendent actor or God through whom they experience guidance and trust in their lives. In only a few cases do secular people refer to God, and in most of those cases in a negative way. Others who describe themselves as spiritual but do not belong to a church indicate that they experience themselves as part of a larger whole, but do not necessarily connect themselves to a transcendent actor or God. Their experience is more oriented towards an inner-worldly reality. The awareness of transcendence appears to be a concept that is very much under strain (Bernts and Berghuijs 2016, 97–119).

The decline of religious affiliation and belief in God in the Netherlands is explained mainly by the modernization of ideologies alongside the expansion of education. As the Dutch population was becoming more and more highly educated, a secular worldview was disseminated among them, which in turn threatened the existing religious plausibility structure. The decline is also explained by the modernization of economics with the rise of existential security, as well as by the modernization of social ties with diminishing Christian socialization. The extent to which educational expansion has driven secularization is remarkable, and largely attributed to the fact

that in the Netherlands, religion is no longer perceived as inseparable from national identity – as it is in Poland, for example (Kregting et al. 2018).

From a sociological perspective, secularization is considered an important and apparently irreversible aspect of the processes of modernization of society (Bruce 2002; Dobbelaere 2002; de Hart, Dekker, and Halman 2013). Religion has lost its societal and public functions, and become privatized and marginalized within its own differentiated sphere. However, research has shown that the reality is far more complicated, multi-layered, and diffuse than the secularization thesis would have us believe (de Hart, Dekker, and Halman 2013, 1–12). Religion is changing shape, becoming less institutional and traditional, and developing a more individual and dynamic character. One should therefore rather speak about "a 'profusion' of many (non) religious positions and possibilities among which people are reflexively (i.e. in a non-obvious or naïve way) moving, searching, doubting (partly inspired by the ethics of authenticity)" (de Groof et al. 2012, 47).

Religious diversity is another characteristic of Dutch society. The Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) with which the Netherlands acquired its independence was in part religiously motivated. As a result of independence, the Protestant religion became privileged, but it was not the only one. Catholic churches and Jewish communities were tolerated, and from the end of the 18th century were more or less guaranteed freedom of religion. Today, Dutch society is religiously diverse, consisting of Roman Catholic (18.2%) and Protestant (13.2%) churches, as well as Islamic (5.6%), Jewish, Hindu, and other (5.9%) communities (Schmeets and Houben 2023).[1]

1.2. The Embarrassment of Catholic Schools

Although their impact differs depending on the national context, phenomena such as secularization, diversity, and individualization influence the way in which Catholic schools perceive themselves, fulfill their religiously motivated and oriented educational endeavor, and strive for the humanization of man and the world and the formation of the whole person (Grace 2002; Pring 2018; Wilkin 2018).

In the Netherlands, Catholic schools represent almost one-third of all schools for primary and secondary education. They are recognized by the episcopal Dutch Council for Catholic Schools and supported by government legislation that guarantees freedom of education and accommodates all schools – both religiously affiliated and public ones – from 1917 onwards with full state funding. Since then, they have received the same proportion of funding as all other schools, based on the number of students who attend the school. They are not only financed but also controlled by the government, in terms of the validity and quality of education. As with all other

---

[1] Due to the use of slightly different research methods, these percentages differ from the results obtained by Bernts and Berghuijs (2016); however, the general picture is quite similar.

schools, Catholic schools are hence regularly visited and supervised by the governmental Inspectorate of Education.

Although Dutch society has become highly secularized, the majority of students and their parents still opt for religiously affiliated schools: 29% of all children in primary and secondary education attend public schools, 30% Catholic schools, 25% Protestant schools, and 16% 'other' schools (Islamic, Hindu and other denominations).[2] The percentage of students attending Catholic schools is still relatively high, in stark contrast to the double secularization faced by the Catholic Church. This remarkable finding may be explained first by the fact that Catholic schools can be found in all parts of the country – in urban as well as rural areas. The spread and availability of Catholic schools are largely connected to the striving of the Catholic Church to fulfil her mission and provide educational opportunities for all children, with a view to their personal as well as societal emancipation (Lijphart 1975; de Groof et al. 2012). The second reason for this interesting finding may be the stability of Catholic schools and the high esteem in which they have been held over a long period of time. Catholic schools are well known for their high rate of academic achievement, as well as for the attention they pay to personal formation (Dijkstra and Peschar 1996; Bryk, Lee, and Holland 1993).

Although Catholic schools are still spread throughout the country, available to all, and highly esteemed in the Netherlands, societal developments such as secularization, diversity and individualization have influenced the way these schools perceive themselves, and indeed, how they strive for their educational endeavor. When asked about the Catholicity of their schools, teachers, school leaders, and governors reveal considerable embarrassment, or perhaps shyness, preferring to state that their schools are like any other (public) schools, and provide excellent educational quality (Dupont 2010, 25–42; van der Zee 2015). This embarrassment or shyness is evidence not only of an inability to talk about the educational endeavor in religious terms but also of a lack of inspiration. The nature of the embarrassment can be clarified in terms of two symptomatic issues: the schools' connection to the Catholic Church, and the subject of religious education.

First, the connection to the Catholic Church has become considerably looser in the past few decades. The Catholic bishops and their Dutch Council for Catholic Schools intervene only marginally regarding the governance, leadership and teaching at schools. Since the 1960s they have considered these to be matters for the lay school governors, leaders, and teachers, except in the case of religious education. Schools generally appear to be pleased with this loose connection and have indicated that what they seek from the Church is mainly inspiration and encouragement (van de Donk 2010). At present, Catholic schools are not visited or supervised by

---

2   https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2017/38/ruim-70-procent-leerlingen-naar-bijzonder-onderwijs.

an ecclesiastical inspectorate on a regular basis and their teachers, leaders, and governors rarely meet and speak to bishops or other representatives of the Church.

The second issue concerns the subject of religious education. In almost every Catholic school the subject is now named 'worldview education,' and aims to enhance the development of students in terms of ethics and worldview (Bertram-Troost and Visser 2017). While the intent of the name change and transition was to improve its practical relevance, the subject has lost much of its systematic attention to religious traditions and the Christian tradition in particular, in favor of the exploration of personal and societal interests. The name change and transition of the subject suggest a loss of awareness of transcendence.

Buijs (2020) saw three possible explanations for this considerable embarrassment or shyness. First, the legal framework for freedom of education is understood as primarily an opportunity to educate students regarding their own circle, the Catholic community. Catholic schools have neglected to systematically and continuously elaborate a Catholic vision of pedagogics, as well as the societal impact of their education and governance. Although the legal framework is understood as an invitation to develop such a vision, teachers, school leaders, and governors appear satisfied with being able to establish their own schools that are fully state-funded and to experience the freedom of designing their own education to a certain extent. Second, secularization has had an enormous impact on the Catholic population. Because of the sharp decline in participation in religious practices, the available knowledge, insights, and expertise regarding the Christian tradition have disappeared very quickly. Teachers, school leaders, and governors were not able to find an appropriate language for talking about the Catholicity of their schools. It was all or nothing: they used exclusively Church speech when talking about schools, or they threw everything overboard that referred to the Church or religiousness. Third, the fact that Catholic schools are funded in full by the state made them increasingly, almost exclusively dependent on the government. Because they are not only financed but also controlled by the government, in terms of the validity and quality of education, schools perceive the government to be the authority to which they are accountable, virtually to the exclusion of all others. In short, freedom of education is perceived by Catholic schools far too much as the end of the battle, and not enough as an opportunity for reinvigorating their mission and educational endeavor. Thus, the religious erosion that has been happening for several decades already evokes widespread embarrassment or shyness today among teachers, leaders, and governors of Catholic schools.

 In summary, although there is a widely dispersed and highly esteemed network of Catholic schools in the Netherlands, teachers, leaders, and governors appear to be rather uncomfortable with the Catholicity and religious identity of their schools. This embarrassment presents itself in issues such as the connection of the schools to the Church, or the subject of religious education. It is articulated as a 'mental de-pillarisation' (Huyse 1987) or 'de-animation' (van de Donk 2001):

the organizational infrastructure is still there, but the religious spirit seems to have left the organization.

Given the situation of Catholic schools in the Netherlands described above, the question arises: what can teachers, school leaders, and governors possibly do to reverse the trend of religious erosion? The issue is highly problematic, in terms of their striving for the religiously inspired endeavor of the humanization of man and the world and the formation of the person as a whole. 'Religious erosion' refers to the awareness of transcendence being very much under pressure, especially in terms of the interplay between the world and a transcendent actor – God.

To answer the question, it is first necessary to develop a coherent and convincing vision of the educational endeavor in the current situation, and then look for appropriate strategies for changing the situation.

2. Theoretical Considerations

In this section, a practical, relevant vision is developed for the educational endeavor of Catholic schools in the contemporary circumstances. This is done by presenting, first, theological considerations regarding points of application of transcendence in the contemporary world; and second, pedagogical considerations pertaining to the transcendent dimension of education and teaching. The theological and pedagogical considerations are then brought together in a critical dialogue, with a view to producing a practical, relevant vision that could enable teachers, leaders, and governors of Catholic schools to turn the tide of religious erosion.

2.1. Theological Considerations for Religion in the Contemporary World

From a contemplative perspective on theology, the Dutch Catholic theologian Erik Borgman (2006) aims not so much to explain phenomena such as religion, secularization, and modern culture, as to deal with them heuristically. He inquires how the sacred is revealed in the world, and reflects on how God manifests Himself in it. Because God and salvation are assumed to be already present in the world – albeit in a veiled and fragmentary way – the world is an invitation to live receptively from what arises. The world is considered a *locus theologicus;* that is, constitutively part of the event of God's salvation. Religion "eventually emerges as imaginative dealing with the world that is evoked by the sacred in the world, and that through this imagination, reveals this sacredness" (Borgman 2006, 67; my own translation).

Borgman (2017) perceives the world as full of situations in which people take care of each other, work for a living, educate children, and flee to find a safer place to live. From a contemplative perspective, in these situations, fullness is detected rather

than hollowness, abundance instead of scarcity, excess rather than shortage. If one is open to this fullness, abundance, and excess, a new reality burgeons in which traces of God's grace and promise can be seen. The new reality invites people to be committed to devotion and dedication. By consistently using a contemplative perspective as a heuristic, Borgman perceives the world, modern culture, and human action as deposits of God's grace and salvation, and religion as a way to bring them to the surface, allow them to breathe and strengthen them.

Religion opens the possibility of discovering that God's grace and salvation can come to light, and also that God can make all things new without abandoning what is old (Borgman 2020). It can especially be found in what the modern culture of malleability, management, and control marginalizes: experiences of dependency, contingency, and vulnerability. Religion aims not to smoothen these experiences but to ground them in the heart of the individual, and deal with them imaginatively. When this happens, transcendence can come to light. Experiences of dependency, contingency, and vulnerability, and the possibility that transcendence will come to light, interrupt the carefully constructed story of modern understanding of oneself, the other, and the world in terms of malleability, management, and control. From a contemplative perspective, religion reminds one not to put these experiences aside, but to focus on them in order to promote a sensitivity and awareness of transcendence.

In short, from a contemplative perspective on theology, religion is perceived as a phenomenon that emerges as an imaginative dealing with the world and what arises in it in order to live on and be committed to God's grace and salvation. Religion is not intended to bring about God's grace and salvation, but to bring them to the surface, allowing them to breathe and strengthen them. Possible traces of transcendence can be found by being open to and interpreting one's experiences of dependency, contingency, and vulnerability.

2.2. Pedagogical Considerations for Education and Teaching

Nowadays, educational practice is dominated by theories of constructivism, which involves the idea that students must construct their insights, understandings, and knowledge by themselves. This dominance has led to a significant change, accelerating a shift from teaching to learning and promoting the idea of teaching as facilitating, supporting, or scaffolding student learning (Biesta 2013). In many countries (including the Netherlands), resistance to this dominance is discernible, inspired by the longing to ground an existential pedagogy in the heart of the educational endeavor. From an existential perspective on pedagogy (Meirieu 2007; Biesta 2013), the emergence of the human person coming into the world lies at the heart of the educational endeavor. Education aims to awaken the desire in students to take a mature approach to the world. The educational task "consists in arousing the desire in

another human being for wanting to exist in and with the world in a grown-up way, that is *as subject*" (Biesta 2017, 7).

The task can be understood in terms of a dialogue. Students are invited to listen to what or who is calling them to be responsive and to take up their responsibility and be responsible for the social and natural other. To a large extent, the elusiveness of the call and the unenforceability of responses to their initiatives make the emergence of the human person uncertain, and the striving for it a risky enterprise. In such circumstances, education cannot be thought of as strong, secure, or predictable; rather, the educational way is slow, difficult, and subtle.

To understand the existential perspective on education as well as on teaching, the notion of transcendence is crucial. It is closely related to the indispensable role of the other for its coming into the world. In line with Levinas, Gert Biesta (2013, 43–58) identifies the other not simply as another person or subject that resembles oneself, but as the Other that transcends the self – either as a teacher (another person from whom one can learn) or as a transcendent actor: God. The latter can be understood as the secular 'being among beings' but also as the religious 'beyond being.' From a secular perspective, the introduction of God as the Other 'beyond being' interrupts the fundamental incompleteness of human thinking. From a religious perspective, this introduction refers to the possibility that a transcendent actor might 'break through' by means of new insights. Both the secular and the religious understanding of the other are seen as invitations to education to be open to the interruption – without guarantee of success. The role of the teacher is not simply to identify with the Other and its authority, but to awaken a sensitivity and awareness of transcendence in education. However, teachers cannot be sure of the results of their teaching regarding the 'coming into the world.' It is out of their hands, but they must "take the idea and possibility of revelation seriously, as both a religious and a secular concept. In doing this I have tried to suggest that transcendence cannot be contained to the other as another human being. As soon as one brings transcendence in, one has to take it seriously all the way down – or perhaps we should say, all the way 'up.'" (Biesta 2013, 56).

By placing the emergence of the human person into the world at its heart, the educational endeavor becomes something that is not at one's disposal; it transcends one's actions. It is about the Other who comes from the outside and adds, rather than just confirming what is already there. Students are dependent on the Other that transcends their selves for their coming into the world, and teachers should bring transcendence into their thinking and realization of teaching. By interrupting, teachers can awaken a sensitivity and awareness of transcendence in their students.

2.3. A Practical Vision Relevant for the Educational Endeavor

In this section, a practical vision relevant for the educational endeavor of Catholic schools is developed, on the basis of what is called the critical-dialogical convergence model between theology and pedagogy (Nipkow 1975, 173–77). The convergence is considered critical-dialogical, which means that pedagogical considerations may be criticized from a theological perspective and vice versa.

Catholic schools should be understood first and foremost as pedagogical communities in which educational practices are primordial and essential. Educational practices are never only to attain certain educational goals; they always have more distant aims. They are less about the transfer of knowledge, and far more aimed at the formation of a person – understood as transformation – through being addressed and interrupted by the Other. Because of their religious affiliation, Catholic schools are expected to understand their educational practices not only in terms of the other, transcendence and a risky enterprise but more specifically in terms of meaning in life 'beyond' inner-worldly connections.

What is to be done for Catholic schools to enable them to formulate a vision for their educational practices in terms of meaning 'beyond' inner-worldly connections? Educational practices come first; and a vision story, in which schools give meaning (in a secular and religious sense) to their practices, comes second. Therefore, Catholic schools should first enhance their educational practices for students to encounter the Other and be interrupted. This can be done by developing and realizing educational activities such as encounters with other people with whom students may not be familiar (for example the elderly, migrants, homeless people, or people from another socio-economic, cultural, or religious background), as well as educational activities in which teachers interrupt students' desires, focus their attention on something outside their known territory, slow down their experiences and feelings of dependency, contingency, and vulnerability by inviting them to write about them or support them in persevering in areas where they experience difficulty.

Second, Catholic schools should identify these encounters and other educational activities as warmly welcomed interruptions. Interruptions are invitations to ask oneself what is happening and how it can be interpreted. The encounters and activities interrupt people's understanding of themselves, the other and the world, cause them to realize that their previous understanding is inadequate and awaken the longing for a new understanding. Identifying encounters as interruptions promotes the transformation of students (and of teachers too); they are no longer the people they were previously.

Third, Catholic schools should enhance the imaginative interpretation of interruptions, to encourage students to come to new insights and possibilities. Imaginative interpretation is boosted with the help of stories. To interpret the emergence of insights in terms of 'beyond being,' religious stories in the form of biblical narratives

(for example) are indispensable (Ricoeur 1995). Religious stories speak of the world in a non-descriptive, poetic way. In so doing they create a textural world for those who listen to them to figure out the identity of the transcendent and be able to speak God's name. God's name is not presented directly but is disclosed or revealed through the interpretation of the story. By interpreting themselves 'in front of' these stories, people can religiously make sense of events in which they are interrupted. (They do however risk their self-understanding and transformation, in a religious sense.)

Fourth, Catholic schools should tell their stories of encounters (and other educational activities) as warmly welcomed practices of being interrupted and interrupting, bear witness to their transformative character, and include the notion of transcendence in thinking about them. Put differently, Catholic schools are invited to relate their educational practices in such a manner as to encourage students to take a mature approach to the world, as a story of transformation through being addressed and interrupted by transcendence – in not only a secular but (even more) in a religious sense.

Bringing together the theological and pedagogical considerations in a critical-dialogical convergence, the vision of Catholic schools for their educational endeavor should be understood in terms of interruption, the other, and transcendence. Educational practices of being interrupted by and interrupting the other will encourage new insights and make it possible for transcendence to emerge. This emergence could be in a secular as well as a religious sense. In the contemporary societal context of secularization, individualization, and diversity, however, the emergence of transcendence is not evident, and certainly not in religious terms. In this context, new strategies must be developed to awaken the sensitivity to and awareness of transcendence. This shall be addressed in the next section.

3. New Strategies to Awaken the Awareness of Transcendence

In this section, two new clusters of strategies for awakening the awareness of transcendence are presented. First, a newly developed cluster of strategies is described that Catholic schools as pedagogical communities could use to understand their educational endeavor in terms of transcendence. Second, a newly developed cluster of strategies for teachers, school leaders, and governors is presented to be employed for the interpretation of their professional endeavor likewise.

3.1. New Strategies for Catholic Schools

The first cluster of strategies relates to the understanding and realization of the educational endeavor, and involves discernment strategies for prospectively reflecting on developments and events in order to decide what is to be done about them.

Discernment strategies involve activities to enable prospective reflection when developments or events interrupt the current praxis of schools and to establish what to do about them. Catholic schools in Western European countries face many issues; for example, students' declining motivation to study and learn, falling attendance at religious services in school, and the erosion of religious education. Events related to these issues interrupt both the daily praxis of Catholic schools and even more so their carefully constructed narratives of good education. From a systemic perspective, schools may take an instrumental approach to these interruptions, by shrinking back from issues and attempting to apply the current narrative (Bakker and Montessori 2016). They may try harder by using 'repair' strategies, for example by insisting to students and others that attending religious services is obligatory. They could also opt for strategies to develop or extend the current system further, for example by expanding school protocols on student behavior. Through these instrumental strategies, interruptions are set aside and dealt with, though the issues may well be solved in the short term.

What better strategies could Catholic schools employ to interpret interruptions wisely, in order to strive purposefully for their educational endeavor? The Christian tradition comprises various practices that include activities for living well, with and for others, with a view to the ultimate good. In this tradition, 'discernment' means the paradigm of receptive and critical reflection, deliberation, and judgment in a specific situation in order to strive for the ultimate good (Waaijman 2002). Although the Christian tradition encompasses various forms of discernment practice, they can all be characterized by four core qualities, each containing a cluster of various strategies for action: to look outwards, to look inwards, to deliberate with others, and to decide what to do. By using these strategies, Catholic schools can establish what to do with a view to the realization of their educational endeavor. Recently, the core features of a communal discernment practice for Catholic schools are developed that contain these clusters of strategies (van der Zee 2023).

A crucial feature of the discernment practice is to open up a situation for deliberation. Through deliberating, new insights may be discovered into what could possibly be done in response to what is happening or what has happened. Deliberation is not about having a debate; it means gathering around an issue and building an open dialogue to find new possibilities. To generate new possibilities, deliberation must use a contemplative gaze; that is, the desire to make sense of developments or events from the perspective of transcendence (Delbecq et al. 2004). A possible way to enable practicing a contemplative gaze is to introduce utopian stories that mediate a draft for a possible world as it would be if the future was in God's hands. A utopian story is one that interrupts the present situation: "The result of reading a utopia is that it puts into question what presently exists; it makes the actual world seem strange … [and] introduces a sense of doubt that shatters the obvious" (Ricoeur 1986, 299). By reading the developments or events in front of utopian stories, new insights and

possibilities can break through. If one is open to such a breakthrough, the idea and possibility of revelation are taken seriously, and the awareness of transcendence is awakened. However, the awakening is to be understood in terms of uncertainty and unenforceability and has no guarantees.

In short, Catholic schools can use discernment strategies to handle societal developments and events that interrupt their current praxis and invite them to address their educational endeavor. By using these strategies, schools are not setting interruptions aside; on the contrary, they see them as welcome opportunities to reinvigorate their educational endeavor. When using deliberation strategies, schools do not jump to predictable or rationally derived conclusions but open themselves up to unexpected new possibilities. By consistently using these strategies and developing a robust practice of discernment strategies, Catholic schools increase their openness to a transcendent breakthrough – in a religious sense.

3.2. New Strategies for Teachers, School Leaders, and Governors

The second cluster of strategies relates to the professional endeavor of teachers, leaders, and governors of Catholic schools, and involves strategies to open themselves up to interruptions in their personal and professional lives, and be able to interpret them as invitations to reconsider their personal and professional story.

Traditionally, Catholic schools in the Netherlands were populated by teachers, school leaders, and governors (as well as students) who identify themselves as Catholics. In contemporary times of religious diversity and erosion, it seems an impossible mission to recruit new colleagues who both define themselves as Catholics and are actively involved in the religious practices of the Catholic Church. The growing shortage of teachers and school leaders has made the situation even worse. What would be a fruitful strategy for inviting teachers, school leaders, and governors to commit themselves to the religiously inspired and oriented educational endeavor of Catholic schools? It is well known that personal biography is an important source for the stories that people tell about their professional lives (Kelchtermans 1994; Sugrue 2012). In their professional story, everyone gives meaning to developments or events that arise, interrupt their story, and challenge them to re-tell it. Developments or events interrupt because they are contingent; that is, it is understood that they are not necessary, but they are also not impossible. They can be experienced as positive (receiving new opportunities, giving birth) or as negative (losing one's job, or a loved one).

Modern life makes contingency even more complicated. In a world in which people can control and design their own lives to a large extent, dealing with and attributing meaning to uncertainty and uncontrollability has become a challenge for people, in both their personal and professional lives. Kurt Wuchterl (2011) proposed three modes for handling experiences of contingency, namely control, acceptance,

and encounter. 'Control' refers to the denial of the contingency of the event. People then interpret the event in terms of rational reasons. 'Acceptance' refers to the acknowledgment that there is no reason that sufficiently explains the occurrence of the event. People interpret the event by posing existential questions. 'Encounter' is the third mode of handling contingency: the contingent life event is experienced as an encounter with a transcendent reality that is other-than-reason. The interpretation of the occurrence of contingent life events can therefore be seen as a promising point of departure for enhancing the awareness of transcendence.

In the past few years, research has been conducted among (future) teachers, leaders, and governors of Catholic schools in the Netherlands not only to find out more about these modes for handling contingent life events but also about the possible impact on their actions as professionals (van den Brand 2016; van der Zee 2019; Copier, Hermans, and van der Zee 2020; Copier 2023; Bastiaansen 2023). All three modes of handling contingency may be used in response to various positive and negative contingent life events.

It has been suggested that the 'encounter' mode should be redefined into a mode of 'receiving,' in order to better understand what is happening in the handling process. 'Receiving' refers to a process: first, accepting the new reality that is created by the occurrence of the event, and second, deriving new insights from the encounter with this new reality that transcends the human framework, and extracting new possibilities from that encounter (Copier 2023, 78–92). The redefined mode includes an understanding of transcendence in both a secular and a religious sense. Various teachers, school leaders, and governors understand the receiving of new insights in a religious sense, that is: as a gift from transcendence. Research has also provided evidence that the mode of handling contingency experiences is related to professional action. For example, school leaders who have received contingency appear to be more willing to express educational aims that leave an openness for what comes from outside and transcends rational human understanding (Copier 2023, 93–112). Future teachers who have received contingency appear to be more open to using teaching strategies that understand the striving for the personal formation of students in terms of transcendence (Bastiaansen 2023).

In short, by interpreting their contingent life events, (future) teachers, school leaders, and governors are invited to reconsider and re-tell the narratives they tell about their personal and professional lives. This invitation increases the possibility of receiving new insights that come from the outside and that transcend rational human understanding, and subsequently awaken their sensitivity and awareness of transcendence. The interest of researchers in inviting people to interpret contingent events lies in the relationship with their professional actions. If their awareness of receiving contingency grows, it will stimulate them to include transcendence when formulating future aims or selecting teaching strategies. The invitation to interpret contingent life events and to re-tell their story includes fruitful strategies

to foster the sensitivity and awareness of transcendence. But again, no guarantees can be given.

Conclusion and Discussion

Secularization and religion are phenomena that mutually influence each other on a societal, community, and personal level. Although the secularization thesis wanted people to believe that religion would disappear, it is still emerging as an imaginative dealing with the world and making sense of life in terms of the interplay between the world and a transcendent actor, God. Secularization does not necessarily imply a loss of awareness of transcendence but could mean the restriction of transcendence to inner-worldly connections. Awareness of transcendence, therefore, is seen as a promising point of departure – not only to understand secularization, religion, and their mutual interplay, but also to design new strategies for dealing with these phenomena.

In this article, the awareness of transcendence in the context of Catholic schools in the Netherlands is explored and these institutions strive for a religiously inspired and religiously oriented educational endeavor. Catholic schools are faced with serious challenges, relating to a religious erosion that has taken place over the past few decades. These challenges involve not only their understanding of themselves as religiously affiliated schools, but also how they deal with issues that emerge from developments and events such as the decline of student motivation, falling attendance at religious services, and the erosion of the subject of religious education. Shrinking back from these issues or using 'repair' strategies to turn the tide appears not to be effective at all. New strategies are needed that stem from a Catholic vision of the educational endeavor, in terms of interruption, the other, and transcendence, and that align with "renewed consciousness of the hunger of the human heart that only Transcendence can satisfy" (Groome 1998, 323).

Two new clusters of strategies are presented with a view to enhancing the sensitivity and awareness of transcendence. Both clusters aim to increase an openness that is closely related to an awareness of transcendence in both a secular and a religious sense (Hermans 2020). At the community level, a cluster of deliberation strategies is presented to be used to come to new insights and possibilities that can be seen as a breakthrough. At the individual level, a cluster of interpretive strategies is presented for addressing contingent events (in both personal and professional life) in such a way as to receive new insights and derive new possibilities. Both clusters of strategies encourage an openness to receiving new insights and possibilities – not in a secure, manageable, and predictable way, but in a subtle, patient, and receptive way. By interpreting the receipt of new insights and the transformation that is caused by

them against the backdrop of religious stories, meaning can be discovered 'beyond' inner-worldly connections. By doing this, Catholic schools allow "… access to truths that transcend the mere data of the empirical and rational sciences, in order to open up to the whole of truth so as to respond to the deepest questions of the human soul that do not only concern immanent reality" (Congregation for Catholic Education 2022, no. 20).

Findings from empirical research provide evidence that school leaders who receive new insights and possibilities from personal experiences of contingency appear to formulate transcendentally-oriented educational aims (Copier 2023, 71–87), and future teachers appear to use teaching strategies with a view to personal formation in terms of transcendence (Bastiaansen 2023). These findings must be evaluated further in future research; however, they are promising in terms of designing new ways to awaken sensitivity to and the awareness of transcendence in the religiously motivated educational endeavor of Catholic schools. In this regard, it should be noted that the use of these newly developed clusters of strategies will go against the dominant grain of secure, predictable, and risk-free education, of which Catholic schools are a part. Thus, one should not be overly optimistic but plan to take friction, conflict, and confusion into account. The strategies presented here commit to an educational approach of slowing down, receiving no guarantees, accepting risks, and being open to what arises. This approach, based on a Catholic vision of education, is worth exploring further in terms of its implications and impact – not only on the educational practice of Catholic schools, but also on how the new generation of students – from a religious perspective – will come into and deal with the world, and discover their ultimate destiny (Giussani 2019).

Translated by Dave Buchanan

Bibliography

Bakker, Cok, and Nicolina Montesano Montessori, eds. 2016. *Complexity in Education: From Horror to Passion*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Bastiaansen, Anke. 2023. *Contingentie en Subjectificatie. De Invloed van Omgaan met Contingentie op het Pedagogisch Handelen van PABO Studenten*. [Contingency and Subjectification. The Influence of Dealing with Contingency on the Pedagogical Actions of Future Teachers]. Unpublished Master's Thesis, Nijmegen.

Bernts, Ton, and Joantine Berghuijs. 2016. *God in Nederland, 1966–2015*. [God in the Netherlands 1966–2015]. Utrecht: Ten Have.

Bertram-Troost, Gerdien, and Taco Visser. 2017. *Godsdienst/levensbeschouwing, wat is dat voor vak? Docentengodsdienst/levensbeschouwing over zichzelf en hun vak, nu en in de toekomst*. [Religious and Worldview Education. What's the Subject? Teachers about Themselves and the Subject, Now and in the Future]. Woerden: Verus.

Biesta, Gert. 2013. *The Beautiful Risk of Education*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Biesta, Gert. 2017. *The Rediscovery of Teaching*. New York: Routledge.

Borgman, Erik. 2006. *Metamorfosen: Over religie en moderne cultuur*. [Metamorphoses. On Religion and Modern Culture]. Kampen: Klement/Pelckmans.

Borgman, Erik. 2017. *Leven van wat komt: Een katholiek uitzicht op de samenleving*. [Living from What Arises. A Catholic View on Society]. Utrecht: Meinema.

Borgman, Erik. 2020. *Alle dingen nieuw: Een theologische visie voor de 21ste eeuw*. [All Things New. A Theological Vision for the 21st Century]. Utrecht: KokBoekencentrum.

Brand, Jos van den. 2016. *Levensverhaal en pedagogische handelingsoriëntatie in de laatmoderne tijd: Een kwalitatieve survey onder leraren in het Nederlandse katholieke basisonderwijs*. [Life Story and Pedagogical Orientations to Act in Late Modern Times. A Qualitative Survey among Teachers in Dutch Catholic Schools for Primary Education]. Münster: LIT.

Bruce, Steve. 2002. *God Is Dead: Secularization in the West. Religion in the Modern World*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bryk, Anthony S., Valerie E. Lee, and Peter Blakeley Holland. 1993. *Catholic Schools and the Common Good*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Buijs, Govert. 2020. "Van wie is het onderwijs? Van 'Goed Onderwijs!' Over de actuele opdracht van artikel 23." [To Whom Does Education Belong? To Good Education! On the Current Mission of Article 23]. In *Waar is het onderwijs goed voor? Anders denken over onderwijs*, edited by Chris Hermans, 46–69. Eindhoven: Damon.

Code of Canon Law. 1983. Accessed December 18, 2023. https://www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html.

Congregation for Catholic Education. 2022. *The Identity of the Catholic School. For a Culture of Dialogue*. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20220125_istruzione-identita-scuola-cattolica_en.html.

Copier, Jorien. 2023. *Stories about Good Education: A Qualitative Empirical Study into Formulating and Using School Vision Stories*. Waxmann: Münster. Accessed December 18, 2023. https://repository.ubn.ru.nl/handle/2066/298239.

Copier, Jorien, Chris Hermans, and Theo van der Zee. 2020. "Spirituality and Contingency in Narrative Biographical Interviews with Primary School Leaders of Catholic Schools in the Netherlands." *Acta Theologica*, no. Supp 30: 113–32. https://doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.sup30.5.

Delbecq, Andre L., Elizabeth Liebert, John Mostyn, Paul C. Nutt, and Gordan Walter. 2004. "Discernment and Strategic Decision Making: Reflections for a Spirituality of Organizational Leadership." In *Spiritual Intelligence at Work: Meaning, Metaphor, and Morals*, edited by Moses L. Pava and Patrick Primeaux, 139–74. Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Dijkstra, Annebert, and Jules L. Peschar. 1996. "Religious Determinants of Academic Attainment in the Netherlands." *Comparative Education Review* 40 (1): 47–65.

Dobbelaere, Karel. 2002. *Secularization: An Analysis at Three Levels*. Bruxelles: P.I.E.-Peter Lang.

Donk, Wim van de. 2001. *De gedragen gemeenschap: Over katholiek maatschappelijk organiseren de ontzuiling voorbij*. [The Borne Community. On Catholic Societal Organising beyond Depillarisation]. Den Haag: SDU Uitgevers.

Donk, Wim van de. 2010. *School en kerk verbinden: Een perspectief voor katholiek onderwijs: Eindrapport van de onafhankelijke verkenningscommissie ingesteld door de Nederlandse Bisschoppenconferentie en de Nederlandse Katholieke Schoolraad*. [To Connect School and Church. A Perspective for Catholic Education. Final Report of the Independent Committee]. Utrecht: Secretariaat RK Kerk and NKSR.

Dupont, Joost. 2010. *Identiteit is kwaliteit: De identiteitstheorie van Paul Ricoeur – als voorstudie voor een verheldering van de identiteit van katholieke basisscholen in Nederland.* [Identity Is Quality. Identity Theory of Paul Ricoeur – As Preliminary Study to Clarify the Identity of Catholic Schools for Primary Education in the Netherlands]. Budel: Damon.

Ester, Peter, Loek Halman, and Ruud de Moor. 1994. *The Individualizing Society: Value Change in Europe and North America.* Tilburg: Tilburg University Press.

Giussani, Luigi, and Stanley. 2019. *The Risk of Education: Discovering Our Ultimate Destiny.* Translated by Mariangela Sullivan. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Grace, Gerald. 2002. *Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets and Morality.* London: Routledge.

Groof, Jan de, Wim van de Donk, Gracienne Lauwers, Peter de Goede, and Tim Verhappen. 2012. *Reflections on Religion and Education in the Netherlands and Flanders.* Accessed December 18, 2023. https://www.academia.edu/70064362/Reflections_on_religion_and_education_in_The_Netherlands_and_Flanders.

Groome, Thomas H. 1998. *Educating for Life: A Spiritual Vision for Every Teacher and Parent.* New York: Crossroad.

Hart, Joep de, Paul Dekker, and Loek Halman, eds. 2013. *Religion and Civil Society in Europe.* Rotterdam: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6815-4.

Hermans, Chris. 2020. "Unexpected Possible. A Building-Block Approach to Spiritual and Religious Experiences Revisited." *Acta Theologica*, no. Supp 30. https://doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.sup30.1.

Huyse, Lucien. 1987. *Voorbij de Verzuiling.* [Beyond Pillarisation]. Leuven: Kritak.

Kelchtermans, Geert. 1994. "Biographical Methods in the Study of Teachers' Professional Development." In *Teachers' Minds and Actions: Research on Teachers' Thinking and Practice*, edited by Ingrid Carlgren, Gunnar Handal, and Sveinung Vaage. London: Falmer Press.

Kregting, Joris, Peer Scheepers, Paul Vermeer, and Chris Hermans. 2018. "Why God Has Left the Netherlands: Explanations for the Decline of Institutional Christianity in the Netherlands Between 1966 and 2015." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 57 (1): 58–79. https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12499.

Lijphart, Arend. 1975. *The Politics of Accommodation: Pluralism and Democracy in the Netherlands.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Meirieu, Philippe. 2007. *Pédagogie: le devoir de résister.* [Pedagogics. The Obligation to Resist]. Issy-les-Moulineaux: ESF Éditeur.

Miller, J. Michael. 2007. "Challenges Facing Catholic Schools: A View from Rome." In *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century*, edited by Gerald Grace and Joseph O'Keefe, 449–80. Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4020-5776-2_24.

Nipkow, Karl Ernst. 1975. *Grundfragen der Religionspädagogik.* Vol. 1, *Gesellschaftliche Herausforderungen und theoretische Ausgangspunkte.* [Foundational Questions in the Pedagogy of Religion. Vol. 1, Societal Challenges and Theoretical Notions]. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Haus Mohn.

Pring, Richard. 2018. "Faith Schools in a Secular Society: Should They Continue?" In *Researching Catholic Education: Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Sean Whittle, 73–81. Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-7808-8_6.

Ricoeur, Paul. 1986. *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia.* Edited by George H. Taylor. New York: Columbia University Press.

Ricoeur, Paul. 1995. *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*. Translated by David Pellauer. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. 1977. *The Catholic School*. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_19770319_catholic-school_en.html.

Schmeets, Hans, and Marieke Houben. 2023. "Religieuze Betrokkenheid in Nederland." *CBS*. https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/longread/statistische-trends/2023/religieuze-betrokkenheid-in-nederland.

Second Vatican Council. 1965. Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis* (= *GE*).

Sugrue, Ciaran. 2012. "The Personal in the Professional Lives of School Leaders." In *Explorations in Narrative Research*, edited by Ivor F. Goodson, Avril M. Loveless, and David Stephens, 91–105. Studies in Professional Life and Work 6. Rotterdam: SensePublishers. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6091-988-6_9.

Taylor, Charles. 2007. *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Waaijman, Kees. 2002. *Spirituality: Forms, Foundations, Methods*. Leuven: Peeters.

Wilkin, Richard. 2018. "Interpreting the Tradition: Contemporary Perspectives." In *Researching Catholic Education Contemporary Perspectives*, edited by Sean Whittle, 169–78. Singapore: Springer.

Wuchterl, Kurt. 2011. *Kontingenz oder das Andere der Vernunft zum Verhältnis von Philosophie, Naturwissenschaft und Religion*. [Contingency or the Other-than-Reason. On the Connection of Philosophy, Science and Religion]. Wiesbaden: Steiner.

Zee, Theo van der. 2015. "Addressing Diversity and Individualism. The Contribution of Catholic Religious Education to the Educational Project of Catholic Schools in the Netherlands." In *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools*, edited by Michael T. Buchanan and Adrian-Mario Gellel, 167–78. Cham: Springer.

Zee, Theo van der. 2019. *Leidinggeven aan wat komt: Een contemplatieve benadering van leiderschap*. [Leading What Is to Come. A Contemplative Approach to Leadership]. Soest: Boekscout.

Zee, Theo van der. 2023. "Reading the Signs of the Times. Design of a Communal Discernment Practice in Catholic Schools." *International Studies in Catholic Education*, 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2023.2215653.

The Crisis of Adults and Its Implications for the Youth. A Theological-Pastoral Study within the Context of Croatia and the Roman Catholic Church Teaching

RUŽICA RAZUM [ID]
University of Zagreb, ruzica.razum@gmail.com

Abstract: This article aims to show the connection between the current crisis of adults and the changes that can be observed in the level of religiosity/spirituality of today's youth. The Roman Catholic Synod on Young People held in Rome highlighted the need to understand young people and their religiosity. Understanding and interpreting the religiosity, ecclesiasticism, and spirituality of today's youth is necessary if we wish to answer their religious and spiritual questions properly. Nonetheless, this paper considers only one specific aspect of youth religiosity, that is, the connection between the world of adults, especially the crisis that has affected many of them, and the development of young people—especially of their spirituality/religiosity. The first part provides a basic outline of young people's religiosity and their relationship to the Roman Catholic Church based on the research. The second part reflects on the crisis of intergenerational transmission of faith, critically evaluating the existing channels used for this purpose. The third part is a critical evaluation of some aspects of the life of adults, especially in light of the crisis that has affected adulthood. The last part, containing results and conclusion, emphasizes the necessity and importance of the formation of adults in the Roman Catholic Church. The research is based on a literature review, analysis of data obtained from research—carried out especially in the Republic of Croatia—as well as directions that come to us from the Roman Catholic Church documents.
Keywords: youth, religiosity, youth education, crisis of adults, Church, Peter Pan syndrome

The relationship between young people and religion is anything but simple. Establishing dialogue with younger generations represents an important and urgent task of the Church. Indeed, the Church has recently faced numerous complex problems such as migration, bioethical issues, environmental issues, protection of the human person's dignity from conception to natural death, abuse in the Church, financial problems, intra-Church disputes, and more. In this sense, because the Church is burdened with problems of exceptional importance and urgency, it is reasonable to ask ourselves the question of the extent to which it manages to remain focused on the issues of young people, including their religiosity and spirituality. Without diminishing the importance of the various problems that the Church is facing today, it is indisputable that the topic of educating young people is of crucial importance for its present as well as its future. The key question is whether Christianity will survive if the new generations do not find the beauty, strength, and reason for their

existence in the Gospel. The question of young people is, in a way, that of the future of Christianity, especially when it comes to Christianity in Europe (Matteo 2017, 9). Without determined young Christians, the Christian voice will become quieter and more insignificant in the future, both in families and in society.

If education is to be considered "the most important means available for encouraging deeper and more harmonious human development and thus for reducing hunger, poverty, exploitation, ignorance, oppression and war" (Delors 1998, 13), then we can say that education is the most accessible means for discovering, accepting and living evangelical values, that is, for the future of Christianity—to the extent that it depends on human strength, of course. Pope Benedict XVI noted that a person's education is a fundamental and decisive issue that calls for the awakening of courage in the process of making conclusive decisions (Benedict XVI 2008). On another occasion, the Pope used the expression "educational emergency" (*emergenza educativa*), which became quite widespread after the Pope's intervention. Pope Francis remains on the same track when he points out that the restoration of society and community is only possible if we prioritize education (Bergoglio [Papa Franjo] 2015, 102). The existence of educational urgency is evidenced by the many failures of adults in their efforts to mold young people into persons of character, open to cooperation with others and capable of giving meaning to their own lives.

The Roman Catholic Church shows in different ways that it is aware of young people's importance. Therefore, the World Youth Day established by John Paul II has a special meaning and pastoral value.[1] The World Youth Day is a true pastoral phenomenon that has permanently committed the Church (Mandarić 2007, 187). The first was held in 1986, and so far, a total of 37 have been held. Another important event that testifies to the Church's devotion to young people is the Synod on Young People. Between 3 and 28 October 2018, the 15th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was held in Rome on the issue of "Young People, Faith, and Vocational Discernment," after which Pope Francis published *Christus Vivit*, an apostolic post-synodal exhortation intended for young people. The value and significance of these events at the general level of the Church is undeniable. In the Republic of Croatia, a meeting of the Croatian Catholic Youth (SHKM) has been held every two years since 1996. Yet, the question remains: does that suffice? Regular life in parishes and dioceses does not show too much concern for educational issues related to young people, their religious life, and the many crises they face.

The religiosity/spirituality as well as the ecclesiastical nature of young people requires special attention. Anyone who researches and studies today's religious situation can notice great changes in the religiosity of contemporary youth. Previous research highlighted the following characteristics regarding the religiosity of

---

1   See the list of all gatherings at: https://www.vatican.va/gmg/documents/gmg_chronicle-wyd_20020325_en.html.

adolescents and young people: subjectivity in the approach to religion; distancing from religious practice; departure from authority; acceptance of new religiosity characterized by syncretism, eclecticism, individualism, and distancing from traditional religion, and more. Traditional religious authority has lost its strength, while individuals pay increasingly more attention to their own autonomous frames of reference. The increasing distancing from the Church is additionally fuelled by a widespread culture for which Christianity is distant and alien—a culture that goes as far as to exhibit anti-Christian and anti-Catholic attitudes.

Considering the depth and complexity of these changes in young people's religiosity and their relationship to the Church and religion, a strong educational and pastoral-catechetical engagement of the Church in relation to the new generations is to be expected. How is it that such efforts have yet to be initiated? Although there are many reasons for such an attitude and behavior of the Church and its authorities, let us focus on only one of its aspects in these considerations. In more exact terms, this paper hypothesizes that this attitude of the Church and the adults in the Church towards the young represents a sign of the crisis in which the adults find themselves. Unsure of their own identities and their own "adulthood," they are unable to take responsibility for young people.

1. Young People, Their Religiosity and Spirituality, and the Church

Seeing that every society renews itself through its young generations, special attention should be directed towards young people, who are often labeled the "future of society." Yet, it is fairly difficult to define the term "youth" in an extremely complex society. Regardless of the different divisions of life span into preadolescence, adolescence, and youth, the common feature of all divisions and reflections is the phenomenon of "prolonged youth" (Razum and Mandarić 2019, 1085). The age group considered by the Synod on Youth refers to the ages between 16 and 29 (*ChV* 68).

Young people's value orientations and lifestyles partly remain anchored in traditional society while simultaneously being strongly influenced by the contemporary socio-cultural environment. Some numerous processes and phenomena influence the religiosity/spirituality of young people and contribute to the existence of multiple value reference frameworks. The processes/phenomena of secularization, individualization, modernization, and globalization, as well as the development of science and technology, unbridled consumerism, and the migration of people to larger cities, have influenced religious practices in many European countries, including the Republic of Croatia (cf. *EG* 70; Semeraro 1995; Razum and Mandarić 2019, 5; Begić and Kutleša 2021). Today, life is intensely marked by relativistic subjectivism, neopaganism, the ideologies of the market and consumerism, as well as the ideology of

personal success, and the influence of means of communication (cf. *EG* 70). In such an environment, characterized by strong ideological and religious pluralism, social incentives to be a Christian and attend church services are practically non-existent.

Sociological research confirms that the Republic of Croatia is one of the most religious countries in Europe. According to the European Values Survey, religious self-identification in Croatia almost exceeds 85% (Baloban, Črpić, and Ježovita 2019, 88). A high percentage of religious self-identification has also been noticed in the population of adolescents and young people. However, while research on the religiosity of adolescents and young people in Croatia confirms that most of them are religious and identify with the Catholic faith (86.1%), many distance themselves from active involvement in the life of the parish community after receiving the sacraments of Christian initiation (Razum and Mandarić 2019, 1093). Research shows that young people are scarcely or not at all engaged within their Catholic communities. Their spirituality reveals signs that go beyond the scope of the dominant, so-called traditional, Catholic spirituality. Young people's faith is increasingly becoming private, subjective, and distant from the Church. Subjectivism is becoming one of the fundamental characteristics of religiosity (Razum and Mandarić 2019, 1094–99; Baloban, Hoblaj, and Crnić 2010). The special relationship that young people have with the Church is indisputable. Their more critical attitude towards every authority—including the Church—is well-known. For religiosity, the space for actualization is no longer exclusively found in the institutional field. A religiosity that moves away from the Church and its teachings is increasingly emerging. Young people who come from families that are distanced from religion have a weak sense of religion. Furthermore, the Synod recognized that many young people do not ask the Church for anything. Such an attitude was built based on certain negative experiences such as sexual and economic scandals, inappropriate communication of ordained ministers with young people, low-quality homilies or catechesis, the passive role of young people in the Christian community, etc. (cf. *ChV* 40). Young people are increasingly becoming a generation "without" God and "without" the Church, insensitive to the spiritual dimension of life (Matteo 2017, 20–21).

Based on the empirical research on the religiosity of adolescents and young people, it can be concluded that one may encounter different typologies of religiosity among the youth (D'Agostino 2019, 29; Grassi 2006, 25–85; Semeraro 1995). The changes in this respect are increasingly related to the alienation from the Church, a much lesser attachment to tradition, a greater reliance on one's own beliefs and experience, a growing distance from Church institutions, the search for spirituality, etc. Young people harbor feelings of mistrust and indifference towards institutions, including the Church in its institutional dimension, which is also fuelled by the current scandals that are rocking the Church (cf. Mion 1995, 20–25). There is a noticeable tendency among young people no to be "against" but rather to become accustomed to living "without" the God revealed in the Gospel and "without" the Church.

At the same time, the preparatory document for the Synod on Young People (*Documento preparatorio* 2018, chap. 2) points to the fact that young people resort to alternative religiosity and a spirituality that is not overly institutionalized.

Despite the high percentage of those who identify themselves as Catholic believers, Croatian society is increasingly based on pluralistic foundations. Some markedly different models of understanding and practicing the Catholic faith are manifested under the common denominator of Catholic identity. For several decades now, Europe has witnessed a slow but progressive shift of people, especially young people, away from the traditional places that determined their religious affiliation (Davie 2005, 122). For religiosity, the space for actualization is no longer exclusively institutional. Today, we can see a religiosity that moves away from the Church and its teachings; a religiosity in which it has become possible to "believe and not belong". Moreover, a certain departure from the official teaching is noticeable within the Church itself, especially concerning morality, although this does not always result in the abandonment of one's religious community. In this religion, each person chooses what suits them according to their tastes, pleasures, and needs. This results in the emergence of a religiosity in which it is possible to "belong and not believe" (Hervieu-Léger 1996, 253), that is, one in which the relationship to religion is predominantly external, formal, traditional, historical, national or opportunistic (Razum 2009, 613).

Churches, therefore, are losing influence over the shaping of the human consciousness and the education of human values. The gap between the world and Christians is expanding; there is less and less understanding between them and the Church itself has become a stranger for many a Christian. Though they may still formally and legally belong to it, they have left it a long time ago when it comes to its moral, spiritual, and intellectual aspects. The emergence of many changes, which are increasingly difficult to manage and control, alters religious practices and may significantly change a person's attitude toward religion. It is precisely this changed structure of society conditioned by the modern way of life that is a vital cause of the growing distance between contemporary people and the Christian faith, especially in relation to some of its components. The lives of today's people, their mentality, their choices, customs, and values are less and less inspired by the Christian faith and Christian values. Nonetheless, it is obvious that religion is not dead. Most people are still interested in it (Begić and Kutleša 2021, 966). It is also true that contemporary religiosity uses different ways, forms, and language compared to Christianity from earlier times. Many young people today lack the experience of faith, so ignoring this fact inevitably condemns religious education to failure. One must, therefore, ask whether the Church takes into consideration the lack of religious feeling/experience of today's youth. During the past decades, most pastoral workers failed to notice and understand the deep changes that were taking place in people, creating a generation of non-believers.

2. The Crisis of the Intergenerational Transmission of Faith

Due to the new cultural and religious context, traditional catechetical activity has found itself in an uncertain situation. After all, its traditional model was conceived for Christian society. The progressive disappearance of that society and the strengthening of a new, no longer Christian world, has depleted the system of transmitting the Christian faith (Razum 2011, 653).

Today, it is generally accepted that we are in a state of severe crisis when it comes to the intergenerational transmission of faith. Considering the task of introducing new generations to the faith, the traditional system of Christian initiation reveals a fundamental flaw insofar as the end of Christian initiation usually coincides with leaving the Christian community (Razum 2009, 604). The traditional initiation model was put into question, even in a state of crisis, when the socio-cultural context was separated. One cannot ignore the fact that there are many significant cultural changes taking place in today's complex society, especially given the numerous profound developments that also affect the transmission of faith and Christian education (Montisci 2006, 46–61). It is impossible to design models of Christian education while ignoring the aggressiveness and progressiveness that impose a new model of a person as a human being who thinks, feels, reacts, and behaves in a fundamentally different way. In light of the extent and depth of these changes, which by no means leave the Christian community intact, we cannot continue in the same way "as we have always done." Today's mentality, customs, and life choices are revealed to be less and less rooted or inspired by the Christian faith. The construction of the Christian identity in today's young people is not supported by the social context (Razum 2009, 612). It is fairly obvious that in recent decades "there has been a breakdown in the way Catholics pass down the Christian faith to the young. It is undeniable that many people feel disillusioned and no longer identify with the Catholic tradition. Growing numbers of parents do not bring their children for baptism or teach them how to pray. There is also a certain exodus towards other faith communities" (*EG* 70).

Today's youth live in a time of general hopelessness. In more elaborate terms, these are times "deprived of the future, in which the coming time does not represent hope but anxiety" (Razum and Mandarić 2019, 3). In terms of confronting this issue, the fundamental question facing the Church is how to nurture in young people a mature faith that is both personal and ecclesial. The path to such a faith leads primarily through young people, listening to them, getting to know their world, and establishing relationships with them. Pope Francis often highlights the importance of listening. The document *Christus Vivit* critically emphasizes: "Rather than listening to young people attentively, 'all too often, there is a tendency to provide pre-packaged answers and ready-made solutions, without allowing their real questions to emerge and facing the challenges they pose'" (*ChV* 65). Belonging to the Church is not only

about adhering to certain truths and lifestyles. It is the result of interpersonal relationships (Razum and Mandarić 2019, 9).

In the past centuries, the transmission of the Christian faith was facilitated by a wider Christian environment, at least in the sense that everyone was baptized and that the social environment was Christian or predominantly Christian. Religious pluralism did not exist, or at least it was not manifested publicly. "Introduction to Christianity" was reduced to a mere process of religious socialization. Processes of integration and social conformity were dominant. The term "introduction to Christianity" had not been used for centuries. After the first centuries, it was out of use until the 20th century, when people came to use it again to describe part of the introduction of its liturgical-sacramental element. The Second Vatican Council then expanded the use of this term (*AG* 14). Today's environment, marked by strong ideological and religious pluralism, is no longer a school of practical Christianity. Believers can no longer live off pure tradition and favorable social influences but need to personally establish their faith. Christian families fail to convey Christian education to their children. Young people who come from families that are distanced from religion have a weak sense of religion. If the parents, as the first educators, do not provide their offspring with a religious experience, i.e., an experience of the Christian faith—especially prayer, reading the Holy Scriptures, and a concrete relationship with the commandment of love—children and young people remain deprived of a sense of God, that is, of a sense of religion. In this sense, the current religious-pedagogical and pastoral-catechetical practices, especially in the context of Christian initiation, cannot assume that the children and young people addressed by this practice have a developed religious sensibility and religious experience.

Education in the faith does not begin in the parish, much less in the school. Religious education in the parish or school builds on the testimony of parents, as well as that of other adults, regarding the importance of the Christian experience for a fulfilled and happy life. The most radical and effective "means" for transmitting the faith and teaching new Christians is a personal relationship with people who live the Gospel and have it in their hearts. Yet, if that personal relationship with convinced Christians who live and testify to their faith is missing, religious education in parish communities will have a rather weak effect. Therefore, apart from Christian families that leave their children and young people religiously malnourished, a great responsibility for young people who distance themselves from religion and the Church also rests with religious communities, which do not enable children and young people to have real contact with mature and convinced Christians (Razum 2011, 653).

In the Republic of Croatia, the Church has placed great hopes and invested many resources in religious education in schools since the state's very inception. Research on the religiosity of adolescents in the city of Zagreb shows that religious education brings numerous positive effects. More specifically, 40.3% of the surveyed high school students claim that their faith has become stronger thanks to religious education.

When it comes to their religious formation, religious teachers come third in terms of importance, preceded only by their mothers and fathers (Mandarić, Razum, and Barić 2019, 148). What is surprising, however, is that only 2.4% of respondents emphasized the role of catechists in their religious formation. Still, this extremely low percentage is much less shocking if one considers that as many as 63.6% of respondents answered that they never participated in parish catechesis or meetings for young people. (Mandarić, Razum, and Barić 2019, 149). This shows that parish catechesis is being neglected, which the Croatian bishops are also aware of: "Therefore, while we proudly point out all the positive efforts that have been invested to introduce religious education in schools, we must state that the original form of systematic religious education, which takes place in the parish community, has been at least partially neglected … the crucial question is how religion is lived in a concrete local Church, that is, a parish community" (Poruka hrvatskih biskupa – župna kateheza u službi župne zajednice 2000). Its future, the future of faith, and the future of the Church in the West largely depend on the Church's attitude towards young people. To keep young people in its fold and to win back those who have left it, the Church is called to intensify its pastoral and catechetical care for children and young people.

3. Adulthood. Impact on the Youth

From a functional point of view, the term "adulthood" refers to the chronological age between adolescence and old age. Different approaches are necessary to derive the fundamental features of that age, and the approach connected to psychological sciences is particularly important. Numerous scientists have tried to outline the basic dynamics of the development of that age from a psychological standpoint (cf. Bucciarelli 1997, 32–33; Lorenzetto 1989, 112–20). Although a person is usually considered to be mature after reaching a certain age, this criterion is not sufficient to determine a mature age. Being mature implies much more than just age. Maturity entails reaching certain physiological, psychological, social, and moral levels. As Joseph Colomb points out: "it can be said that a person has not entered adulthood and has wasted his or her youth if he or she has not developed into a responsible person" (Colomb 1981, 126–27). Accepting responsibility for oneself, other people, and the world is a key feature of adulthood. While there is no such thing as a perfect adult who embodies all the qualities of adulthood, it can be said that a person who truly strives to attain and live these characteristics, i.e., this ideal, is an adult. Being an adult has always been synonymous with being "mature," or being able to take responsibility for oneself and others. These characteristics, however, are increasingly difficult to encounter in the lives of adults today (Cucci 2012, 25). *Becoming an adult* is scary and *being an adult* is difficult. Facing the challenges of social complexity and

cultural pluralism causes many adults to feel powerless, lost, insecure, and experience an identity crisis.

3.1. Who/What Is an Adult Like Today: A Paradigm Shift

The attitude of contemporary culture towards adulthood is fairly interesting. In the past, adulthood was the desired age—that of independence, security, decision-making, and authority. In contrast, modern society no longer seems to view adulthood as the desired age; it is as if it does not want to reach that age at all. That is why it is hardly surprising that today we increasingly encounter adults who are, in fact, eternal teenagers.

Adults today are no longer what they used to be. The old wisdom paradigms are no longer active as new horizons of meaning are emerging—precisely those that govern the lives of Western people, especially adults. In a brief time, these new instances became the common heritage of Western people, in no small part thanks to modern technology that enables fast and powerful communication. The development of communication technology has set the stage for new ideas/ideologies that have marked the late 20th and early 21st centuries, also affecting adults to a significant extent. These include, just to name a few: the changes related to the new self-awareness and social position of women, the transgender ideology that goes against the morality of tradition, the ideology based on the cult of money, markets, free digital communication (Cucci 2012, 33), the ideology of radical self-realization. Divorces hardly arouse anyone's indignation anymore and few are concerned about the increase in suicides resulting from social deviance and sexual disorders the likes of which one would never mention even in polite social circles in the past. For the most part, we manage to peacefully live alongside such issues as abortion and euthanasia, as well as the problem of millions of homeless and starving people. Even the latest threats to our freedom in the world of the "new normal" do not seem to bother us. All these new value/life paradigms very easily and swiftly became entrenched in the mentality of modern people. Changes occur so quickly that it is almost impossible for us to notice them as they are happening. Modern people have lost themselves in the overwhelming number of possibilities they are given daily.

Postmodern culture promotes the idea of people marked by individualistic and narcissistic attitudes, people who are focused on themselves, on material goods, on quantity over quality, on ever-changing desires and immediate pleasures. The fear of transience directs people's lives towards the superficial and transitory, as well as radical freedom. An individual is seen as a self-sufficient entity on a permanent, one-sided quest for satisfaction and happiness (Portera 2011, 22). Today, one can go as far as to describe it as true egolatry, that is, the cult of "I." The development of modern and postmodern individualism has strengthened the notion of self-love—narcissism—"making it no longer a problem of only the individual, but one of the most

typical characteristics of our culture" (Halík, 2022, 141). The ideology of radical self-realization, characterized by extreme egoism, is now at work. Many have fallen prey to this mentality. Adults are captivated by the cult of self-realization and lost in their own myths: youth at any price, money and career at any price, and culture of one's own "I" at any price. But they seem to be unaware of what "at any price" means for their children. (Matteo 2018, 46).

3.2. The Crisis of Adults: The Disappearance of "Adulthood" and "Maturity"

The behavior of adults testifies to their fascination with youth, to the detriment of their adulthood/maturity. They take many imprudent steps in their attempts to return to the irresponsibility and nonchalance of childhood or the allure and vigor of adolescence, longing to stop time, or even reverse it (Bruckner 1997, 85–91). Adolescence is seen less as a period of life in which one prepares for adult life and more as a life phase that a person does not want to leave. The attitude of "staying young," and remaining "an eternal adolescent" is very popular and widely accepted. Adulthood has been affected by the Peter Pan syndrome (Cucci 2012; Matteo 2021; University of Granada 2007). The Peter Pan syndrome characterizes people who refuse to grow up and take on the life responsibilities associated with adulthood. If adults remain adolescents at the level of their desires and imagination, it means that they no longer see adulthood, i.e., growth and development, as a desired ideal. Thus, what becomes the ideal is not to grow, not to develop, i.e., to remain trapped in one stage of life—adolescence.

The loss of value and attractiveness of growth and development toward adulthood is a recent phenomenon that was completely unknown in the past. It seems that growing, developing, and aging are considered something bad. Old age has become almost synonymous with uselessness and frustration, while aging is perceived as something to be ashamed of, akin to a disease (Cernuzio 2017). This is an illusory endeavor since time cannot be stopped, except at the level of desires and imagination. However, the effort to stop time will not save one from aging—it will only fill one with fear and apathy regarding growth and changes, i.e., life. The price paid for permanent youth is the hindered development of the person and the impaired development of younger generations (Savage 2009, 95). Even Pope Francis points out that adults who do not want to be adults and assume the role of eternal adolescents are an obstacle to the development and growth of their own children (Cernuzio 2017).

Today, it has become almost impossible to see a clear intergenerational boundary between children, young people, and adults. They are all connected by the same style of dress, communication, behavior, life, relationships, and feelings. Everyone shows similar reactions to different life challenges so it is difficult to understand who has truly grown up. In the context of contemporary times, when a person is not

so much marked by age as participation in certain lifestyles, we are reaching a point where the biological boundary is erased and hybrid figures of aged adolescents, adult adolescents, and the eternally young are created. (cf. Cucci 2012, 16). On the one hand, it is increasingly difficult to encounter adults who behave like adults, and on the other, we are witnessing the emergence of another phenomenon—children behaving like adults, which was also unheard of until recently. It seems that all ages have lost their specificities, drowning in common, undifferentiated features. Our society is increasingly becoming a society of eternal children.

If we consider adults to be people who accept their responsibility for "future generations and for the world in which they will live" (Alberich and Binz 2002, 93), who take responsibility for the consequences of their words, actions, and life decisions, then we cannot turn a blind eye to the strong weakening of the presence of adults in modern society. Adults get lost in situations and experiences where this happens to their children as well. The concept of maturity, construed as closely related to responsibility, is disappearing along with the notion of an adult person. In this sense, there is no longer any need for education either, since everyone is considered self-sufficient. After all, in the society of "eternal children" it seems that no one is even able to raise another person. The crisis of adulthood is closely linked to the changes occurring in family relationships as well as the education crisis. The disappearance of adults strongly affects relationships in families: it is no longer children who need to learn rules and lessons from their parents—parents now adapt to the criteria and behaviors of their children, thus seeking their acceptance and approval (Cucci 2012, 31–32; Show and Wood 2009).

Adults, parents, and teachers who struggle with their adolescent crises and are unable to make clear decisions will not help in children's development. We are witnessing immature educators who still follow unrealistic ideals of absolute freedom, are unable to manage their lives, and are incapable of combining personal freedom with the principles of the common good, commitment, and responsibility. Many young adults are guided by the belief that one must strive only for self-fulfillment, even at the expense of one's neighbors, which then leads to one's inability to be loyal or respect obligations and values (Portera 2011, 23; Show and Wood 2009). Even though the education of younger generations represents one of the key tasks of adulthood, there is a noticeable lack of educational determination and effectiveness among adults—as if they have given up on educating children and young people.

3.3. Adults and Young People

Young people are a reflection of their living environment. We can understand all their values, aspirations, problems, and insecurities only if we place them within the socio-cultural environment whose spirit they assimilate every day. Young people are the expression of a society that is very different from that of the older generations.

Rapid social changes contribute to the growing distance between the young and the elderly. While the world of young people has always created problems at the level of relationships, it seems that these problems are even more pronounced today than ever before.

Although it is not always easy to understand and accept certain thoughts and behaviors of young people, difficulties in the relationship between adults and young people often arise from the many prejudices that the former have towards the latter. Adults may feel envy, jealousy, fear, and resentment towards the youth. These negative feelings can arise from the following: not accepting one's age, fear of aging and losing power and authority; memories of one's failures, wrongdoings, and weaknesses, as well as a certain superiority that young people may show in certain areas of life. Insofar as they are focused on themselves and the accumulation of goods and privileges, adults become incapable of caring for the young (Matteo 2017, 12). The document *Christus Vivit* warns of various kinds of abuse in the Church, the desire for domination, the lack of dialogue and transparency, double life, and especially the problem of clericalism as a permanent nuisance for priests (*ChV* 98).

The relationship between young people and adults is often filled with misunderstandings, prejudice, criticism, and judgment, from both sides. The notion of a "crisis of the educational function of adults" (Alberich and Binz 2002, 65) is increasingly discussed, as are the generational downfall and gap. The adults who "were once young, while the young were never adults" (cf. Alberich and Binz 2002, 65), among other things, are more responsible for the current situation. There is no education, and therefore no education in religion, without responsible and high-quality educators, i.e., without responsible and mature adults.

3.4. The Impact of the Adult Crisis on the Religious Life of Young People

The adult crisis is also manifested in religious life. The immaturity of adults manifests itself as the immaturity of adult Christians, which has dramatic consequences for young people and their religious life. Speaking in biblical language: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit?" (Luke 6:39). Can an immature adult help a young person become a mature adult?

What is truly important to today's adults, "eternal adolescents," is almost exclusively their socio-economic status, career, personal success, health, and aesthetic form. In the heart of an adult, there is room for everything, except religious experience. God, the Church, the Gospel, sin, salvation, death, sacrifice, prayer, and eternity are no longer part of the family vocabulary. The life of an adult is marked by the absence of God and the absence of the Church (Matteo 2018, 33). The crisis of family religious education is more than obvious. Children are deprived of paternal and maternal role models in an area where they particularly need their presence and assistance. Today, for a variety of reasons, families increasingly remain silent on

religious reality. At the level of everyday life, religious language is belittled and there is less and less reliance on God. Religious rites are disappearing (participation in the Sunday Eucharist) and certain moments, such as prayer, are losing their meaning (cf. *EG* 70). Families no longer spontaneously discuss God. Nevertheless, they still try to maintain a surface-level connection with the Church's religious tradition, even though they have reduced it to a conformist choice, depriving it of its religious content. If religion is no longer important to parents, it is difficult to conceive that young people might find it important themselves. Many young people show no interest in religion (for many, Confirmation is a departure from the religious community—at least for a certain time). Atheism and indifference of contemporary youth are further fed by the death of Christianity in family life, by the obscuring of God in the eyes of fathers and mothers (Matteo 2018, 34). The chain of transmission of faith has been broken. The intergenerational transmission of faith is no longer self-explanatory. The notion of family Christianity has died, as has the reality of the family as the "first and small Church," which was entrusted with the task of educating new believers throughout history. The chain of transmission of faith has been broken without any special consideration and virtually without any regrets. God has gradually disappeared from the horizon of consciousness of adults born in the second half of the last century to the same extent to which there emerged adults increasingly marked by a life in which God simply has no place. (Matteo 2018, 34; *EG* 70).

The faithlessness of young people originates directly from this new figure of an adult, which is increasingly manifested as a post-Christian person that the current Western generations have invented and diligently embodied. It is an adult devoid of all responsibilities towards new generations and of any authentic connection with God, religious community, society, the future, and thus, with his or her own children—an adult who loves, respects, and supports his or her youth more than young people do; an adult who, for this very reason, has nothing to do with everything that characterizes the notion of a Christian (Matteo 2018, 64).

4. The Formation of an Adult

It is impossible to explore the issues of the Confirmand crisis, the distanced attitude of young people towards the Church, or the abandonment of religious practice after childhood, without first discussing the issue of adults. If we want the new generations to continue to be convinced and persuasive Christians, the focus and emphasis should be on the formation and empowerment of Christians themselves. Besides, the commitment to adult catechesis was clearly expressed in many Church documents (Alberich and Binz 2002, 30–36) following the Second Vatican Council. Despite the Church's determination to make the adult catechesis "the main form of

catechesis to which all, always necessary, forms of catechesis are somehow directed" (*DCG* 20), current pastoral attention is still mainly focused on children, and sometimes the elderly. Catechesis, where it exists, is mainly aimed at children, and the general impression is that the Church is a place that specializes in the world of children. Whereas historically pastoral care has focused on children, today the focus must be on promoting adult believers with adult faith (Alberich 1992, 32). The question remains, however, whether the Church is affected by a fear of adults and of "maturity," whether it wants mature adult believers, and whether, for its part, it is ready for a co-responsible dialogue with the adults of our time.

If mature adults—also mature in their faith—are crucial for mature living and passing on the faith to younger generations, we must ask ourselves how much attention and care the Church devotes to the formation of new adult believers. The fundamental question is whether the Church has the power to give rise to new believers, i.e., whether it can form new adult believers since its future depends on it. Yet, the rule "do as it has always been done" does not apply when it comes to the formation of adults. For before us is a different adult. A post-Christian one. According to Pope John Paul II, man "is the primary and fundamental way for the Church" (*RH* 14), and if so, special attention should be paid to the issue of a person/subject, and we should try to meet that person where he or she is found on the path of abandoning the Christian faith (cf. Emmaus, Luke 24:13–35). When burdened by the weight and complexity of the problems that stem from the modern world, pastoral and catechetical answers can sometimes seem completely inappropriate. Inappropriate pastoral and catechetical attitudes emerge when the concrete cultural situation is simply ignored, when current changes are not understood, and when the usual pastoral and catechetical practice is continued without attempting to analyze or interpret it. Traditional pastoral service, which assumes that the people are already Christian, does not grasp the logic and dynamics of the evangelization process. In a Christian society, where education in faith takes place within the family and Christian community, such a situation may limit the catechesis to the development and deepening of knowledge about the faith. Today, however, the lack of primary religious socialization cannot simply be compensated and replaced by catechesis and religious education, nor can it be substituted by deepening catechetical efforts, especially if they comply with the traditional model of transmitting and deepening religious truths (Razum 2011, 663).

How to preserve faith and overcome the crisis in the modern world? One of the important ways of "confronting" the culture of narcissism, individualism, and division is networking, and building communities and institutions capable of contributing to the development of a Christian identity. The negative forces of the dominant culture are too strong for individuals to resist them alone. It is necessary to build stable and strong communities that nurture faith. Christians are expected to be a creative minority and to offer a bright alternative to this cold and increasingly

dark world. All this should be preceded by the act of awakening Christians stunned by the intoxicating poison of materialism, consumerism, hedonism, and technicism. If we wish to survive as Christians, we must rediscover our identity and roots.

Communicating faith in a secularized society represents a challenge and a complex task for the Christian community. The existence of living Christian communities is certainly a *condizione sine qua non* for recognizing the God of Jesus Christ. As highlighted in the 1971 General Catechetical Directory, "Catechesis, finally, demands the witness of faith, both from the catechists and from the ecclesial community" (*DCG* 35). In a world where the authenticity of what a person represents is expected to be substantiated by a "live example," the emphasis placed on witnessing becomes crucial for catechesis as well. A catechist cannot expect to interest, engage, and educate anyone in the Christian faith if he or she cannot rely on the testimony of the community. (Razum 2011, 664–65). The Christian community is now faced with the serious task of engaging an increasingly numerous generation of unbelieving Christians.

Conclusion

The world of young people and their religiosity are experiencing profound and permanent changes. They result from deeper and more far-reaching transitions taking place at the socio-cultural level. The socio-cultural environment of the former traditional religiosity/spirituality was one dominated by religious and Christian reality. One in which the Christian life was adopted by the very belonging and participation in society and family and whose life was significantly marked by religious traits. In the meantime, however, the social world has gradually de-Christianized.

Current research on the religiosity of young people unequivocally indicates the changes in traditional religiosity taking place in the world of young people. The religiosity changes among today's youth are so profound and powerful that failure to account for them may well spell doom for the mission of the Church itself. Changes are also noticeable in relation to young people's attitudes towards the Church—they are showing an increasingly strong distrust and critical attitude, which has been further exacerbated by the recent sexual and financial scandals. Young people are increasingly becoming a generation "without" God and "without" the Church, insensitive to the spiritual dimension of life.

Young people's religiosity and attitudes towards the Church are strongly influenced by adults. Adult age, on the other hand, is marked by the crisis of adulthood and maturity, which is closely related to changing family relationships and especially to the education crisis. Since adults are experiencing an identity crisis, the question is how ready and able they are to devote themselves to the issues of young people and

how reliable teachers, educators, and witnesses they can be. Only an adult and mature person—one engaged in a constant process of becoming adult and mature—can guarantee a quality education for new generations, which will enable children and young people to develop into adult, mature, and happy people, and into convinced and convincing Christians. This is a task in which the current generation of parents and educators is bound to face many difficulties and setbacks.

The best testimony that Christians can offer to the world, and especially to their children if they want them to be Christians too, is to simply be the Church, the community of Jesus' disciples. Christians are called to live in communion. Contrary to many forms of individualism, we need Christians who show solidarity; people of the community, able and willing to live their faith "with others." The Church community is one of life, love, and truth. The Spirit of Christ empowers Christians to be a different community—one that represents a challenge to the world of divisions, violence, conspiracies, and rejection. Therefore, if they want to be convincing to others, and especially to their children, adult Christians will have to become more authentic narrators and witnesses of the Christian truth. Traditional pastoral-catechetical models, which assume that the people are still Christian, cannot be effective in the contemporary post-Christian and missionary context.

Translated by Emanuel Maloča

Bibliography

Alberich, Emilio. 1992. *La catechesi della chiesa: Saggio di catechetica fondamentale*. Torino: Elle Di Ci.

Alberich, Emilio, and Ambroise Binz. 2002. *Odrasli i kateheza: Elementi katehetske metodologije za odraslu dob: elementi katehetske metodologije za odraslu dob prijevod Vine Mihaljević*. Translated by Vine Mihaljević. Zagreb: KSC. http://library.foi.hr/lib/knjiga.php?B=573&sqlx=15078&H=.

Baloban, Josip, Gordan Črpić, and Josip Ježovita. 2019. *Vrednote u Hrvatskoj od 1999. do 2018. prema European Values Study*. Zagreb: KBF Zagreb and HKS and KS.

Baloban, Josip, Alojzije Hoblaj, and Danijel Crnić. 2010. "Određeni aspekti crkvenosti u Hrvatskoj – rezultati i prosudbe istraživanja." *Bogoslovska smotra* 80 (2): 527–61. Accessed March 6, 2024. https://hrcak.srce.hr/56246.

Begić, Ana, and Mislav Kutleša. 2021. "Understanding Faith and the Image of God in Young Believers Today: Presentation of the Survey Results on the Attitudes and Opinions of Young People about Understanding Faith and the Image of God in Croatia." *Bogoslovska Smotra* 91 (5): 959–79. https://doi.org/10.53745/bs.91.5.10.

Benedict XVI. 2008. *Letter to the Faithful of the Diocese and City of Rome on the Urgent Task of Educating Young People*. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/letters/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20080121_educazione.html.

Bergoglio [Papa Franjo], Jorge Mario. 2015. *O odgoju: izazovi za kršćanske odgojitelje: izazovi za kršćanske odgojitelje et al.* Translated by Melanija Mašina and Ana Marija Drmić Janeš. Split: Verbum. http://library.foi.hr/lib/knjiga.php?B=20&sqlx=83163&H=.

Bruckner, Pascal. 1997. *Napast nedužnosti*. Translated by Višnja Machiedo. *Biblioteka Busola*. Zagreb: Nakladni zavod Matice hrvatske.

Bucciarelli, Claudio. 1997. "Adulto." In *Dizionario di scienze dell'educazione*, edited by José Manuel Prellezo, Carlo Nanni, and Guglielmo Malizia, 32–33. Leumann (TO): Elle Di Ci.

Cernuzio, Salvatore. 2017. "No agli adulti eterni adolescenti: ostacolano la crescita dei figli." *La Stampa*. http://www.lastampa.it/2017/06/19/vaticaninsider/no-agli-adulti-eterni-adolescenti-ostacolano-la-crescita-dei-figli-G1jDlsuRp3IQci55fTeSiI/pagina.html.

Colomb, Joseph. 1981. *Kateheza životnih dobi. Biblioteka Orijentacije*. 2nd ed. Zagreb: KSC.

Cucci, Giovanni. 2012. *La crisi dell'adulto: La sindrome di Peter Pan. Comunità cristiana*. Assisi: Cittadella.

D'Agostino, Federico. 2019. "Giovani, Famiglia e religiosità nel sud." In *Giovani e vita quotidiana: Il ruolo sociale della famiglia e della religione*, edited by Francesco Del Pizzo and Pasquale Incoronato, 23–30. Milano: FrancoAngeli.

Davie, Grace. 2005. *Religija u suvremenoj Europi. Mutacija sjećanja*. Translated by Lidija Vinković. Zagreb: Golden Marketing and Tehnička knjiga.

Delors, Jacques. 1998. *Učenje – blago u nama: Izvješće UNESCO-u međunarodnog povjerenstva za razvoj obrazovanja za 21. stoljeće*. Translated by Božica Jakovlev. Zagreb: Educa.

Documento preparatorio: I giovani, la fede e il discernimento vocazionale. 2018. http://secretariat.synod.va/content/synod2018/it/fede-discernimento-vocazione/documento-preparatorio.html.

Francis. 2013. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (= *EG*).

Francis. 2019. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit* (= *ChV*).

Grassi, Riccardo. 2006. "I molti volti della religiosità giovanile." In *Giovani, religione e vita quotidiana. Un'indagine dell'Istituto Iard per and Centro di Orientamento Pastorale*, edited by Riccardo Grassi, 25–85. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Halík, Tomáš. 2022. *Želim da postojiš. O Bogu ljubavi*. Translated by Miro Jelečević. Zagreb: KS.

HBK (Hrvatska biskupska konferencija). 2000. *Poruka hrvatskih biskupa – župna kateheza u službi župne zajednice*. Accessed September 3, 2022. https://hbk.hr/dokumenti-hbk/zupna-kateheza-u-sluzbi-zupne-zajednice-poruka-hrvatskih-biskupa/.

Hervieu-Léger, Danièle. 1996. *Religione e memoria*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

John Paul II. 1979. Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* (= *RH*).

Lorenzetto, Anna. 1989. "Educazione degli adulti." In *Enciclopedia pedagogica*, edited by Mauro Laeng, vol. 1, Abaco – Buzzati. 112–20. Brescia: La Scuola.

Mandarić, Blaženka Valentina. 2007. "Mladi – nada Crkve i svijeta." In *Ivan Pavao II: poslanje i djelovanje. Zbornik radova sa simpozija održanog u Zagrebu 24. lipnja 2005. godine*, edited by Ines Sabotič, Željko Tanjić, and Gordan Črpić, 183–96. Zagreb: GK and Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar and KBF Zagreb and Centar za promicanje socijalnog nauka Crkve HBK.

Mandarić, Blaženka Valentina, Ružica Razum, and Denis Barić. 2019. *Religioznost zagrebačkih adolescenata*. Zagreb: KBF Sveučilišta u Zagrebu and Kršćanska sadašnjost.

Matteo, Armando. 2017. *La prima generazione incredula: Il difficile rapporto tra i giovani e la fede*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino.

Matteo, Armando. 2018. *Tutti giovani nessun giovane: Le attese disattese della prima generazione incredula*. Milano: Piemme.

Matteo, Armando. 2021. *Convertire Peter Pan: Il destino della fede nella società dell'eterna giovinezza*. Milano: Àncora.

Mion, Renato. 1995. "Indifferenza religiosa dei giovani nella cultura del post-moderno. Un approccio socio-culturale." In *I giovani fra indifferenza e nuova religiosità*, edited by Cosimo Semeraro, 13–47. Leumann (TO): Elle Di Ci.

Montisci, Ubaldo. 2006. "L'iniziazione cristiana in Italia in un tempo di transizione." *Catechesi* 76 (3): 46–61.

Portera, Agostino. 2011. "Interkulturelle pädagogische Antwort auf die komplexe Gesellschaft." *Pedagogijska istraživanja* 8 (1): 19–35. Accessed March 6, 2024. https://hrcak.srce.hr/118075.

Razum, Ružica. 2009. "Katehetski inicijacijski itinerarij." *Bogoslovska smotra* 79 (3): 603–32. Accessed March 6, 2024. https://hrcak.srce.hr/41025.

Razum, Ružica. 2011. "Prema novome govoru vjere u katehezi." *Bogoslovska smotra* 81 (3): 647–74. Accessed March 6, 2024. https://hrcak.srce.hr/72524.

Razum, Ružica, and Blaženka Valentina Mandarić. 2019. "Young People, Faith, Spirituality, Ecclesiality." *Bogoslovska smotra* 89 (5): 1083–1108. Accessed March 6, 2024. https://hrcak.srce.hr/235140.

Sacra Congregazione per il Clero. 1971. *Dirretorio catechistico generale*. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_cclergy_dir_19710411_it.html (= *DCG*).

Savage, Jon. 2009. *L'invenzione dei giovani. Storie / Feltrinelli*. Milano: Feltrinelli.

Second Vatican Council. 1965. Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church *Ad Gentes* (= *AG*).

Semeraro, Cosimo, ed. 1995. *I giovani fra indifferenza e nuova religiosità*. Leumann (TO): Elle Di Ci.

Show, Robert, and Stephanie Wood. 2009. *Epidemija popustljivog odgoja. Zašto su djeca nevesela, nezadovoljna, sebična… te kako im pomoći*. Translated by Alma Keser Brozović. Alma Keser Brozović. Zagreb: V.B.Z. Accessed March 6, 2024. https://www.izvorznanja.com/teaser/693.pdf.

University of Granada. 2007. "Overprotecting Parents Can Lead Children to Develop 'Peter Pan Syndrome.'" *ScienceDaily*. https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/05/070501112023.htm.

The Culture of Temporariness in Pope Francis' Teaching on Marriage and Family

MICHAŁ BORDA iD
WSB University in Dąbrowa Górnicza, bordamichal@gmail.com

BOŻENA MARZEC iD
Humanitas University in Sosnowiec, bozena.marzec@humanitas.edu.pl

Abstract: What Pope Francis describes as "the culture of temporariness" are all the changes taking place in communities and the broad anthropological and cultural context of the Western world. According to the pope, they include new ways of creating and maintaining relations, *zapping*, consumerism, individualism, the culture of rejection, unemployment, and NEET generation. In search for the Church's response to secularization, the authors decided to explore Pope Francis' instructions addressed to young people concerning marital and family life in the era of the current culture of temporariness. This is the major research objective of the article. To achieve it, using the method of literature review covering the topic, the authors first present the manifestations of the culture of temporariness among young people. Next, the consequences of the culture of temporariness in catechesis for marriages and families are indicated. In the last part of the paper, Pope Francis's instructions for young people regarding the threats of the culture of temporariness in their lives and activities of marriages and families are elaborated on.

Keywords: Pope Francis, culture of temporariness, youth, marriage, family

The first environment in which a person should experience mutual love and care and develop their faith is marriage and family. Thanks to the sacrament of marriage, spouses become a domestic church, a domestic sanctuary in which parents, as stewards of God's grace, fulfill the triple function of Christ: the prophetic, the priestly, and the royal function. Marital and family life, lived in accordance with God's plan, constitutes the Gospel in itself, in which God's selfless and patient love for man can be seen. Christian spouses share the mystery of unity and fruitful love of Christ and the Church. Thus, catechesis in the family, with the family and of families is supposed to reveal the gift received from God in the sacrament of marriage to young people (PRKNE 2020, nos. 227–31). This means that a Christian family should radiate the light of the Gospel to others and be subject to continuous evangelization themselves (John Paul II 1981, no. 52). Pope Francis, describing the evangelization that is carried out through family, points out that "By their witness as well as their words, families speak to others of Jesus. They pass on the faith, they arouse a desire for God and they reflect the beauty of the Gospel and its way of life." (Francis 2016a, no. 184). However, the involvement of families in evangelization encounters a difficult challenge these days, which Pope Francis refers to as "the culture of temporariness."

What Pope Francis describes as "the culture of temporariness" (*cultura del prov-visorio*) are all the changes taking place in communities and the broad anthropological and cultural context of the Western world. A description of the culture of temporariness, which fits into the contemporary trends in secularization, can be found in the post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, in which Pope Francis elaborates on the instability in relationships based only on feelings, fear of commitment, and calculation of the profitability of a relationship. Consumerism has turned love into a quick consumption commodity. The Pope writes: "[people] believe, along the lines of social networks, that love can be connected or disconnected at the whim of the consumer, and the relationship quickly 'blocked'. […] We treat affective relationships the way we treat material objects and the environment: everything is disposable; everyone uses and throws away, takes and breaks, exploits and squeezes to the last drop. Then, goodbye." (Francis 2016a, no. 39). When looking for the Church's response to secularization in this issue, it is worth taking a closer look at Pope Francis' instructions addressed to young people, which concern marital and family life. For this purpose, the authors, using the method of literature review on the topic, will first present the manifestations of the culture of temporariness among the youth. Then, the consequences of the culture of temporariness in the work of catechesis for marriages and families will be elaborated on. In the final part of the article, Pope Francis' instructions for young people in the face of the threats of the culture of temporariness in the life and activities of marriages and families will be discussed.

1. The Manifestations of the Culture of Temporariness in the Lives of Young People

The first manifestation of the culture of temporariness that Pope Francis draws attention to is a new way of creating and maintaining relationships. Building relationships only in the virtual world leads to the distortion of reality. Young people, trying to adapt to high and often artificial standards, constantly modify their images, "hiding behind masks and false identities, almost becoming fake selves" (Francis 2018c, 4). It often happens that a person's self-esteem depends on the number of "likes," which creates a very deep feeling of uncertainty and inadequacy. A similar principle applies here as when choosing a movie or a restaurant: the number of positive comments or "likes" ennobles the selected item in a magical way (Bauman 2006, 188). Establishing a real relationship with a particular person depends on their "market value" in the virtual world. The value of a person measured in this way is fluid, dependent on the moods of others, and one wrong move on the Internet (such as liking a wrong photo or defending one's values) may result in ostracism and

exclusion from the community, unfortunately not only the virtual one, but also the real one. There may also be a depreciation of the human person (Francis 2019a, no. 90).

The digital environment constitutes a space in which the virtual community lives, creating "their own substitutes for real life. It is here that the acceptance (or lack of acceptance) of values, behaviors and attitudes is expressed" (Flader 2018, 448). Therefore, it is not surprising that young people live in constant uncertainty about their value and are afraid to make any decisions in order not to risk exclusion. The closed circulation of information that bring together people with similar views contributes to the creation of fake news and fuels prejudice and hatred. Fake news is often generated to destroy someone's reputation. This applies not only to young people, but to the entire society, including the Church, as well (Francis 2019a, no. 89). The fear of rejection, which is the result of immersion in the virtual world, leads to isolation, "[people's] withdrawal from their families and their cultural and religious values" (Francis 2019a, no. 90), and finally to complete eradication and the lack of an internal compass that would indicate the direction and the purpose of life (Francis 2013d, 38).

What constitutes another manifestation of the culture of temporariness among young people is *zapping*. Lucyna Słupek (2006, 240) defines the phenomenon as "jumping," usually with a TV remote control, on TV channels. This activity is mindless, thoughtless and chaotic. *Zapping* is also classified as a mental dysfunction caused by media abuse (Chwaszcz, Pietruszka, and Sikorski 2005, 122–23). Antoni Zając even uses the term *homo zappiens*. According to him, "A *homo sapiens* thinks, a *homo zappiens* – zapps – when listening to music, watching TV or doing homework, browsing websites and texting" (Zając 2013, 14–26). The reasons for constantly changing channels are the multitude of TV programs and the desire to see everything. The process gives the false sense of controlling all the content and not missing anything important. However, the excess of stimuli makes everything seem boring, and the joy comes from simply channel-zapping.

The phenomenon of *zapping* also applies to life situations. Pope Francis addresses this topic in his two exhortations, in particular: *Gaudete et Exsultate* and *Christus Vivit*, in which he indicates that, just as a person in front of a TV "zaps the channels," a young person wants and is able to move in several spaces at the same time in virtual reality (Francis 2018a, no. 167; 2019a, no. 279). The number of possible activities and kinds of entertainment makes people lose their critical sense, as they all seem to be good and worth investing one's time and engaging one's strengths and talents in. *Zapping* contributes to the lack of full commitment, raises constant doubts about whether the choice made is the right one, and encourages making short-term decisions that can be changed quickly. The ability to withdraw from a situation swiftly contributes to irresponsible attitudes and weakens perseverance. What counts is what is new and pleasant.

The modern youth grow up in a consumerist, pluralistic and individualistic world, which contributes to experiencing problems related to identity. According to

Zbyszko Melosik, human identity is currently fragmented, constantly reconstructed from numerous elements that are often contradictory and overlapping. The multiplicity of structures and connections created in this way leads to identities being increasingly shallow, provisional, and temporary. The effect of such transformation is a shift from one "big identity" which one's life was built around, towards many "small identities" that become temporary, dependent on the prevailing fashion and pop culture patterns (Melosik 2013, 69). A person with an unintegrated identity has difficulty making choices, is influenced easily, and expects others to make important life decisions for them (Francis 2014e, 40–41). The attitude of shifting responsibility and avoiding long-term choices results in mediocrity. On one hand, young people have the desire for a true and noble life, on the other hand, however, making only short-term decisions that can be withdrawn at any time blocks the fulfillment of this desire. Pope Francis refers to such an attitude as "the poor spirit of adaptation that is not meekness or humility, but rather mediocrity, pusillanimity" (Francis 2018d, 40–41).

The culture of temporariness is closely linked to consumerism and, therefore, to the culture of rejection, as well. In his speeches, Francis intercedes for young people who are the victims of the culture of temporariness and rejection. Another process visible in the lives of young people is unemployment. The deprivation of work and of the dignity of work is the worst form of material poverty. It is worth recalling that the Pope refers to this phenomenon as the "neither-nor" youth: they neither study nor work (Francis 2014a, 28). NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) – signifies a social group of young people who do not undertake any activity in neither of the three categories: work, formal education, or training. It is a process leading to a lack of perspectives, hopes, and, consequently – addictions and the lack of meaning in life. A person becomes a participant in the throw-away culture "that considers humanity in itself, human beings, as a consumer good, which can be used and then thrown away" (Francis 2014g, 44–48).

Trying to see "the little flame that continues to burn" – as Francis points out – in the hearts of young people (Francis 2019a, no. 67), it must be stated that there is a desire for what is ultimate in a person. He or she feels that only what is definitive is of true meaning and value. However, despite a clear desire for what is ultimate, young people in today's culture are afraid of making a final decision and committing themselves fully (Francis 2014d, 38–40). This constant uncertainty of choice, half-hearted commitment and the need to always leave the door open for return constitute the main manifestations of the culture of temporariness, which have consequences in marital and family life and in young people's decisions to choose such a path of life.

2. Consequences of the Culture of Temporariness in Marital and Family Life

The influence of the culture of temporariness is already visible in the lives of young people, and consequently also in the functioning of marriages and families. The current culture, full of consumerism and utilitarianism, strips almost all human matters of their spiritual, supernatural dimension, reducing man only to the role of a consumer or the consumed one. In his homily for Ash Wednesday 2019, Pope Francis teaches that "Possessions are temporary, power passes, success wanes. The culture of appearance prevalent today, which persuades us to live for passing things, is a great deception. It is like a blaze: once ended, only ash remains" (Francis 2019b, 38–39). Investing one's all strengths and powers in goods that fade away quickly leads to a sense of uncertainty, reluctance to get involved, and ultimately a sense of lack of meaning in life. Francis teaches that the "prevailing cultural models – for example, the 'culture of the temporary'" (Francis 2014d, 38–40) do not "offer an atmosphere that promotes the cultivation of stable life choices with strong bonds" (Francis 2014d, 38–40). Continuously strengthened individual independence, which is based not on love and responsibility, but on temporary emotions, contributes to cancelling previously made choices quickly. It comes to the point at which a young person, in the name of his or her own independence, can swiftly deviate from a carefully chosen life path. This leads to making further choices that will not require taking too much responsibility or much dedication. Further life choices will be superficial enough to allow the person to withdraw from them at any time (Rabczyński 2017, 133–49). Superficiality in taking responsibility and making commitments has further consequences not only in the sphere of building relationships as engaged or married couples, but also in all areas of life that require full commitment, such as starting and graduating from university, finding a life goal or taking up challenges. The Pope refers to people with such an attitude as "wanderers" who, having no life goal, live without enthusiasm and joy (Francis 2014d, 38–40).

Moreover, in addition to the young "wanderers," Pope Francis mentions another group – young people who "have gone into retirement." These people have no dreams, do not want to become involved in anything, withdraw before the game even starts, are sad, bored and look for excitement in false illusions (Francis 2016d, 16). The consumer mentality makes young people see their happiness in prosperity. The Pope refers to this state as "couch happiness" (Francis 2016c, 25–27). The couch here is a symbol of a particular paralysis, which, combined with fear, forces a person to withdraw from taking on challenges, making them lethargic and bemused. Therefore, the couch appears as a comfortable, safe place where you can spend your life while immersing yourself in the virtual world of games or the Internet. This paralysis causes isolation, lack of the willingness to meet others and make friends. The most significant consequence of confusing happiness with consumption is

the loss of freedom, as a person falls into life stagnation, becoming unable to become involved and leave their mark on the world (Francis 2016c, 25–27). This process takes the meaning of life away, brings vegetation, resignation and a lack of ambition. The Pope says that such a person "stays seated" and will achieve nothing (Francis 2018d, 40–41).

Such a young person has an inner desire to achieve something great, but in the conditions of the culture of temporariness, saturated with consumerism, this desire often comes down to being original. It is easy to notice that this goal must be achieved by the young person immediately and they must constantly continue being unique, and therefore it requires qualities other than perseverance, commitment or patience. Francis draws attention to the phenomenon of personalization, which, on one hand, brings the discovery of one's identity and a shift from copying others' behavior, releasing spontaneity and individual talents, on the other hand, however, the personalization, "if misdirected it can foster attitudes of constant suspicion, fear of commitment, self-centredness and arrogance" (Francis 2016a, no. 33). Eradication, i.e. rejection of traditional authorities and institutions, such as family, school, Church or friends; the pluralism of possible identities, each of which seems equally attractive, contributes to the creation of identity void (Urbaniak 2014, 14). Liquid modernity, thanks to market tools, allows people to create a new identity in an instant using a well-known brand of clothes, cosmetics or cars. However, the consequence of such a solution is that the identity is illusory, untrue, created by advertising agencies for profit-making purposes. The superficiality of one's own identity affects the way they build relationships with others, as well as with oneself. The fear of the unattractiveness of one's own "self," and further – of being rejected, becoming human waste, causes continuing modification and following fashion in creating one's own identity. As a result, the person loses it (Francis 2018c, 4–8).

A young person, who is constantly transforming his or her identity, is unable to define who they are and what system of values they follow. Building long-term and strong relationships on such a liquid foundation is almost impossible, hence the youth of the culture of temporariness are looking for substitutes in the form of many shallow relations. This leads to the loss of bonds that are necessary to meet the need for affiliation, build a true identity and future marital and family relationships.

3. Pope Francis' Instructions for Young People

As Paweł Sproncel aptly notes (2022, 176), the culture of temporariness itself somehow determines the way to counteract its effects. Diagnosing the contemporary threats and realizing their consequences allows the authors of the article to propose

countermeasures inspired by the teachings of Pope Francis. They constitute a proposal of the Church's response to the increasing secularization.

First and foremost, there is the issue of shaping an appropriate human identity. An internally integrated person will undertake subsequent tasks with courage and take responsibility for their family and their life in faith. A young person of liquid modernity, often rootless, without any direction in his or her life, immersed in the digital world, must first answer the question: "who am I?" Pope Francis points out that the deepest identity of man is accepting the truth of being the child of God: "This is our 'posture', this is our spiritual identity: we are always beloved children of God" (Francis 2016b, 28–30). This truth is a kind of a backbone on which one should build their entire identity. Man's acceptance of the truth about God's love protects him from falling into sadness and despair due to sins, flaws or mistakes. God "loves us more than we love ourselves, [...] believes in us more than we believe in ourselves, [...] always 'supports' us as the most steadfast of fans" (Francis 2016b, 28–30). The Pope warns that isolating oneself in sadness and constantly remembering the damage suffered or the opportunities lost is not a Christian attitude, as it closes a person to God's action and cooperation with God. The lack of self-acceptance, which manifests itself in dissatisfaction and negative thinking, is a sign of failure to recognize one's own and deepest identity, i.e. the truth about being a child of God. Without this truth, a person is unable to believe that God has a plan for them (Francis 2016b, 28–30). The Pope recommends introducing prayer of thanksgiving into one's life (Francis 2016b, 28–30), which focuses a person on contemplating God's love, and not on dwelling on sins and flaws (Borda 2018, 79–81).

Building one's life on the foundation of God's love, and not on considering one's own weaknesses, does not mean forgetting to work on oneself. Accepting the fact of being created out of God's love is an indispensable basis for taking the next step – accepting one's own limitations. The acceptance of the truth about one's own limitations constitutes the moment when a young person enters adulthood (Francis 2018d, 40–41). The Pope explains that recognizing one's own weakness is a condition for opening oneself to God's omnipotence (Francis 2018f, 44–45). Experiencing the effects of one's own sins can begin the process of building a life based on the truth about oneself, not on delusion. Thanks to this encounter with the truth, a person opens themselves to "what is missing" (cf. Matt 19:20), that is, seeing his or her ordinariness, they are able to open themselves to the extraordinary (Francis 2018d, 40–41).

Experiencing their own weaknesses makes young people, looking for a way out, a higher and stronger instance, open to the fatherhood of God, which leads them to accept their own condition, their own weaknesses and to reject illusions (Francis 2018f, 44–45). The Pope, recalling the text of the prophet Isaiah: "by his wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5), teaches that man was healed by the wounds of the Man who is God. Hence, people's personal weaknesses, failures and sins can become a place of opening to God's salvation. "Our healing is in the One who became poor, accepted

defeat, took upon himself our transience only to fill it with love and strength. He comes to reveal the fatherhood of God to us; in Christ, our weakness is no longer a curse, but a place of encounter with the Father and a source of new strength from on high" (Francis 2018f, 44–45).

On the path to maturity, there also appears a question about the meaning of life. The culture of temporariness – as already mentioned – deprives a person of the meaning of life and blurs their purpose. One seems lost in the world, lives from day to day, without a particular direction (Francis 2018b, 29–30). Such an attitude inevitably leads to a loss of meaning. The Pope teaches that it is God who gives purpose to the life of every person and directs it with his grace. Following God's grace is a path of wisdom that is born of faith. The opposite of this path of wisdom is eternal wandering during which wisdom is lost (Francis 2018b, 29–30). God's gift of wisdom allows one to unmask the false promises of happiness that modern culture tries to convey to us in the form of the absolutization of freedom, individualism, and consumerism, which ultimately lead to egoism, self-centeredness, isolation, and the loss of the meaning of life (Francis 2018b, 29–30).

Bringing up for freedom is indicated by the Pope as another countermeasure against the consequences of the culture of temporariness in the lives of young people (Francis 2013c, 4–5). The process of being brought up for freedom takes place through taking challenges and making ultimate life decisions and commitments. Addressing young people, the Pope explains that freedom does not mean doing what you want without responsibility, discernment and reflection. It is also not about gaining new, unrelated experiences or following ever-changing fashion. It does not also mean getting rid of everything that a person does not like anymore (Francis 2013c, 4–5). "Instead, freedom is the gift of being able to choose the good: this is true freedom. The free person is the one who chooses what is good, what is pleasing to God, even if it requires effort, even if it is not easy" (Francis 2016e, 24).

Therefore, freedom is shaped by making choices and taking on challenges. The Pope encourages young people to have dreams, not to be satisfied with a half-hearted life, but to take up challenges that will determine the goals in their lives (Francis 2016e, 24). What we need is "healthy restlessness" (Francis 2018d, 40–41), which will not allow us to be satisfied with a "part-time" life (Francis 2013b, 15). Such a life is, in fact, submission to fashion, temporary benefits and the illusion of freedom (Francis 2013b, 15).

Fulfilling the dreams mentioned by Francis requires young people to make ultimate decisions and a final commitment. It can therefore be said that having dreams constitutes the driving force behind the decision-making process and gaining the courage to take up particular challenges (Francis 2016e, 24). The Pope warns that the loss of dreams may threaten a young person when he or she sees the period of youth as a transitional time towards adulthood, in which nothing happens. He refers to such an attitude as a "waiting room" (Francis 2019e, 31–33) before the adult life.

Another remedy that allows young people to be free from the culture of temporariness is to give themselves to others. Francis writes: "Giving means getting up from your armchair, from the comfort that makes you wrapped up in yourself, and starting to walk. Giving means not submitting to life, but entering the field, to give some goodness to the world. Please, do not leave your life on the bedside table, to not be satisfied with seeing it pass by on the television, do not believe that it will be the next app that you download that will make you happy" (Francis 2019c, 25–27). In other words, not giving in to the lust for money is practicing poverty of spirit and the virtue of temperance. The Pope points out that to adopt an attitude of temperance, courage is necessary, which comes from trust in God. Practicing the virtue of temperance opens people to the needs of others, especially the poor, and allows to strengthen solidarity and to overcome indifference (Francis 2014f, 12–13). Being with the poor teaches one what human dignity is. A poor person has no money, power, or prestige, but he or she is a teacher of human dignity and trust in God (Francis 2014f, 12–13). Meeting the poor or sick and disabled frees one from self-centeredness and isolation, and teaches courage and sensitivity towards others. The Pope teaches that "Seeing the frailty of others gives us perspective; it helps us not to go through life licking our wounds" (Francis 2018e, 19).

Commitment, making fundamental life decisions and challenges, as well as deeds of mercy (Francis 2016e, 24) are not only a response to the current culture of temporariness affecting young people, but also constitute a source of happiness and a full life in freedom (Francis 2016b, 28–30). In his teaching, the Pope also points to other activities that definitely support the maturation process and allow making the right decisions. One of them is talking to elders, who are "the guardians of that spiritual legacy of faith and values which define a people and illumine a path" (Francis 2015a, 31–35). At this point, it is worth recalling the speech delivered to the participants of the plenary meeting of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, in which the Pope encourages the Church to reach out to the digital world and social networking sites in order to listen, engage in a dialogue and encourage, all with Christian identity (Francis 2013d, 38).

The process of standing up to challenges and making fundamental decisions is often accompanied by doubts and fear, which are intensified by the above-mentioned *zapping*. That is why Pope Francis reminds the method of discernment, which the Message for the Thirty-Third World Youth Day of 2018 is dedicated to. The method of discernment Francis describes is aimed at overcoming fears. To be able to do this, one must first clearly define and specifically name their fears. "Do not be afraid to face your fears honestly, to recognize them for what they are and to come to terms with them" (Francis 2018c, 5). Once the fears are identified and overcome, the process of discernment leads to facing challenges. In this place, a person has a chance to make a profound act of faith in God, which is also a victory over fear. Therefore, building faith in God's Providence protects one from closing themselves off to others.

It should also be stated that discernment, and especially discernment of vocation, also to life in marriage and family, is not only a work of introspection, because vocation is a gift from God (Francis 2016a, no. 72). Discernment is therefore also opening to the One who calls (Francis 2019d, 5–7). Hence, silence, prayer and the sacraments are necessary, as they strengthen our relationship with God. Finally, on the path of discernment one meets other people who are more experienced in faith and help to make the right choices (Francis 2018c, 4–8). It is worth noting that their role is to accompany the discernment process, not to make choices for others. Spiritual development cannot be achieved by taking control over another person. It will constitute an apparent success, based on human immaturity (Francis 2014e, 40–41). Among people, it is necessary to remember the principle "time is greater than space" (Francis 2013a, no. 222) and allow a person to mature at their own pace. The effects of discernment will be a network of brotherhood, openness, taking up challenges, and therefore, trustful surrender to God and making a fundamental decision that is necessary in the transition to adulthood and finding the meaning of life (Francis 2019d, 5–7).

What can also enter the lives of young people who have no sense of existence is addictions. Francis gives three ways to counteract them. These are: "the path of education, the path of sports and the path of work" (Francis 2014c, 23–24). What constitutes their common denominator is development. Developing through school, sport and work makes a person not only get to know him or herself, but also teaches living in the presence of others, commitment, striving for good, overcoming fears, pursuing goals and fulfilling dreams. These features help one face problems in adult life without resorting to stimulants, getting into despair or self-isolation. These three paths shape a young person and help them learn to cooperate, strive for victory and make demands on him or herself, as well as cure them of individualism and discouragement (Francis 2014c, 23–24).

Then, in the development path of a young person, there comes the moment of starting a family, preceded by the period of engagement. The culture of temporariness makes people stop paying attention to this transitional time (Francis 2015b, 47–48), treating it as a thing of the past or merely the fulfillment of a custom. However, Pope Francis shows the special role of this period in the formation of a lasting covenant of love between a man and a woman. He warns against the effects of the current culture of immediacy: "Whoever thinks that they can want everything at once, then also gives up everything – and at once – at the first difficulty (or the first opportunity). There is no hope for trust and fidelity to the gift of oneself if the custom of using love as a kind of 'supplement' to psychophysical well-being dominates" (Francis 2015b, 47–48). Engagement is the time when a man and a woman learn to guard together the great gift of marital love. It cannot be reduced only to something that is bought, sold or withdrawn from when it seems no longer attractive (Goleń 2019, 21–35).

The Pope notes that the engagement period is accompanied by fear of making the final decision about marriage; he refers to it as "fear of the 'forever'" (Francis 2014b, 18). The answer is to entrust oneself to Jesus every day. This constitutes a way of growing in love and becoming women and men mature in faith. This path results from the fact that the "'forever' is not only a question of duration" (Francis 2014b, 17–20), but it is also about the quality of marital love, for which the model is the communion of the Persons of the Holy Trinity (Zarembski 2015, 169). Therefore, deepening the relationship with Jesus on a daily basis is an essential factor in building marital love and overcoming the consequences of the culture of temporariness (Goleń 2019, 24–25).

Conclusions

The Directory for Catechesis perceives the family as a community of love and life, which consists of the entire set of interpersonal relationships: spousal relationship, fatherhood-motherhood, sonship, fraternity, through which each person enters the human family and the family of God, which is the Church (PRKNE 2020, no. 228). The contemporary culture of temporariness, which influences the progressive secularization of the young generation, makes it difficult to educate young people to treat marriage and family responsibly. Therefore, when looking for the Church's response to secularization, it is worth using catechesis, and within its framework, religious education at school, to look for Pope Francis' instructions addressed to young people, which concern marital and family life. Pope Francis' teaching on the culture of temporariness among the young as well as the consequences of the culture of temporariness in the work of catechization of married couples and families analyzed in this article may help contemporary catechists in implementing the canonical mission of the Church so that their ministry and truthful testimony to reliability and beauty of indissoluble and ever faithful marriage might stand out.

Pope Francis' instructions for young people presented in the last part of the article should constitute an inspiration for all those who care deeply about the future of Christian marriages and families. Shaping appropriate identity of man, accepting the truth about being God's child, thanksgiving, working on oneself, accepting one's own weakness, searching for the meaning and purpose of life, upbringing to freedom, making dreams come true, offering oneself to others, practicing the virtue of poverty and temperance, deeds of mercy, discernment, development through school, sport and work, the period of engagement and deepening the relation with Jesus everyday are vital factors in building nuptial love and conquering the consequences of the culture of temporariness. In this way, Pope Francis' vision and dream about the modern family, expressed in *Amoris Laetitia*, will be realized.

Bibliography

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2006. *Życie na przemiał*. 2nd ed. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.

Borda, Michał. 2018. "Pedagogiczne przesłanie XXXI Światowych Dni Młodzieży w Polsce." In *Społeczne i podmiotowe uwarunkowania rozwoju młodzieży*, edited by Agnieszka Cybal--Michalska, Małgorzata Orłowska, and Waldemar Segiet. Dąbrowa Górnicza: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii WSB.

Chwaszcz, Joanna, Małgorzata Pietruszka, and Dariusz Sikorski. 2005. *Media*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Flader, Maciej. 2018. "Wiara w czasach portali społecznościowych: Charakterystyka pokolenia sieciowego." In *Duszpasterstwo młodzieży w Polsce wobec współczesnych przemian*, edited by Piotr Ochotny, Mateusz J. Tutak, and Tomasz Wielebski. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo i Księgarnia "Gotów" Katolickiego Stowarzyszenia Młodzieży.

Francis. 2013a. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*.

Francis. 2013b. "Jesteście polem Bożej wiary. Czuwanie modlitewne z młodzieżą na plaży Copacabana." *L'Osservatore Romano* 34 (8–9): 15.

Francis. 2013c. "Maryja opiekuje się nami jak dobra mama. Nabożeństwo różańcowe w bazylice Matki Boskiej Większej." *L'Osservatore Romano* 34 (7): 4–5.

Francis. 2013d. "Trzeba towarzyszyć człowiekowi w epoce cyfrowej. Audiencja dla uczestników zgromadzenia plenarnego Papieskiej Rady ds. Środków Społecznego Przekazu." *L'Osservatore Romano* 34 (11): 38–39.

Francis. 2014a. "Odwaga, żeby iść naprzód. Papież Franciszek rozmawia z dziennikarzami w samolocie w drodze powrotnej z Ziemi Świętej." *L'Osservatore Romano* 35 (6): 26–31.

Francis. 2014b. "Uczmy się przepraszać i przebaczać sobie nawzajem. Spotkanie z parami narzeczonych." *L'Osservatore Romano* 35 (3–4): 17–20.

Francis. 2014c. "Upodobanie do gry zespołowej. Przemówienie do dziewcząt i chłopców z Włoskiego Centrum Sportowego, 7.06.2014." *L'Osservatore Romano* 35 (7): 23–24.

Francis. 2014d. "Wasz entuzjazm jest zaraźliwy. Spotkanie z młodzieżą z regionów Abruzji i Molise przed sanktuarium w Castelpetroso." *L'Osservatore Romano* 35 (7): 38–40.

Francis. 2014e. "Zachowujcie świeżość pierwszego spotkania z Bogiem. Przemówienie do uczestników III Światowego Kongresu Ruchów Kościelnych i Nowych Wspólnot." *L'Osservatore Romano* 35 (12): 40–41.

Francis. 2014f. "Zarażanie radością. Orędzie na XXIX Światowy Dzień Młodzieży 2014." *L'Osservatore Romano* 35 (2): 12–13.

Francis. 2014g. "Ziemia, mieszkanie i praca prawami wszystkich. Przemówienie do uczestników światowego spotkania ruchów ludowych." *L'Osservatore Romano* 35 (11): 44–48.

Francis. 2015a. "Społeczeństwo bardziej ludzkie jest możliwe. Spotkanie z przedstawicielami paragwajskiego społeczeństwa obywatelskiego w Asunción." *L'Osservatore Romano* 36 (9): 31–35.

Francis. 2015b. "Wielka praca. Audiencja generalna, 20.05.2015." *L'Osservatore Romano* 36 (6): 47–48.

Francis. 2016a. Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*.

Francis. 2016b. "Marzyciele o nowej ludzkości. Homilia podczas Mszy św. Na Campus Misericordiae na zakończenie XXXI Światowego Dnia Młodzieży." *L'Osservatore Romano* 37 (7–8): 28–30.

Francis. 2016c. "Nic nie usprawiedliwia przelewu bratniej krwi. Przemówienie podczas czuwania modlitewnego z młodzieżą na Campus Misericordiae w Brzegach." *L'Osservatore Romano* 37 (7–8): 25–27.

Francis. 2016d. "Polska chce być wiecznie młodym obliczem miłosierdzia. Przemówienie podczas spotkania powitalnego z uczestnikami ŚDM na krakowskich Błoniach." *L'Osservatore Romano* 37 (7–8): 15–16.

Francis. 2016e. "Szczęście to nie aplikacja. Homilia podczas Mszy św. z okazji Jubileuszu Chłopców i Dziewcząt." *L'Osservatore Romano* 37 (5): 24.

Francis. 2018a. Apostolic Exhortation *Gaudete et Exsultate*.

Francis. 2018b. "Mądrość, która wyzwala. Przemówienie podczas spotkania z młodzieżą w Dhace." *L'Osservatore Romano* 39 (1): 29–30.

Francis. 2018c. "Największą przeszkodą jest lęk. Orędzie na 33. Światowy Dzień Młodzieży." *L'Osservatore Romano* 39 (3–4): 4–8.

Francis. 2018d. "Nie należy się zadowalać przeciętnością. Audiencja generalna." *L'Osservatore Romano* 39 (7): 40–41.

Francis. 2018e. "Pamiętajcie o korzeniach tego narodu. Przemówienie podczas spotkania z młodzieżą na placu przed wileńską katedrą." *L'Osservatore Romano* 39 (10): 19.

Francis. 2018f. "Skrząca iluzja bożków. Audiencja generalna." *L'Osservatore Romano* 39 (8–9): 44–45.

Francis. 2019a. Apostolic Exhortation *Christus Vivit*.

Francis. 2019b. "Czas na odnalezienie kierunku życia. Homilia podczas Mszy św. w Środę Popielcową." *L'Osservatore Romano* 40 (3): 38–39.

Francis. 2019c. "Mapą naszego życia jest Ewangelia. Przemówienie do uczestników międzynarodowego zlotu 'Euromoot 2019.'" *L'Osservatore Romano* 40 (9): 25–27.

Francis. 2019d. "Odwaga, by podjąć ryzyko. Orędzie na Światowy Dzień Modlitw o Powołania 2019, 31.01.2019." *L'Osservatore Romano* 40 (3): 5–7.

Francis. 2019e. "Wy, młodzi, jesteście Bożym teraz! Homilia podczas Mszy św. na zakończenie 34. ŚDM w Metro Park." *L'Osservatore Romano* 40 (2): 31–33.

Goleń, Jacek. 2019. "Odnowa przygotowania narzeczonych do małżeństwa po adhortacji *Amoris laetitia*." *Teologia Praktyczna*, no. 20: 21–35. https://doi.org/10.14746/tp.2019.20.02.

John Paul II. 1981. Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio*.

Melosik, Zbyszko. 2013. *Kultura popularna i tożsamość młodzieży: W niewoli władzy i wolności*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls."

PRKNE (Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji). 2020. *Dyrektorium o katechizacji*. [Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. *Directory for Catechesis*]. Kielce: Jedność.

Rabczyński, Paweł. 2017. "A Christian Family in a 'Provisional Culture.'" *Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej* 16 (3): 133–49. https://doi.org/10.15290/rtk.2017.16.3.09.

Słupek, Lucyna. 2006. "Zapping." In *Słownik terminologii medialnej*, edited by Walery Pisarek, 240. Kraków: TAiWPN Universitas.

Sproncel, Paweł. 2022. *Kultura tymczasowości jako wyzwanie dla duszpasterstwa Kościoła w świetle nauczania papieża Franciszka: Studium teologiczno-pastoralne*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo "Scriptum" Tomasz Sekunda.

Urbaniak, Marcin. 2014. "Gorzki posmak płynnej nowoczesności." *Kwartalnik Naukowy Uczelni Vistula* 42 (4): 5–27.

Zając, Antoni. 2013. "Cywilizacja informacyjna na język kultury, wiedzy i edukacji przetworzona." *Kwartalnik Edukacyjny* 75 (4): 14–26.

Zarembski, Zbigniew. 2015. "Apostolat rodziny naglącą potrzebą Kościoła." In *Duszpasterstwo w Polsce. 50 lat inspiracji Soboru Watykańskiego II*, edited by Marek Fiałkowski, 161–82. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Katecheza w ponowoczesności – przestrzenie dialogu

Catechesis in Postmodernity – the Scope for Dialogue

KAMILLA FREJUSZ 🆔

Akademia Katolicka w Warszawie – Collegium Bobolanum, kamifrejusz@gmail.com

Streszczenie: Katecheza zawsze odbywa się w konkretnych warunkach i w konkretnych czasach. Nie może być oderwana od rzeczywistości, nie może „rozmijać" się z problemami przeżywanymi przez katechizowanych. W tym znaczeniu ponowoczesność i cechujący ją sekularyzm stawiają katechezę w nowych warunkach, w sytuacji, która wymaga rozpoznania, a następnie rozeznania, jak w tej nowej rzeczywistości możliwe jest głoszenie katechezy, jak możliwe jest dotarcie z Ewangelią do współczesnego człowieka. Artykuł podejmuje namysł nad możliwościami dialogu katechetycznego z człowiekiem żyjącym w ponowoczesności, którą charakteryzuje zjawisko sekularyzacji. Refleksja przeprowadzona będzie w dwóch punktach. Najpierw ukazany zostanie kontekst, w którym zarysowuje się współczesny dialog katechetyczny. Następnie wyartykułowane zostaną konkretne zagadnienia, które mogą stanowić swoistą przestrzeń spotkania (konieczną do zaistnienia dialogu) z człowiekiem ponowoczesności. Całość zakończy krytyczne podsumowanie.

Słowa klucze: ponowoczesność, Kościół, katecheza, dialog

Abstract: Catechesis is always context-and-time-specific. It cannot be detached from reality, nor can it ignore the problems experienced by those being catechised. In this sense, postmodernity and its characteristic secularism place catechesis in a situation that requires recognition, and then discernment, of how in this new reality it is possible to proclaim catechesis and to reach the contemporary person with the Gospel. This article undertakes a reflection on the possibilities of catechetical dialogue with individuals living in postmodernity characterised by secularisation. The analysis addresses two principal issues. First, the context is described in which contemporary dialogue is conducted within the broadly understood catechesis. Then, specific points of convergence are identified that may open up a meeting space necessary for the emergence of dialogue with the postmodern person. The article concludes with a critical summary.

Keywords: postmodernity, Church, catechesis, dialogue

„Relacja pomiędzy Ewangelią a kulturą od zawsze stanowiła wyzwanie w życiu Kościoła. Jego zadaniem jest wiernie strzec depozytu wiary, ale jednocześnie «konieczne jest, aby ta pewna i niezmienna doktryna, której należy okazywać wierność i szacunek, była pogłębiana oraz przedstawiana w sposób odpowiadający wymogom naszych czasów»" (*DK* 44). Wymogi „naszych" czasów, zwanych ponowoczesnością, stawiają przed katechezą nowe wyzwania. Jednym z nich jest umiejętność rozeznania i rozpoznania współczesnego kontekstu, w którym odbywa się dialog katechetyczny. Bez tego niemożliwe jest rozpoczęcie dialogu katechetycznego, a nawet zaproszenie do niego współczesnego człowieka. W niniejszym artykule podjęta zostanie refleksja

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17004   191

nad poszukiwaniem przestrzeni możliwości dialogu katechetycznego z człowiekiem żyjącym w ponowoczesności. Najpierw ukazany zostanie kontekst kulturowo-religijny, w którym odbywa się współczesny dialog katechetyczny. Następnie wyartykułowane (zaproponowane) zostaną konkretne elementy i możliwości, które mogą stanowić swoistą przestrzeń spotkania (konieczną do zaistnienia dialogu) ze współczesnym katechizowanym.

1. Kontekst kulturowo-religijny współczesnej katechezy

Rozeznanie obecnej sytuacji jest niczym innym jak rozeznawaniem znaków czasu, które z kolei stanowi warunek skuteczności procesu katechizacji (Mąkosa 2019, 472). Ze znaków czasu płynie adresowane do całego Kościoła silne wezwanie do działania. Ojcowie Soboru Watykańskiego II pisali w konstytucji *Gaudium et spes*, że

> Kościół zawsze ma obowiązek badać znaki czasów i wyjaśniać je w świetle Ewangelii, tak aby mógł w sposób dostosowany do mentalności każdego pokolenia odpowiadać ludziom na ich odwieczne pytania dotyczące sensu życia obecnego i przyszłego oraz wzajemnego ich stosunku do siebie. Należy zatem poznawać i rozumieć świat, w którym żyjemy, a także jego nieraz dramatyczne oczekiwania, dążenia i właściwości (*KDK* 4).

W kontekście malejącej liczby katechizowanych, rozeznawanie znaków czasu – w tym również wyzwań ze strony ponowoczesności – wydaje się być niejednokrotnie czynnikiem warunkującym zaistnienie jakiegokolwiek dialogu katechetycznego. W świetle najnowszych badań większość ludzi młodych odchodzących dziś od Kościoła czy zaprzestających konkretnych praktyk religijnych jako powód swych decyzji wcale nie podaje (jak można byłoby się spodziewać) zgorszenia wywołanego zjawiskiem skandali w Kościele. Najczęściej podawanym powodem okazuje się brak zainteresowania, brak potrzeby, obojętność (17%). Dopiero na drugim miejscu znalazły się formułowane krytyki pod adresem Kościoła (12%), że badanym nie podoba się to, co robi Kościół, że zrazili się do Kościoła (Grabowska 2022, 5). Skoro ludzie młodzi jako powód odejścia od Kościoła najczęściej deklarują brak zainteresowania, to czy nie należałoby w ramach procesu rozeznawania znaków czasu spróbować dotrzeć do powodów tego zjawiska? Być może przyczyna wcale nie tkwi w braku zainteresowania nauką Kościoła? Być może proces katechetyczny nieuwzględniający kontekstu społecznego nie jest w stanie doprowadzić do takiego spotkania z młodym człowiekiem, które umożliwiłoby zaistnienie dialogu katechetycznego? Wydaje się także, że „rozejście się" młodych z Kościołem nie zawsze powodowane jest ich niezgodą na treści nauczania Kościoła. To „rozejście" często dokonuje się o wiele wcześniej. Młodzi ludzie niejednokrotnie nawet nie mają możliwości zapoznania

się z Ewangelią. Sposób, w jaki im się ją przedstawia (i nie chodzi tutaj o metodykę), niejako „na starcie" powoduje brak zainteresowania. Czasy, w których żyją, również nie „stymulują" do wnikania, dopytywania i rozeznawania. Refleksja ta przypomina spostrzeżenie Tomáša Halíka, który w jednej ze swoich książek opisuje następujące wydarzenie: „Kiedyś na stacji praskiego metra zobaczyłem wypisane na murze zdanie: «Jezus jest odpowiedzią!», które prawdopodobnie przed chwilą utrwalił ktoś, kto pełen zachwytu wracał z radosnego zgromadzenia ewangelikalnego. Ktoś inny dopisał jednak do tej deklaracji: «Ale jakie było pytanie?»" (Halík 2016, 29). Halík przywołuje w tym kontekście trafne stwierdzenie filozofa Erica Voegelina: „największy problem dzisiejszych chrześcijan nie polega na tym, że nie znają właściwych odpowiedzi, ale że zapomnieli o pytaniach, które zostały postawione i ku którym owe odpowiedzi zmierzały" (Halík 2016, 29). Ludzie młodzi w swoich wypowiedziach na temat katechezy wiele razy potwierdzali tę diagnozę. Odnoszą wrażenie, że Kościół przychodzi do nich z nauką, która nie jest odpowiedzią na ich pytania. Obecnie jest to jedno z największych wyzwań stawianych katechezie. Jest ono stawiane przez młodego człowieka, który urodził się już w ponowoczesności, który niejako wzrastał w jej postulatach i pytaniach, a najczęściej w atmosferze podważającej sens ich stawiania.

Skoro współcześni katechizowani uważają, że nie słucha się ich pytań; skoro nie wykazują zainteresowania tym, co Kościół ma im do powiedzenia, i w coraz większej liczbie rezygnują z praktyk religijnych oraz z zadawania sobie pytań o swoją wiarę bądź jej brak – to czy największym wyzwaniem katechezy w dobie ponowoczesności nie powinna być umiejętność dostrzeżenia tych przestrzeni ich życia, w których można się z nimi spotkać i nawiązać dialog? Innymi słowy, skoro metoda dialogu zakłada istnienie pewnej wspólnoty poglądów, od której można rozpocząć rozmowę (Starnawski 2011, 56), to czy w przypadku ponowoczesności istnieją takie wspólne poglądy? Czy istnieją jakieś wspólne przestrzenie, w których można się spotkać? Jednym słowem, czy w ogóle jest możliwy dialog ze współczesnym ponowoczesnym młodym człowiekiem?

Definicja postmodernizmu (ponowoczesności) i jego obraz prezentowany zarówno w mediach, jak i w niektórych książkach i artykułach katechetycznych zdają się na starcie uniemożliwiać jakikolwiek dialog. W najnowszym *Leksykonie katechetycznym* czytamy: „Postmodernizm całkowicie zrywa z fundamentalnymi założeniami kultury euroatlantyckiej. Ze szczególną determinacją atakuje chrześcijaństwo, w tym głównie Kościół rzymskokatolicki […], konsekwentnie działa w kierunku eliminacji religii ze sfery publicznej […], jest więc ideologią nie do zaakceptowania dla chrześcijanina […]" (Panuś 2022, 563). Czy wobec tej definicji można myśleć o jakiejkolwiek możliwości dialogu z ponowoczesnością w ramach katechezy (biorąc pod uwagę warunki, które muszą być spełnione, aby on zaistniał)? W literaturze przedmiotu znajdziemy wiele odpowiedzi przeczących, podających w wątpliwość i podważających sens takiego dialogu. Wydaje się jednak, że odpowiedź przecząca

nie jest aż tak oczywista. Chociaż Tomasz Węcławski stwierdza, że między ponowo-czesnością a chrześcijaństwem przynajmniej w jednej kwestii panuje zgoda „i że jest to zgoda beznadziejna: nie ma miejsca, na którym można by się spotkać i ostatecznie pogodzić" (Węcławski 1996, 139), to jednak uważa on jednocześnie, że istnieje moż-liwość zaproszenia postmodernizmu do dialogu w ramach teologii praktycznej. Jego zdaniem to, „czym dzisiaj dysponuje systematyczna teologia, w tak niewielkim stop-niu wchodzi w grę jako środek porozumienia ze światem «wrażliwości postmoder-nistycznej», że możemy spokojnie odłożyć na lepsze czasy próbę rozwiązania naszej kwestii na tej płaszczyźnie. Pozostaje zatem tylko odpowiedź «praktyczna». Ta z kolei może mieć jedynie charakter zaproszenia" (Węcławski 1996, 139–40). We współcze-snej sytuacji, kiedy tak wielu młodych ludzi odchodzi od Kościoła, należałoby skupić się właśnie wokół poszukiwania możliwości „zaproszenia" młodego człowieka do dialogu. Aby to było możliwe, należy szukać przestrzeni, w których można „spotkać" się z młodym człowiekiem.

Wobec pojawiających się wątpliwości co do realności takiego spotkania warto przywołać jeszcze okoliczności i racje wynikające z uniwersalizmu chrześcijańskie-go, na jakie powołuje się Grzegorz Dziewulski. Jego zdaniem chrześcijaństwu, po-mimo wyłonienia się z partykularnie nastawionego judaizmu, wielokrotnie udawało się owocnie spotkać ze światami innych kultur i w ich języku wyrażać swoje orędzie.

> Tak było najpierw z recepcją żywej w Cesarstwie Rzymskim myśli platońskiej, która za-owocowała rozwiniętą teologią, przede wszystkim w postaci chrystologii, skrystalizowa-nej w dogmacie chalcedońskim, tak też było z myślą Arystotelesa przyswojoną w okresie Wielkiej Scholastyki przez św. Tomasza z Akwinu. Podobne spotkanie, na sposób inkultu-racji, miało miejsce, kiedy chrześcijaństwo przenikało i korzeniło się w kolejnych ewange-lizowanych narodach i regionach (Dziewulski 2013, 30).

Dlatego też Kościół stawia w tej kwestii ogromne zadanie przed dialogiem kate-chetycznym.

Organizując działalność katechetyczną, Kościół opiera się na analizie sytuacji, a zatem na poznaniu aspektów społeczno-kulturowych i religijnych danej rzeczywi-stości pod kątem duszpasterskiej interpretacji, której celem jest inkulturacja wiary. Analiza sytuacji oraz kontekstu społecznokulturowego pomaga z kolei zrozumieć, jaki wpływ na życie współczesnego człowieka mają przemiany zachodzące w spo-łeczeństwie (*DK* 418). W tym też znaczeniu autorzy najnowszego *Dyrektorium ka-techetycznego* wyraźnie podkreślają konieczność podejmowania konkretnych wysił-ków mających na celu wypracowanie pogłębionego spojrzenia na rzeczywistość.

> Tak niejednorodna i zmienna rzeczywistość, zarówno pod względem społeczno-kultural-nym, jak i religijnym, wymaga takiego sposobu odczytania, który byłby w stanie uchwy-cić jej wielościenny charakter, a jednocześnie zachować ważność i specyfikę każdego z jej

aspektów, wraz z ich rozmaitymi odniesieniami do całości. Takie podejście interpretacyjne pozwala widzieć zjawiska z różnych perspektyw, jednocześnie dostrzegając ich współzależności. Ważne, by Kościół, który pragnie każdemu człowiekowi ofiarować piękno wiary, był świadom tej złożoności i wypracował pogłębione i bardziej światłe spojrzenie na rzeczywistość (*DK* 321).

Pojęcie wielościennego charakteru współczesnej rzeczywistości autorzy *Dyrektorium* odnoszą do nauczania papieża Franciszka, który w analogii do bryły wielościanu interpretuje współczesną sytuację pastoralną. Choć modelem tym papież posługuje się przede wszystkim w wyjaśnianiu procesu globalizacji (*EG* 236), to może być on również pomocny w refleksji nad dynamiką pastoralnego rozeznawania złożonych sytuacji (*AL* 4). Analizując proces współczesnej globalizacji, papież przywołuje obraz kuli i wielościanu. W *Evangelii gaudium* pisze, że modelem współczesnej globalizacji

> nie jest kula, która nie przewyższa części, gdzie każdy punkt jest tak samo oddalony od centrum i nie ma różnicy między jednym punktem a drugim. Modelem jest wielościan, odzwierciedlający zbieg wszystkich jego elementów, które zachowują w nim oryginalność. Zarówno działalność duszpasterska, jak i działalność polityczna mają na celu zebranie w takim wielościanie tego, co najlepsze. […] Nawet osoby, które mogą być krytykowane za swoje błędy, mają coś do zaofiarowania i nie powinno się tego zaprzepaścić (*EG* 236).

Obraz wielościanu trafnie ukazuje współczesną sytuację dialogu katechetycznego, w którym konieczne jest dostrzeżenie wielu płaszczyzn, kontekstów i złożoności, jakie niesie za sobą ponowoczesność. Dopiero po takim rozeznaniu możliwa jest „umiejętność bycia z" stanowiąca naturalna zdolność konieczną w katechezie rozumianej jako akt komunikacji i akt wychowawczy (*DK* 140). Katecheta musi mieć realistyczny kontakt z obecną rzeczywistością. Dopiero wówczas może dostrzec, „że współczesny człowiek targany jest pytaniami egzystencjalnymi oraz potrzebuje spotkania z Bogiem w nie mniejszym stopniu, niż miało to miejsce w poprzednich epokach" (Dziewiecki 2004, 43).

Umiejętność prowadzenia dialogu z człowiekiem „ponowoczesnym" nie oznacza zgody i bezkrytycznego przyjęcia za swoje poglądów i idei ponowoczesności. Choć dialog związany jest z koniecznością większej otwartości Kościoła wobec oczekiwań społeczeństwa ponowoczesnego, to jednak nigdy nie może być rozumiany jako rezygnacja ze swojej tożsamości (Sroczyńska 2018, 173). Skoro postmodernizm określa nasze czasy, to – jak słusznie zauważa Dariusz Kowalczyk – „teolog, który z jednej strony chce mówić z głębi wiary Kościoła, ale z drugiej odpowiadać na znaki czasu, musi się z owym postmodernizmem na różne sposoby konfrontować. Nie znaczy to, że ma stawać się teologiem postmodernistycznym, ale że ma być teologiem świadomym tego, co dzieje się wokół tu i teraz. By umieć dialogować, a jeśli trzeba – sprzeczać się w obronie wiary" (Kowalczyk 2019, 19). Mówiąc o dialogu katechetycznym

należy pójść nieco dalej. Katecheta, który chce prowadzić dialog z katechizowanymi, powinien na początku tego dialogu nie tyle stanąć w konfrontacji z poglądami postmodernizmu, co poszukać punktów wspólnych, elementów, które umożliwią rozpoczęcie dialogu katechetycznego. Postawienie się w pozycji konfrontacyjnej w większości sytuacji uniemożliwi jakikolwiek dialog i spotkanie. W procesie poszukiwania „punktów stycznych", które niejako „stworzyłyby warunki" (Krysztofik and Walulik 2016, 43) do zapoznania się z treściami wiary, zwłaszcza tymi dotyczącymi odkrywania sensu życia, pomocne są teologie fundamentalna i dogmatyczna oraz toczący się w niej dyskurs z ponowoczesnością (Góźdź, Chyła, and Kunka 2012; Bokwa 2010). Choć przedstawiciele tego dyskursu zdają sobie sprawę, że możliwości i obszary dialogu między filozofią ponowoczesną a teologią stwarzają niewielkie „pola manewru i dialogicznego spotkania" (Bokwa 2010, 393), to jednak zgodnie podkreślają, że „przestrzeń taka istnieje, że powinna zostać odkryta, zdefiniowana i zagospodarowana" (Bokwa 2010, 393). A skoro, jak stwierdza Dziewulski, „istnieją pewne zbieżności teologii i ponowoczesności w postaci idei czy narzędzi i środków ich wyrazu, eksplikacji i komunikacji, intuicji czy postulatów, [które – K.F.] mogą […] stanowić sposobność bądź płaszczyznę spotkania" (Dziewulski 2013, 33), to tym bardziej możliwość odnalezienia takich zbieżności w teologii praktycznej (jak zostało to już wspomniane) wydaje się realna. I chociaż, jak stwierdza Krzysztof Kaucha, „elementów programu postmodernizmu możliwych do zaakceptowania z chrześcijańskiego punktu widzenia nie jest wiele" (Kaucha 2013, 74), to jednak (odwołując się do współczesnej literatury przedmiotu) jest w nim kilka bliskich nam punktów, a tzw. „wrażliwość postmodernistyczna – czy świadomie, czy nie – czasami przypomina wrażliwość chrześcijańską" (Kaucha 2013, 83). Można zatem wyodrębnić kilka komponentów stanowiących swoiste „zaproszenie" do dialogu katechetycznego.

2. Wspólne przestrzenie dialogu katechezy z ponowoczesnością

Pierwszym elementem charakteryzującym postawę postmodernistyczną (ponowoczesną), wokół którego można byłoby zacząć dialog katechetyczny, jest antyscjentyzm, czyli „odrzucenie naiwnej apoteozy poznania naukowego wcześniejszych podejść pozytywistycznych" (Bronk 1996, 90), a więc przekonania, że rozum i nauka stanowią lekarstwo na wszelkie problemy współczesnego świata i człowieka (Panuś 2022, 561). Dobra i zarazem „nasza" – jak określa to Kaucha – jest w postmodernizmie krytyka niektórych idei oświeceniowych i modernistycznych, które zostały skierowane wprost przeciwko chrześcijaństwu jako religii historycznej, objawionej (Kaucha 2013, 77–78). Może wręcz dziwić, zdaniem wspomnianego autora, „że postmodernizm nie traktuje chrześcijaństwa jako swego sprzymierzeńca. Można zgodzić się do pewnego stopnia z postulatem relatywizacji ludzkiej wiedzy i osiągnięć

rozumu, który to postulat jest i nam bliski. Wiadomo, że ludzka natura jest ułomna, także poznanie i język, co dotyczy również do pewnego stopnia poznania teologicznego, dlatego potrzebny jest ludzkiemu poznaniu epistemiczny gwarant z natury swej pozaludzki" (Kaucha 2013, 78). Jak słusznie zauważa Kaucha, teologia fundamentalna wskaże tutaj na Objawienie Boże (i nie będzie to nielogiczne i niezgodne z intuicją postmodernistyczną, która oczywiście wprost nie wyprowadza takiej konstatacji). Postmodernizm potwierdza także prawdę,

> że nie ma bezzałożeniowego punktu wyjścia (totalnej neutralności poznawczej, absolutnej pozakontekstualności), i że nigdy nie powinno się ulegać aprioryzmowi. Te postulaty są, i to niezależnie od postmodernizmu, spełnione w teologii fundamentalnej, w ramach której budowane argumenty nie są aprioryczno-dedukcyjne, lecz raczej na drodze indukcyjno-dedukcyjnej zmierzają do uzasadnienia wiarygodności podstaw religii chrześcijańskiej, którymi nie są aprioryczne idee, lecz osoby i wydarzenia (Kaucha 2013, 78).

Z postulatu antyscjentyzmu płynie także swoista nauka dla teologii współczesnej. Również ona bowiem, jak słusznie dostrzega Robert Woźniak, „uległa pokusie «małpowania», zwartej i szczelnej, zamkniętej racjonalności oświeconej. Również i ona przeżywa dzisiaj poważny kryzys swojej tożsamości epistemologicznej […]. Świadczy o tym rozpowszechniony skrajny apofatyzm, który powraca do teologii poprzez jego wykrzywione użycie we współczesnej filozofii" (Woźniak 2012, 172).

Mówiąc o antyscjentyzmie, warto przyjrzeć się także analizie Kowalczyka, który zwraca uwagę na to, że ponowoczesność nie tyle podważa rozum wszelaki, ale mówi o „rozumie słabym", czyli takim, który nie powinien stawiać sobie zbyt ambitnych, przerastających go zadań. Jego zdaniem, o ile modernizm głosił ideę rozumu „mocnego", to znaczy takiego, który nieustannie rozwija się, poszerzając zasięg swego poznania aż do fundamentów rzeczywistości, a konsekwencją takiego stanowiska była wiara w stały, linearny postęp ludzkości, o tyle w ponowoczesności mówi się o rozumie „słabym", który przestał być uprzywilejowanym miejscem orientowania się we wszechświecie; rozum ustępuje miejsca cielesnej i uczuciowej spontaniczności. W odniesieniu do tej konstatacji „postmodernistyczny styl życia charakteryzuje się niespójnością, fragmentaryzacją i epizodycznością myśli i działań człowieka" (Kowalczyk 2019, 21). Rozum „mocny" i rozum „słaby" wiążą się bowiem z „mocnym" i „słabym" rozumieniem prawdy (Kowalczyk 2018, 132–42). Zdaniem Kowalczyka, w pewnym znaczeniu, postmodernistyczną ideę „rozumu słabego", który nie pretenduje do tworzenia wielkich systemów, możemy odnaleźć w nauczaniu papieża Franciszka, który wiele razy zaprasza do pokory w formułowaniu filozoficzno-teologicznych tez (Kowalczyk 2019, 22). W adhortacji *Gaudete et exsultate* papież wzywa do pewnego rodzaju umiaru w pretendowaniu do głoszenia prawdy: „Prawdę, którą otrzymujemy od Pana – stwierdza papież – możemy pojąć jedynie w sposób bardzo niedoskonały. Z jeszcze większą trudnością udaje się nam ją wyrazić. Dlatego nie

możemy udawać, że nasz sposób rozumienia upoważnia nas do sprawowania ścisłe-go nadzoru nad życiem innych" (*GE* 4). Z kolei w adhortacji *Evangelii gaudium* czy-tamy, że „domniemane bezpieczeństwo doktrynalne lub dyscyplinarne, […] otwiera pole dla narcystycznego i autorytarnego elitaryzmu, gdzie zamiast ewangelizować, analizuje się i krytykuje innych, i zamiast ułatwiać dostęp do łaski, traci się energię na kontrolowanie" (*EG* 94). Słowa te nie oznaczają w żadnej mierze ponowoczesne-go wątpienia prowadzącego do relatywizmu i sceptycyzmu. Wskazują raczej na inne rozłożenie akcentów, które w kontekście zaproszenia do dialogu katechetycznego wydaje się być istotne. Warto w punkcie wyjścia dialogu katechetycznego zgodzić się z ponowoczesnym młodym człowiekiem w postulacie „słabości" ludzkiej wiedzy i osiągnięć rozumu, pokazując chociażby nauczanie papieża Franciszka w tej kwestii.

Kolejnym elementem, niejako wynikającym z poprzedniego, jest krytyka wiel-kich narracji. Słynna teza Jeana-Françoisa Lyotarda, podjęta w jego książce *Kondy-cja ponowoczesna. Raport o stanie wiedzy*, mówiąca o upadku wielkich metanarracji oświeceniowych, stała się jedną z najważniejszych idei głoszonych przez zwolenni-ków ponowoczesności. Zgodnie z filozofią Lyotarda „w kulturze i społeczeństwie postmodernistycznym metanarracje straciły wiarygodność, przy czym pierwotne przyczyny tego stanu rzeczy tkwią w samych dziewiętnastowiecznych metanarra-cjach" (Słomski and Czarnecki 2018, 130). Jego zdaniem „wielkie opowieści" totali-zują i kolonizują rzeczywistość, tymczasem „małe opowieści" otwarte są na inność, różnorodność. Oczywiście, jak dostrzega Kowalczyk, z drugiej strony bywa i tak, że „rozdrobnione postmodernistyczne opowieści negują jakiegokolwiek «transcen-dentalnego Narratora». Ale przecież nie musi tak być. Najlepszy przykład stanowi Biblia, która jest zbiorem różnych «małych opowieści», różnych tradycji, niekiedy pozornie sprzecznych. Biblia nie jest totalizującym systemem, dlaczego [sic!] wciąż mówi do nas, do ludzi różnych czasów i różnych kultur" (Kowalczyk 2019, 22). Dla-tego ukazanie Biblii w całym bogactwie jej gatunków literackich, poprzez konkretne przypowieści, małe narracje, może stanowić cenny wkład w dialog katechetyczny ze współczesnym człowiekiem.

Wrażliwość na los cierpiących i marginalizowanych oraz świadomość wpływu człowieka na świat przyrody to kolejne punkty wspólnego spotkania z ponowoczes-nością w dialogu katechetycznym. Współczesna młodzież ma dużą wrażliwość na kwestie dotyczące nierówności społecznych, klimatu, wpływu człowieka na jakość życia na ziemi. W świetle badań przeprowadzonych wśród ludzi młodych (poświę-conych ich autoidentyfikacji w dobie ponowoczesności) okazuje się, że młodzież dostrzega „skłonność ludzi do stawania się odpowiedzialnymi nie tylko za siebie, ale także za losy całego globu («zdecydowanie zgadzam się» – 15,6%, «raczej zga-dzam się» – 31,8%). Prawidłowość ta dowodzi istnienia powinności troszczenia się o wspólnotę, myślenia o wszystkich" (Myszka 2014, 166) wbrew prezentowanej w środowiskach kościelnych opinii o człowieku ponowoczesności, który „kręci się wokół siebie, wykorzystuje innych ludzi do osiągnięcia własnego celu, jest niezdolny

do solidarności społecznej" (Dziewiecki 2013, 58). Oznacza to, że „pomimo powszechnych przekonań na temat przejawiania skłonności do egoizmu przez jednostki, prezentują one jednak dojrzałą postawę opierającą się na twierdzeniu, że niedomagania jednego z regionów świata mogą przyczynić się do zaburzenia funkcjonowania całości" (Myszka 2014, 166). Kwestia troski o klimat i środowisko stanowi niejednokrotnie punkt wyjścia do dyskusji nad możliwością zaistnienia jakiejkolwiek wspólnoty pomiędzy ludźmi. Zdaniem Zygmunta Baumana, jeśli „w świecie jednostek ma zaistnieć wspólnota, może to być (i musi) jedynie wspólnota utkana ze wspólnej i wzajemnej troski; wspólnota troski i odpowiedzialności […]" (Bauman 2008, 200). Odniesienie do wspólnoty działania w imię jakiegoś dobra odnajdujemy także w analizie Baumana dotyczącej rozumienia „my" jako nazwy „bycia-jeden-dla--drugiego człowiekiem" (Bauman 2006, 29). Stwierdza on, że w czasach ponowoczesności „my" jest zadaniem – „ciągłym, wołającym o wciąż na nowo podejmowany i ciągle tak samo gorliwy wysiłek" (Bauman 2006, 29).

Niestety w kontekście budowania wspólnoty troski o świat współczesna młodzież nie widzi w Kościele sprzymierzeńca swoich poglądów. A przecież tak wiele w tej tematyce odnajdujemy wskazań w dokumentach nauczania Kościoła. Skoro, jak słusznie zauważają autorzy najnowszego *Dyrektorium katechetycznego*, „kwestia ekologii jest postrzegana jako ważna przez wielu ludzi i organizacje o różnej prowenien-cji kulturalnej i filozoficznej" (*DK* 382), to tym bardziej powinna ona stanowić punkt wspólny w dialogu katechetycznym w czasach ponowoczesności. Dialog ten, wyczulony na ochronę świata stworzonego, powinien krzewić kulturę atencji, którą otaczać należy tak środowisko, jak i ludzi w nim żyjących (*DK* 383). Dlatego warto w dialogu katechetycznym ukazywać jakże bogate nauczanie Kościoła w tej kwestii (Krajewski 2011, 163), zwłaszcza nauczanie papieża Franciszka, który dostrzega, jak „wiele wysiłków na rzecz znalezienia konkretnych rozwiązań kryzysu ekologicznego zostało zmarnowanych nie tylko przez możnych tego świata, ale również z powodu braku zainteresowania pozostałych. Negacja problemu wynikająca z wygodnej obojętności, rezygnacja lub ślepa wiara w środki techniczne to postawy utrudniające znalezienie właściwych rozwiązań, spotykane nawet wśród wierzących" (*LS* 14). Przecież edukacja ekologiczna propagowana w katechizacji (*DK* 381–84), choć odwołuje się do myśli chrześcijańskiej, zwłaszcza do norm moralności chrześcijańskiej, u podstaw której znajdują się teologiczne prawdy o Bogu Stwórcy i stworzeniu wszechświata, to jednak bazuje na założeniach edukacji ekologicznej w ogóle (Zellma 2003, 257). I właśnie ona może stanowić punkt wyjścia i zaproszenie do dialogu katechetycznego. Dlatego konieczne jest ukazywanie młodym ludziom, w jaki sposób ich troska o zwierzęta, środowisko, klimat zgadza się z nauczaniem Kościoła.

Kolejnym elementem istotnym z punktu widzenia dialogu katechetycznego, a dostrzeżonym w podjętej przez Kauchę analizie postmodernizmu, jest krytyka okrucieństw XX wieku i ideologii, które je spowodowały, a które przecież były ate-istyczne i antychrześcijańskie. Powinno być łatwo w katechezie spotkać się wokół

dyskusji nad przyczynami zaistniałych i nadal toczących się w świecie wojen. Niewątpliwie trudniejszym wyzwaniem jest, jak pokazuje choćby kontekst niedawno rozgorzałych konfliktów wojennych (niestety niepozbawionych religijnych wątków), ukazanie, dlaczego są one zaprzeczeniem prawd religijnych i wypaczeniem religii (nawet wtedy, a zwłaszcza wtedy, kiedy na religię owi wojownicy się powołują). Nauczanie Kościoła, a szczególnie papieża Franciszka, dostarcza nam w tej kwestii wielu istotnych argumentów. W myśl tego nauczania wszelakie akty przemocy i terroryzmu dokonywane w imię Boga i religii są sprzeniewierzeniem się nie tylko miłości bliźniego, ale także miłości Boga. Są one profanacją religii w jej istocie. Jest to stanowisko nie tylko papieża, ale również wielkiego imama uniwersytetu Al-Azhar Ahmeda el-Tayeba. We wspólnie podpisanym *Dokumencie o ludzkim braterstwie dla pokoju światowego i współistnienia* stwierdzają oni, że

> terroryzm jest godny pożałowania i zagraża bezpieczeństwu ludzi, czy to na Wschodzie, czy na Zachodzie, na Północy czy Południu, i szerzy panikę, terror i pesymizm, ale nie jest on spowodowany religią, nawet gdy terroryści posługują się nią instrumentalnie. Jest to raczej spowodowane nagromadzeniem błędnych interpretacji tekstów religijnych oraz polityką związaną z głodem, ubóstwem, niesprawiedliwością, uciskiem i arogancją (Franciszek and Wielki Imam Al-Azharr 2019).

Nie tylko w nauczaniu papieża Franciszka, ale i jego poprzedników (Brzezińska 2021, 258) możemy odnaleźć radykalny sprzeciw wobec wszelkich przejawów terroryzmu. Sprzeciw ten poparty nauczaniem Kościoła może być ważnym punktem rozpoczęcia dialogu katechetycznego.

Na ciekawą interpretację jednego z elementów ponowoczesności, który może stać się punktem wspólnym w dialogu katechetycznym, zwrócił uwagę Kaucha. Jego zdaniem,

> patrząc z szerszej, chrześcijańskiej perspektywy, można stwierdzić, że postmodernizm – choć tego nie przyznaje wprost – obala mit autosoteriologii, nie tylko oświeceniowej. Jeśli zbawienie jest możliwe, jak głosi chrześcijaństwo, a nawet jeśli jest możliwe wyzwolenie człowieka z oczywistych ograniczeń wewnętrznych i zewnętrznych, czego chrześcijaństwo nie głosi, to na pewno nie może to być dziełem samego człowieka, którego ułomność jest aż nadto w postmodernistycznej krytyce wykazana (Kaucha 2013, 78–79).

Oznacza to, że kwestia niemożności samozbawienia się człowieka (oczywiście, o ile w ogóle kwestia zbawienia może być wspólnie podejmowanym tematem) może stanowić punkt wyjścia do dalszych rozmów i dyskusji na tematy związane z eschatologią, zwłaszcza w katechezie dorosłych.

Ostatnią kwestią, istotną z punktu widzenia elementów konstytuujących ponowoczesność, choć nie będącą w dosłownym słowa tego znaczeniu punktem

wspólnym, jest religijność. Czy ponowoczesność rzeczywiście jest niereligijna? Czy rzeczywiście jest czasem „dawania sobie rady bez Boga" (Bauman 2000, 289) bądź też „rewolucją antyeschatologiczną" (Bauman 2000, 296)? Zdaniem niektórych współczesna „sekularyzacja [...] nie polega na zaniku religii, lecz na powstawaniu nowej duchowości, nowych form religijności. [...] Instytucja Kościoła wraz ze swoją wykładnią rzeczywistości traci swoje uprzywilejowane miejsce. Pojawiają się instytucje wtórne, czyli zorganizowane grupy religijne posiadające swój system wierzeń i praktyk religijnych, które istnieją w ramach tego samego społeczeństwa" (Bąk 2015, 116). Ponadto, jak stwierdza Władysław Piwowarski, „w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym kształtuje się kultura «pluralnego monoteizmu». Wszyscy wierzą w Boga, ale każdy w swojego własnego" (Piwowarski 2000, 180). Pewną nową społeczną formą religii jest religia prywatna. Religia w pewnym sensie staje się w swojej orientacji coraz bardziej doczesna. Subiektywne preferencje, będące kryterium wyboru, domagają się bogatej oferty, najczęściej wyrażonej w synkretycznej treści wierzeń. Nowe przejawy religii zawierają w sobie elementy ekologiczne, mistyczne bez uwzględniania istnienia Boga (Bąk 2015, 116), a „potrzeby religijne są traktowane jako jedne z wielu i możliwe do zaspokojenia w różnej formie na współczesnym rynku ofert duchowości" (Bąk 2015, 119).

Ciekawą interpretację religijności ponowoczesnej przedstawia Andrzej Pankalla. Opierając się na koncepcji „transkulturowości" Wolfganga Welscha, formułuje on pojęcie „transreligijności", którą rozumie jako przekraczanie partykularnych elementów różnych religii przy jednoczesnym łączeniu i zatrzymywaniu tego, co w każdej z nich wydaje się subiektywnie ważne (Pankalla 2015, 127). Zjawisko to różni się od synkretyzmu tym, że nie stanowi jedynie połączenia różnych elementów pochodzących z różnych religii. Podstawową cechą transreligijności jest zatem „bytowanie pomiędzy różnymi elementami pochodzącymi z odmiennych religii, jednak nie na zasadzie łączenia, lecz cyrkularnie następującego wyboru i konsekwentnie następującego zachowania, które związane jest z przechodzeniem od jednego elementu do drugiego z całkowitym zaangażowaniem w każdy z nich" (Pankalla and Wieradzka 2014, 169). Postawa ta jest konsekwencją wielości i łatwości dostępu do różnych filozofii, systemów religijnych czy religijnych wartości, wobec których należy się opowiedzieć i dokonać wyboru (Wieradzka-Pilarczyk 2015, 134).

Zdaniem Antoniego Torzewskiego wielu współczesnych autorów podejmujących analizę ponowoczesności utrzymuje tezę, że religijność w obliczu postmodernistycznych wezwań do pluralizmu nie jest możliwa, a nawet, że w ogóle wezwanie to jest nieuprawomocnione. Argumentują oni, że ponowoczesność wyklucza jakąkolwiek religię i propaguje postawy areligijne oraz naiwnie pluralistyczno-tolerancyjne (Torzewski 2021, 36). Niemniej, choć współczesna recepcja ponowoczesności, a zwłaszcza postulatu dotyczącego pluralizmu religijnego, jest niezwykle krytyczna na gruncie polskim, to jednak można znaleźć autorów odmiennego zdania. Torzewski zalicza do nich Charlesa Taylora i Janusza Mariańskiego, jako autorów niezwiązanych ideowo

z postmodernizmem, oraz filozofa Gianniego Vattimo. Potwierdzeniem tej tezy są słowa, które odnajdujemy w jednej z książek Mariańskiego dotyczące jego postrzegania zmieniającej się (nie zanikającej) religijności. Pisze on, że „zmieniająca się religijność ewoluuje od wielkiej Transcendencji do małej Transcendencji aż po granice swojej duchowości bez Boga" (Mariański 2010, 151). Religijność w czasach ponowoczesności, jego zdaniem, nie jest w zaniku ani nie wykazuje tendencji spadkowych, „staje się natomiast mniej uchwytna w swoich wymiarach zewnętrznych i mniej ukościelniona" (Mariański 2015, 52). Nie oznacza to jednak, że Transcendencja jest skazana na ostateczną zagładę. Ponowoczesne losy religii są bowiem o wiele bardziej skomplikowane, niż dopuszczają to ponowocześni krytycy (Mariański 2023, 33). Podobne stanowisko w tej kwestii zajmuje Wojciech Rzeszowski. Uważa on, że konsumpcyjne i powierzchowne nastawienie do życia, którym określa się często ponowoczesność, nie oznacza bynajmniej całkowitego zaniku religijności czy duchowych potrzeb człowieka. Potwierdzeniem tej tezy jest „nieustanne zapotrzebowanie na nowe, często oderwane od chrześcijaństwa, wspólnoty i grupy parareligijne, pozwalające doświadczyć poczucia przynależności, wspólnoty i namiastek nadprzyrodzoności" (Rzeszowski 2012, 217). Także przywołany już w tekście Kowalczyka Gianni Vattimo, mówi o swoistym „powrocie Boga", który miałby charakteryzować ponowoczesną mentalność i kulturę. Nie ma już bowiem – zdaniem Vattimo – uzasadnionych, możliwych do przyjęcia racji filozoficznych, aby być ateistą albo aby odrzucić religię. A zatem, jak konstatuje Kowalczyk, „ponowoczesność, która z jednej strony kojarzona jest z uderzającym w religijność relatywizmem, z drugiej strony paradoksalnie pewnym typem religijności sprzyja. Człowiek ponowoczesny chętnie zajrzy od czasu do czasu do kościoła, nie lubi jednak, kiedy mówi mu się o obowiązku systematycznych praktyk" (Kowalczyk 2019, 24). Dlatego, choć „[p]ostmodernistyczna krytyka religii może być widziana jako relatywizacja dogmatów i moralności, ale można w niej też dostrzec troskę o wolność i autentyzm relacji z Bogiem. Nie brakowało wszak systemów teologiczno-moralnych, które były w pewnym sensie bezduszne, dzielące włos na czworo bez widzenia konkretnego człowieka" (Kowalczyk 2019, 27). W tym także kontekście jawi się kolejna przestrzeń i możliwość wspólnej dyskusji wokół tematyki grzechu. Postmodernistyczna religijność jest bowiem w dużej mierze reakcją na wynaturzenia średniowiecznej i modernistycznej religijności. Dostrzegalny w ponowoczesności „[z]anik poczucia grzechu wiąże się paradoksalnie z nadużywaniem orędzia o grzechu […]. Przez wiele wieków zbyt mocny był w Kościele augustiański pesymizm, zgodnie z którym ludzkość to masa godnych potępienia istot (*massa damnata*), z których nieliczni zdołają się uratować" (Kowalczyk 2019, 26). Owo zagubienie ewangelicznych proporcji widoczne jest szczególnie w podejściu do seksualności, a konkretnie w upatrywaniu wszelkiego nieładu w dziedzinie seksualności za grzech śmiertelny. Widoczne to jest także we współczesnym kaznodziejstwie, a także w teologii pastoralnej.

Postmodernistyczną odpowiedzią na przesadę orędzia o grzechach dotyczących sfery seksualności była przesada rewolucji seksualnej, która odcisnęła swe piętno w ponowoczesnej kulturze. Ta bowiem, jak pisze Bauman w artykule zatytułowanym „O ponowoczesnych pożytkach z seksu", „wychwala rozkosze seksu i zachęca do nasycania sensem erotycznym każdego zakątka «świata przeżyć»; [...]. Z drugiej jednak strony ta sama kultura zakazuje traktowania innego kolekcjonera wrażeń jako seksualnego obiektu – a co ważniejsze jeszcze, każe bronić ze wszech sił integralności własnego ciała i sprzeciwiać się przyjmowaniu go za obiekt seksualny" (Bauman 1997, 104). Czy ów zakaz traktowania innych jako seksualnych obiektów nie stanowi jakiegoś punktu wyjścia do rozmowy, która mogłaby naprowadzić na dostrzeżenie absurdów wynikających ze stawianych wykluczających się postulatów? Niestety bardzo często katecheza „przegrywa" ten dyskurs. Zamiast ukazywania mądrej wykładni teologii ciała, niejednokrotnie epatuje średniowiecznym piętnowaniem grzeszności związanej z seksualnością. Rozpoczęcie dialogu takimi „powitaniami" nigdy nie doprowadzi do żadnego dialogu, a tym bardziej nie doprowadzi do jakiegokolwiek spotkania. Efektem takich działań najczęściej będzie nic nie wnosząca odpowiedź udzielona w podobnym tonie. W tym kontekście tak ważne jest nieustanne przypominanie w dialogu katechetycznym nauczania Kościoła (zwłaszcza w kwestiach dotyczących sfery seksualnej człowieka), że Kościół nigdy nie potępia człowieka, ale konkretny grzech.

Zakończenie

Ponowoczesność jest dużym wyzwaniem dla katechezy. Katecheza głoszona współczesnemu człowiekowi wymaga od katechetów (zarówno w katechezie dzieci, młodzieży, jak i dorosłych) mądrej diagnozy samej ponowoczesności, analizy jej założeń i głoszonych idei, a przede wszystkim umiejętności prowadzenia (a najpierw zaproszenia do) dialogu katechetycznego z jej przedstawicielami. Dialog ten (nieco inaczej niż dialog naukowy) wymaga zatrzymania się w swoim wywodzie, zrobienia niejako kroku wstecz po to, aby wyjść naprzeciw katechizowanemu, aby dostrzec, że istnieje pewna wspólnota poglądów, które mogą stanowić punkt wyjścia do zaistnienia dialogu katechetycznego. To o wiele trudniejsze niż tradycyjne duszpasterstwo (Mąkosa 2018, 14). Jest to wyzwanie także dla formacji osób duchownych i katechetów, którzy w takim społeczeństwie mają katechizować. Tym bardziej że liczba tych, którzy chcą być katechizowani, ulega redukcji. Oczywiście przywołane w artykule (w wypowiedziach przedstawicieli ponowoczesności, jak i badaczy ją analizujących) przykłady, elementy, które nazwane zostały „wspólnymi" punktami dającymi możliwość zaproszenia do dialogu katechetycznego, wymagają uzupełnienia, dopowiedzenia. Przecież mówiąc o antyscjentyzmie należałoby powiedzieć: „tak, ale wiara i rozum";

mówiąc o wielkich narracjach należałoby dodać: „tak, ale chrześcijaństwo ma również wielką narrację", mówiąc o wrażliwości na los cierpiących i marginalizowanych należałoby oświadczyć: „tak, ale nie tylko prawa kobiet, ale także nienarodzonych dzieci", … i tak dalej. Oczywistym jest, że dialog katechetyczny nie może polegać na wzajemnym „przytakiwaniu" sobie i radości, że chociaż cokolwiek mamy wspólnego. Niemniej aby go rozpocząć, aby do niego zaprosić, najpierw należy znaleźć właśnie punkty (stwarzające przestrzeń do dialogu), które choćby w niewielkiej mierze, wydają się być wspólne. Owo poszukiwanie stanowi jedno z największych wyzwań, jakie stają przed katechezą w kulturze ponowoczesności.

Bibliografia

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1997. "O ponowoczesnych pożytkach z seksu." *Studia Socjologiczne* 147 (4): 87–106.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2000. *Ponowoczesność jako źródło cierpień*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sic!

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2006. *Moralność w niestabilnym świecie*. Poznań: Drukarnia i Księgarnia Świętego Wojciecha.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 2008. *Wspólnota*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie.

Bąk, Urszula. 2015. "Postmodernizm a religia." *Konteksty Społeczne* 3 (1): 109–20.

Bokwa, Ignacy. 2010. *Teologia w warunkach nowoczesności i ponowoczesności*. Sandomierz: Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne i Drukarnia Sandomierz.

Bronk, Andrzej. 1996. "Krajobraz postmodernistyczny." *Ethos* 9 (1–2): 79–100.

Brzezińska, Joanna. 2021. "Terroryzm z perspektywy nauczania trzech papieży — Jana Pawła II, Benedykta XVI i Franciszka." *Studia nad Autorytaryzmem i Totalitaryzmem* 43 (1): 243–61. https://doi.org/10.19195/2300-7249.43.1.16.

Dziewiecki, Marek. 2004. "Ponowoczesność, media i ewangelizacja." *Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne* 3: 23–47.

Dziewiecki, Marek. 2013. "Kościół i młodzież w ponowoczesności." *Zeszyty Formacji Katechetów* 49 (1): 57–64.

Dziewulski, Grzegorz. 2013. "Wyzwania postmodernizmu wobec Kościoła i teologii fundamentalnej." In *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa w dyskusji z postmodernizmem*, 27–58. Biblioteka Teologii Fundamentalnej 8. Bydgoszcz: Stowarzyszenie Teologów Fundamentalnych w Polsce.

Franciszek. 2013. Adhortacja apostolska *Evangelii gaudium* (= EG).

Franciszek. 2015. Encyklika *Laudato si'* (= LS).

Franciszek. 2016. Adhortacja apostolska *Amoris laetitia* (= AL).

Franciszek. 2018. Adhortacja apostolska *Gaudete et exsultate* (= GE).

Franciszek and Wielki Imam Al-Azharr. 2019. *Dokument o ludzkim braterstwie dla pokoju światowego i współistnienia*. http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/pl/travels/2019/outside/documents/papa-francesco_20190204_documento-fratellanza-umana.html.

Góźdź, Krzysztof, Janusz Chyła, and Sławomir Kunka, eds. 2012. *Teologia wobec nurtu ponowoczesności*. Pelplin: Bernardinum.

Grabowska, Mirosława. 2022. *Dlaczego Polacy odchodzą z Kościoła?* Komunikat z Badań CBOS 105. https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2022/K_105_22.PDF.

Halík, Tomáš. 2016. *Cierpliwość wobec Boga: Spotkanie wiary z niewiarą*. Translated by Andrzej Babuchowski. 3rd ed. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM.

Kaucha, Krzysztof. 2013. "Czy może być co dobrego w postmodernizmie?" In *Wiarygodność chrześcijaństwa w dyskusji z postmodernizmem*, 73–86. Biblioteka Teologii Fundamentalnej 8. Bydgoszcz: Stowarzyszenie Teologów Fundamentalnych w Polsce.

Kowalczyk, Dariusz. 2018. "«Cóż to jest prawda? – Ja jestem prawdą». Teologiczne meandry i nadzieje dialogu kultur i religii." In *Dialog wielokulturowości i prawda*, edited by Helena Czakowska and Mariusz Kuciński, 132–42. Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Kujawsko-Pomorskiej Szkoły Wyższej w Bydgoszczy.

Kowalczyk, Dariusz. 2019. "«Zły» i «dobry» postmodernizm, czyli w jakich czasach żyje współczesny teolog." *Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne* 32 (3): 18–35. https://doi.org/10.30439/wst.2019.3.2.

Krajewski, Piotr. 2011. "Edukacja ekologiczna w dokumentach Kościoła oraz prawie kanonicznym." *Paedagogia Christiana* 28 (2): 145–63. https://doi.org/10.12775/pch.2011.009.

Krysztofik, Janusz, and Anna Walulik. 2016. "Edukacja religijna i jej miejsce w ponowoczesności." *Studia Katechetyczne* 12: 35–50.

Mariański, Janusz. 2010. *Religia w społeczeństwie ponowoczesnym: Studium socjologiczne*. Warszawa: Oficyna Naukowa.

Mariański, Janusz. 2015. "Sekularyzacja albo desekularyzacja – fałszywa alternatywa." In *Ponowoczesne przestrzenie oddziaływań wychowawczo-formacyjnych Kościoła i „ziemie niczyje"*, edited by Renata Jasnos and Ewa Miśkowiec, 41–68. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM.

Mariański, Janusz. 2023. *Religijność młodzieży polskiej w procesie przemian w XXI wieku (analizy socjologiczne)*. Lublin: Akademia Nauk Społecznych i Medycznych w Lublinie, Akademia Nauk Stosowanych.

Mąkosa, Paweł. 2018. "Przyszłość ewangelizacji i katechezy wobec przemian kulturowych." In *Wychowanie i katecheza w służbie Polakom w kraju i na emigracji*, edited by Paweł Mąkosa, 8–19. Lublin: Pronoia.

Mąkosa, Paweł. 2019. "Znaki czasu dla katechezy w Polsce." *Verbum Vitae* 35: 459–75. https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.1936.

Myszka, Lucyna. 2014. "Obraz ponowoczesnego świata z perspektywy współczesnej młodzieży." *Kultura – Społeczeństwo – Edukacja* 6 (2): 153–73.

Pankalla, Andrzej. 2015. "(Trans?)religijna tożsamość naszych czasów z perspektywy psychologii realnej." In *Homo religiosus a psychologia*, edited by Andrzej Pankalla, 117–37. Poznań: Kunke Poligrafia.

Pankalla, Andrzej, and Anna Wieradzka. 2014. "Ponowoczesna tożsamość religijna młodych Polaków z perspektywy koncepcji Jamesa Marcii i Koena Luyckxa." *Studia Sociologica* 1 (6): 163–77.

Panuś, Tadeusz. 2022. "Postmodernizm." In *Leksykon katechetyczny*, 559–63. Kielce: Jedność.

Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji. 2020. *Dyrektorium o katechizacji*. Kielce: Jedność (= *DK*).

Piwowarski, Władysław. 2000. *Socjologia religii*. Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL.

Rzeszowski, Wojciech. 2012. "Katecheza Kościoła wobec wezwań współczesnego świata." *Studia Elbląskie* 13: 213–26.

Sobór Watykański II. 1965. Konstytucja duszpasterska o Kościele w świecie współczesnym *Gaudium et spes* (= *KDK*).

Słomski, Wojciech, and Paweł Czarnecki. 2018. "Wstęp do filozofii Jean-François Lyotarda." *Prosopon* 25 (4): 119–42.

Sroczyńska, Maria. 2018. "O potrzebie religii w ponowoczesnym świecie (refleksje socjologa)." *Chrześcijaństwo, Świat, Polityka*, no. 22: 166–75. https://doi.org/10.21697/csp.2018.22.1.10.

Starnawski, Witold. 2011. "Dialog jako metoda, postawa, sposób życia." In *Pedagogika dialogu: Nauczyciele dialogu*, edited by Dorota Jankowska, 55–62, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Akademii Pedagogiki Specjalnej.

Torzewski, Antoni. 2021. "Możliwość religii w obliczu współczesnego pluralizmu." *Humaniora. Czasopismo Internetowe* 34 (2): 31–45. https://doi.org/10.14746/h.2021.2.2.

Węcławski, Tomasz. 1996. "Postmodernizm i teologia. (Kilka wstępnych uwag o tym, co jest możliwe)." *Ethos* 9 (1–2): 133–40.

Wieradzka-Pilarczyk, Anna. 2015. *Tożsamość religijna młodych Polaków*. Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza. Wydział Teologiczny. Redakcja Wydawnictw.

Woźniak, Robert. 2012. "Teologia w ponowoczesności." In *Teologia wobec nurtu ponowoczesności*, edited by Krzysztof Góźdź, Janusz Chyła, and Sławomir Kunka, 169–79. Pelplin: Bernardinum.

Zellma, Anna. 2003. "Edukacja ekologiczna katechizowanej młodzieży w kontekście zmian programowych szkolnego nauczania religii." *Studia Elbląskie* 5: 255

Katechetyczne i psychologiczne aspekty przynależności do wspólnoty Kościoła w okresie wczesnej adolescencji

Catechetical and Psychological Aspects of Belonging to the Church Community in Early Adolescence

MONIKA DACKA (iD)
Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski Jana Pawła II, monika.dacka@kul.pl

TOMASZ KOPICZKO (iD)
Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego, t.kopiczko@uksw.edu.pl

Streszczenie: Okres wczesnej adolescencji zarówno z punktu widzenia katechetyki, jak i psychologii budzi wiele trudności, a zarazem stanowi wyzwanie dla refleksji naukowej i praktyki wychowawczej. Celem tego artykułu jest podjęcie interdyscyplinarnej refleksji nad przynależnością do wspólnoty Kościoła osób w okresie wczesnej adolescencji. Efekty podjętych poszukiwań naukowych pozwoliły na realizację celu w trzech istotnych punktach. Po pierwsze, scharakteryzowano okres wczesnej adolescencji z uwzględnieniem potrzeby przynależności. Po drugie, zostały ukazane wyzwania społeczne i kulturowe, które stanowią kontekst dorastającego człowieka. Po trzecie, wskazano na konkretne propozycje rozwiązań zmierzających w kierunku praktyki wychowywania w wierze. Dzięki zastosowaniu metody analitycznej i syntetycznej przebadano szereg tekstów teologicznych, psychologicznych oraz poddano analizie badania empiryczne. Pozwoliło to na wypracowanie wniosków oraz wskazanie potrzeby troski o właściwe relacje osobowe, wrażliwe towarzyszenie osobom młodym, prawidłowe przeniesienie doświadczeń oraz dbałość o poczucie wspólnoty.

Słowa kluczowe: wczesna adolescencja, wspólnota Kościoła, potrzeby, towarzyszenie

Abstract: From the point of view of both catechetics and psychology the period of early adolescence raises many difficulties and at the same time poses a challenge for scientific reflection and educational practice. The aim of this article is to undertake an interdisciplinary reflection on belonging of people to the community of the Church in early adolescence. The results of the undertaken scientific research have made the aim possible to be fulfilled in three important aspects. Firstly, the period of early adolescence was characterised taking into account the need to belong. Secondly, the social and cultural challenges that constitute the context of adolescence are shown. Thirdly, concrete proposals for solutions towards the practice of faith education are indicated. Through the use of an analytical and synthetic method, a number of theological and psychological texts, but also empirical studies, have been examined. It allowed us to develop conclusions and to point out the need for concern for proper personal relationships, sensitive support of young people, correct transference of experiences and care for a sense of community.

Keywords: early adolescence, Church community, needs, accompaniment

Wczesna adolescencja, czyli wiek 10/12 do 16 lat, to jeden z kluczowych okresów w religijnym rozwoju człowieka. Dziecko, a później osoba młoda, ma zazwyczaj możliwość doświadczyć innych wspólnot. Jest to czas wzmożonych poszukiwań

207

wartości, światopoglądu oraz przejawiania krytycznych postaw wobec autorytetów. To także okres mniej lub bardziej udanego rozeznawania i budowania własnej tożsamości oraz odkrywania własnego miejsca w świecie. Młody człowiek poszukuje możliwości kształtowania, pogłębiania swojego rozwoju poznawczego, uczuciowego, społecznego, a także religijnego. W tym okresie dokonuje się wprowadzenie w bardziej autonomiczne życie chrześcijańskie. Nie może to być proces automatyczny, lecz powinien opierać się na autentycznym doświadczeniu inicjacji i wspólnoty (Samulnik 2022, 143; *DK* 241–44).

Pragnąc określić problem badawczy, należy podkreślić trudną sytuację życiową, w której znajdują się młodzi ludzie w okresie wczesnej adolescencji. W tym okresie w wyraźny sposób ukazuje się ich potrzeba przynależności do grupy. Jest to istotne w perspektywie kolejnych kroków w rozwoju religijnym. Obserwacja rzeczywistości wskazuje na to, że w kwestii wiary i religijności niewystarczające są już nakazy rodziców lub wychowawców. Konieczna jest natomiast potrzeba ukonstytuowania się własnej tożsamości oraz wynikająca z niej umiejętność podejmowania samodzielnych decyzji. Tylko wtedy pojawi się szansa na trwały i świadomy wybór odnalezienia miejsca we wspólnocie. W przeciwnym przypadku oraz przy braku odpowiedniego wsparcia osoby we wczesnej adolescencji dość często odchodzą od praktykowania wiary we wspólnocie Kościoła.

Celem niniejszego artykułu jest wyakcentowanie poprzez interdyscyplinarną refleksję istotnych z naukowego punktu aspektów przynależności do wspólnoty Kościoła w okresie wczesnej adolescencji. Cel ten zostanie zrealizowany w trzech punktach. Po pierwsze, zaprezentuje się elementy charakterystyczne dla okresu wczesnej adolescencji i potrzeby przynależności. Po drugie, będą nakreślone podstawowe wyzwania społeczne i kulturowe, z którymi spotyka się dorastający człowiek. Po trzecie, wskaże się konkretne propozycje rozwiązań, zmierzających w kierunku praktyki wychowywania w wierze. Całość rozważań o charakterze psychologiczno-katechetycznym zmierza w kierunku wypracowania rozwiązań praktycznych pozwalających lepiej zrozumieć rozwój i funkcjonowanie nastolatków oraz ich miejsce we wspólnocie Kościoła. Rozwiązania te mają stanowić próbę odpowiedzi na pogłębiającą się sekularyzację, a jednocześnie na nowo wskazać duszpasterzom, wychowawcom i katechetom, jak należy postępować wobec ludzi młodych, którzy rozeznają swoją wiarę. Obszar źródeł obejmuje dokumenty Kościoła, publikacje z zakresu teologii, psychologii oraz wybrane badania empiryczne.

1. Specyfika funkcjonowania młodzieży w okresie wczesnej adolescencji

Adolescencja bywa określana jako czas przejściowy między etapem dzieciństwa a dorosłości, trwającym od 10/12 do 20/23 roku życia (Oleszkowicz and Senejko 2011, 259). W okresie dorastania występują dwa podokresy: wczesny (10–16 rok życia) oraz późny (17–20/23 rok życia) (Oleszkowicz and Senejko 2011, 259). Adolescencja opisywana jest jako dynamiczna faza rozwoju i intensywnych zmian o charakterze biologicznym, społecznym i psychologicznym. Młodzi ludzie w okresie dorastania eksperymentują w nowych rolach, zadaniach, realizują własne pragnienia, cele, dokonują samodzielnych wyborów i próbują podejmować niezależne decyzje (Segiet 2015, 7). Zachodzące w tym okresie życia przemiany przyczyniają się również do zmian religijnego i duchowego funkcjonowania młodych ludzi.

Okres wczesnego dorastania cechuje się intensywnymi zmianami o charakterze biologicznym, intelektualnym, emocjonalnym, społecznym i moralnym (Rydz 2007, 25–32). Nastolatkowie zyskują w tym czasie większą świadomość i wrażliwość dotyczącą własnego wyglądu oraz przejawiają skłonność do porównywania się z innymi (Zuhri 2023, 48). Okresowi dorastania towarzyszy również duża labilność i silne reakcje emocjonalne, podporządkowanie grupie rówieśniczej, nasilona konfliktowość z rodzicami (Bardziejewska 2005, 356). Dostrzegalna jest również dysproporcja między realnym postrzeganiem znaczenia danej sytuacji, a tworzeniem jej wyobrażeń. W tej fazie rozwoju nastolatek angażuje się w działania związane z edukacją, podejmuje nowe role oraz zaczyna ukierunkowywać się na wartości społeczne (Gaś 2015, 9). Wczesny etap dojrzewania postrzegany bywa jako czas chaotycznej, burzliwej aktywności, podążania za szlachetnymi, lecz często nierealnymi pragnieniami. Młodzież kwestionuje dotychczasowy system wartości, poglądy, poszukuje celu i sensu życia. Nastolatkowie zaczynają myśleć krytycznie o swoich przekonaniach, wierzeniach. Poddają testowaniu kulturowy przekaz rodzinny (Magaldi-Dopman and Park-Taylor 2010, 42).

Okres dojrzewania to również najbardziej wrażliwy etap duchowego i religijnego rozwoju (Good, Willoughby, and Fritjers 2009, 35). W tej fazie rozwoju młodzież poszukuje i odnajduje poczucie przynależności we wspólnocie wyznaniowej (Ebstyne King 2003, 200). Religia daje nastolatkom możliwość poszukiwania i odkrywania własnej tożsamości przez oddziaływania społeczne, ideologiczne, duchowe oraz promowanie pozytywnej samooceny (Ebstyne King 2003, 197). W okresie dorastania młodzież może porzucać również swój dotychczasowy system wierzeń, wyznawane wartości oraz wycofywać się ze wspólnot religijnych. Proces ten określany bywa jako dekonwersja, czyli „głębokość i intensywność zmiany biograficznej, która może być związana z niewiarą i/lub brakiem przynależności" (Paloutzian et al. 2013, 408).

W okresie dorastania światopogląd, preferowane wartości i system wierzeń charakteryzują się dużą niestabilnością. Młody człowiek zaczyna poszukiwać idealnego wzorca identyfikacji i odniesienia. Może przy tym doświadczyć poczucia bezsensu życia oraz niezgodności przekonań czy podejmowanych zachowań ze społecznie oczekiwanymi standardami funkcjonowania (Chęć 2020, 43).

Pojawiające się w okresie dorastania trudności i dylematy stanowią wynik braku równowagi między możliwościami nastolatka a dyspozycjami rozwojowymi. Przejawia się to w sprzecznościach widocznych w podejmowanych działaniach. Z jednej strony towarzyszy im duża pewność siebie, poczucie mocy i siły, z drugiej zaś zmagają się z brakiem wiary we własne możliwości (Mastalski 2007, 56).

W okresie wczesnej adolescencji dochodzi do swoistego napięcia pomiędzy potrzebą przynależności a poczuciem przynależności. To właśnie w tej przestrzeni może dojść do rozwoju religijnego i znalezienia własnego miejsca we wspólnocie Kościoła. Należy zauważyć, że to właśnie w tej rzeczywistości zachodzą zmiany w rozwoju religijności i wierzeń młodzieży (Goeke-Morey et al. 2014, 750). Według Jamesa Fowlera (1981, 258–62) oraz Jamesa Fowlera i Mary Dell (Fowler and Dell 2010, 39–40) w okresie dojrzewania zachodzi „syntetyczno-konwencjonalny" etap wiary, któremu sprzyjają zmiany w funkcjonowaniu poznawczym oraz przyjmowanie perspektywy interpersonalnej umożliwiające młodzieży zrozumienie realnego obrazu Boga. Uwzględniając teorię przywiązania postawy wobec Boga, mogą mieć one znaczenie dla tworzenia oceny Stwórcy, budowania bezpiecznej postawy, poszukiwania i zaangażowania w więzi, zwłaszcza w sytuacji poznawania siebie i uzyskiwania niezależności od środowiska rodzinnego (Goeke-Morey et al. 2014, 750). Budowana bliska relacja z Bogiem może spełniać funkcję ochronną dla nastolatka przed problemami psychologicznymi oraz sprzyjać rozwojowi mechanizmów związanych z promowaniem radzenia sobie z trudnościami (Ano and Vasconcelles 2005, 462–63), zapewniać wsparcie społeczne oraz potrzebę przynależności (Greenfield and Marks 2007, 246–47). W okresie adolescencji młodzi ludzie są zdolni budować bardziej złożone, osobiste reprezentacje Boga (Fowler and Dell 2010, 39–40) w powiązaniu z zachodzącymi zmianami rozwojowymi w zakresie rozwoju przywiązania, przynależności i samoświadomości.

Przynależność to jedna z podstawowych potrzeb, definiowanych przez Abrahama Maslowa (1943, 380–81). W okresie adolescencji wiąże się ona z poszukiwaniem miłości i akceptacji, również w przestrzeni życia religijnego. Polega to na odnalezieniu własnego miejsca w danej społeczności. Czymś naturalnym jest fakt, że człowiek potrzebuje kontaktów z innymi ludźmi, odczuwa chęć bycia ważnym i dostrzeganym przez nich. Zwłaszcza w okresie dorastania przynależność jest jedną z najważniejszych, a zarazem najtrudniejszych do osiągnięcia potrzeb. Człowiek młody, przechodzący swoistą transformację tożsamościową, potrzebuje akceptacji. Ma to szczególne znaczenie w przestrzeni życia religijnego, gdzie odkrywanie świata wartości dokonuje się na drodze poszukiwań i własnych doświadczeń, a nie na drodze nakazów,

co często można zaobserwować w praktyce wychowania religijnego. Istotnego znaczenia nabiera zachodząca zależność między wolnością wychowanka a autorytetem wychowawcy (Rawicka 2020, 137).

Przywiązanie łączy się z potrzebą przynależności. Ma duże znaczenie dla rozwoju człowieka i jego dobrego samopoczucia (Skymba et al. 2022, 1565). Każda osoba posiada pewną wrodzoną zdolność do tworzenia i wchodzenia w relacje z innymi (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 499). Stabilne i pozytywne kontakty z ludźmi zapewniają poczucie wzajemnej troski i ukierunkowują na wspólne dobro. Relacje z drugim człowiekiem zapewniają poczucie bezpieczeństwa, stabilności emocjonalnej i wzajemnej troski (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 500). Według Shelly Gable (2005, 176) potrzeba przynależności motywuje do osiągania pozytywnych efektów, natomiast strach przed odrzuceniem przyczynia się do powstania pesymistycznych postaw i sprzyja skłonności do unikania podejmowania wyzwań. Potrzeba przynależności wiąże się również z doświadczaniem poczucia bliskości tożsamości (Kohut 1977, 220–23) czy emocjonalnego dzielenia się (Lee and Robbins 1995, 239–40).

Poczucie przynależności może wynikać z częściowej lub całkowitej realizacji potrzeby przynależności. Skutkiem tego jest zaangażowanie się w określone środowisko, w którym osoba zaczyna stawać się jego integralną częścią (Malik and Malik 2023, 3). Młody człowiek, zgodnie z założeniami teorii tożsamości społecznej (Tajfel 1972, 272), nabywa tożsamość społeczną, czyli uzyskuje wiedzę, że należy do określonej grupy, która ma dla niego określoną wartość i znaczenie emocjonalne dla jego przynależności. Młodzież jest w dużej mierze świadoma świata społecznego przez określanie w nim swojego miejsca. Młodzi ludzie dokonują klasyfikacji innych, należących do swojej grupy lub zewnętrznej, na podstawie: kategoryzacji (odniesienie i przypisywanie siebie oraz innych do określonych kategorii), tożsamości (identyfikacja i dostosowanie do norm grupy) i porównywania społecznego (porównywanie własnej grupy z innymi).

Potrzeba przynależności stanowi zatem istotny konstrukt w aspekcie psychologicznym i teoretycznym (Arslan 2021, 71). Realizacja potrzeby przynależności jest zatem fundamentem dla motywacji budowania i utrzymywania pozytywnych relacji z innymi we wspólnocie ludzi wierzących (Baumeister and Leary 1995, 497). Bonnie Hagerty i współpracownicy (1992, 173) definiowali poczucie przynależności jako „doświadczenie osobistego zaangażowania w system lub środowisko, tak aby osoby czuły się integralną *częścią* tego systemu lub środowiska" (1992, 173). Z kolei zdaniem Kelly-Ann Allen i współpracowników poczucie przynależności jest ważne dla dzieci w każdym wieku, szczególnie zaś jest istotne wobec specyficznych potrzeb młodzieży w wieku 12–18 lat (2018, 3). Na gruncie religijnym, gdzie kształtuje się tożsamość własnego miejsca we wspólnocie, umożliwia ono budowanie więzi z innymi, pozwala wzmacniać pewność siebie oraz kreować świat wartości i wierzeń tożsamych ze specyfiką danej wspólnoty religijnej (*DK* 249–50).

Analizując przynależność religijną i wyznaniową, należy uwzględnić m.in.: ogólne ustosunkowanie do religii (negatywne, obojętne, pozytywne), stopień własnej wiary (poszukujący, obojętny, niezdecydowany, wierzący, głęboko wierzący) oraz przekaz wartości religijnych w środowisku rodzinnym i własne odniesienia do religii (Mariański 2022, 6–7).

Podsumowując powyższe spostrzeżenia dotyczące okresu adolescencji oraz potrzeby przynależności, warto podkreślić, że człowiek młody, wyrastający z okresu dzieciństwa i przechodzący w nową fazę życia, często może odczuwać dyskomfort, zwłaszcza w sytuacjach, kiedy inni (szczególnie rodzice lub wspólnota Kościoła) traktują go jak dziecko lub ignorują jego potrzeby życiowe. Należy zatem pamiętać, że dynamika rozwoju religijnego i odnalezienia własnego miejsca we wspólnocie Kościoła w okresie dorastania powinna uwzględniać nie tylko wymagania, ale przede wszystkim indywidualne potrzeby młodego człowieka. Należy zabiegać o warunki sprzyjające poszanowaniu jego osobowej godności oraz kształtowaniu własnej autonomii, a to z kolei stanowi dobry grunt do rozwoju współpracy i dialogu edukacyjnego.

2. Wyzwania społeczne i kulturowe wobec współczesnej młodzieży

Dokonując charakterystyki współczesnego społeczeństwa, zgodnie z teorią Artura Płazińskiego, w obecnej dobie dynamicznych zmian trudno jest wskazać jeden prąd myślowy, który rzutuje na życie człowieka. Dlatego najbardziej właściwym będzie mówienie o społeczno-kulturowej panoramie rzeczywistości (Płaziński 2019, 150). Jak zauważa Elżbieta Osewska, ponowoczesność, sekularyzacja, indyferentyzm oraz pluralizm religijny tworzą redukcjonistyczną wizję człowieka. Często jest to człowiek pozbawiony poczucia godności i wolności (Osewska 2020, 27–67). Bez wątpienia zatem współczesna kultura z wszechobecnym utylitaryzmem oraz indywidualizmem nie sprzyja dowartościowaniu osoby ludzkiej, zwłaszcza człowieka młodego, który próbuje odnaleźć swoje miejsce we wspólnocie Kościoła. W głębokim konflikcie stają bowiem potrzeby społeczne i indywidualne. Młody człowiek, tak często pozornie zaangażowany w liczne relacje, coraz częściej okazuje się być odizolowany zarówno od swoich bliskich, przyjaciół, jak i wspólnoty wiary. Personalizm katolicki ciągle konfrontuje się z oświeceniowymi teoriami Thomasa Hobbesa i Jeana-Jacques'a Rousseau opartymi na egoizmie i własnych interesach (Głąbiński 2019, 122).

W kontekście wyzwań katechetycznych i psychologicznych nie sposób także nie zauważyć procesów globalizacji oraz postępu naukowo-technologicznego przyczyniających się do zmiany stylu życia, systemu wartościowania i wierzeń współczesnej młodzieży. Młodzi ludzie coraz częściej przyzwyczajają się do funkcjonowania w obszarze ciągłej zmiany – „zdolność do przeskakiwania niemal w sposób dowolny z jednego do drugiego dyskursu kulturowego, z jednego do drugiego stylu

życia, a nawet z jednej do drugiej formy tożsamości" (Melosik 2013, 165). Dynamika przemian zachodzących we współczesnym świecie powoduje utratę autorytetów, poczucia bezpieczeństwa, sensu życia wśród młodzieży (Cybal-Michalska 2010, 134). Wzrastająca samodzielność, podążanie za innowacją, różnymi opcjami wyborów, tworzenie silnie zindywidualizowanych projektów życiowych przyczyniają się do zmniejszenia znaczenia tradycyjnych poglądów czy punktów orientacyjnych (Gabriel 1994, 61). Zachodzące przemiany prowadzą do zmiany sposobu wyrażania religijności, która staje się coraz bardziej zindywidualizowana (Ziebertz, Hermans, and Riegel 2010, 422). Bez wątpienia te wszystkie zjawiska społeczne utrudniają kształtowanie dojrzałej osoby wierzącej. Nie tworzą one także kontekstu, w którym człowiek młody może znaleźć właściwą sobie przestrzeń we wspólnocie Kościoła.

Z punktu widzenia rozwoju wiary szczególnie istotne są zjawiska, które w pewnym stopniu wpływają na styl funkcjonowania, system wartościowania i wierzeń współczesnej młodzieży. Należą do nich m.in.: ateizacja, brutalizacja, desocjalizacja czy eskapizacja. Pierwsze z nich związane jest z eliminacją Boga z przestrzeni publicznej. Ateizacja wpływa na zmianę systemu wartościowania i prowadzi do powstawania różnych kryzysów u młodych ludzi. Brutalizacja charakteryzuje się postępującą eskalacją przemocy i agresji wśród młodzieży. Desocjalizacja wiąże się z promowaniem egocentryzmu, egoizmu, łamaniem norm społecznych i wzorców kulturowych występujących w danym społeczeństwie. Młody człowiek coraz częściej podejmuje również ucieczkę od trudnych, wymagających wysiłku zadań, obowiązków, co wiąże się ze zjawiskiem eskapizacji (Gaś 2015, 8–9) przejawiającym się coraz częściej w składaniu niezobowiązujących do niczego obietnic oraz silnym pragnieniem doświadczania przyjemnego życia.

Współczesny świat promuje hedonizm związany z dążeniem do przyjemności. Pogoni za szczęściem towarzyszy zmiana systemu wartościowania (przykrość kojarzona jest z nieszczęściem; cierpienie z przekleństwem). Aktualnie na znaczeniu zyskuje również materializm charakteryzujący się promowaniem stylu życia opartego na posiadaniu określonych dóbr, czemu towarzyszy negowanie, a czasami wręcz zwalczanie wymiaru życia duchowego (Gaś 2015, 9–11). Przemianom ulega również religijność współczesnych społeczeństw. Zmiany w zakresie praktyk religijnych i wiary są rezultatem efektu pokoleniowego – każde kolejne pokolenie jest coraz mniej religijne niż poprzednie. Zauważalny jest wzrost osób niereligijnych (Gärtner 2022, 1). Dostrzegalne są również postępujące procesy sekularyzacyjne, które wiążą się coraz częściej ze zmianą form życia religijnego (Boguszewski and Bożewicz 2019, 32). W konsekwencji aktualnie religijność staje się bardziej kwestią osobistego wyboru, autentycznego zaangażowania i pogłębionych praktyk niż efektem międzypokoleniowego przekazu.

Okres dorastania postrzegany bywa z jednej strony jako czas zmian w zakresie przeżywania swojej własnej religijności przez młodzież. Dochodzi do procesu ukierunkowania na indywidualną, refleksyjną wiarę. Wbrew oczekiwaniom

duszpasterskim dochodzi wtedy często do gwałtownego odchodzenia od wspólnoty Kościoła. Taki stan rzeczy odzwierciedlają badania z ostatnich lat. Można wskazać chociażby badania CBOS (Grabowska 2021, 10), przeprowadzone wśród polskiej młodzieży. Wskazują one, że 71% wierzy w obecność Boga, natomiast 28,6% uznaje siebie za osoby niewierzące. W regularnych praktykach religijnych, np. w nabożeństwach, uczestniczy 23% młodzieży, zaś do braku zaangażowania w praktyki religijne przyznaje się 36% młodych ludzi (Grabowska 2021, 10). Badania Błażeja Dyczewskiego (2021), zrealizowane w ramach ogólnopolskiej diagnozy społecznej uczniów klas V–VIII szkoły podstawowej, wykazały, że 42% charakteryzowało siebie jako wierzących i praktykujących, 42,7% – jako niepraktykujących, ale wierzących, 15,3% – jako niewierzących. W prowadzonych badaniach widoczny był spadek liczby uczniów deklarujących wiarę religijną, który częściej dotyczył uczniów klas VII–VIII niż klas V–VI oraz częściej grupy dziewcząt niż chłopców (Dyczewski 2022, 141–42).

 Z danych raportu *Kościół w Polsce 2023* wynika, że u 21% młodzieży powodem obojętności lub niewiary są „osobiste przekonania". Około 20% badanych odczuwa niechęć do instytucji Kościoła, zaś 9% zniechęca wiedza o negatywnych doświadczeniach moralnych księży. Młodzież w 58% deklaruje, że źródłem wiary jest dla nich wychowanie religijne w rodzinie. Niespełna co piąty badany potrafi mówić o swojej wierze w kategoriach doświadczeń osobistych. Coraz mniejsze znaczenie dla rozwoju religijnego młodych ludzi ma również przykład rodziców. Zaledwie 16% badanych wskazuje na rolę świadectwa wiary jednego z rodziców. Świadczyć to może o tym, że rodzice dziś nie są już tymi, którzy wprowadzają w świat wiary. Ich rola jest właściwie znikoma.

Najnowsze badania wskazują także na swoisty kryzys w świecie wartości u ludzi młodych. Według danych raportu *Kościół w Polsce 2023* najważniejszymi wartościami dla badanych pozostają miłość i wielkie uczucie (52%). W dalszej kolejności wskazywane są: zaufanie i przyjaciele (51%), szczęście rodzinne (46%). Znalezienie miejsca w społeczeństwie jest ważne dla młodzieży szkół średnich (45%). Jedynie 10% młodzieży wskazało, że ważna jest dla nich wiara. Nie sposób jednak oprzeć się wrażeniu, że deklaracje co do wartości miłości, przyjaźni i rodziny pozostają jedynie na poziomie potrzeb, często niezaspokojonych. Natomiast należy zauważyć, że niemal połowa badanych w młodzieńczym okresie życia dąży do tego, aby odnaleźć właściwe sobie miejsce w życiu. Jest to zbieżne z naturalną potrzebą, która rodzi się i ma być zaspokojona w tym okresie życia. „Bycie sobą" wiąże się z umiejscowieniem siebie w czasie i przestrzeni umożliwia identyfikację społeczną połączoną z „byciem przynależnym i tożsamym z innymi" (Barbara Jankowiak and Wojtynkiewicz 2018, 170).

O tym, że w kwestii rozwoju religijnego młodzi ludzie nie mają zaspokojonych podstawowych potrzeb, świadczyć mogą kolejne parametry badawcze raportu *Kościół w Polsce 2023*. Młodzież w prowadzonych badaniach wskazała, że oczekuje od Kościoła m.in. doświadczenia Boga (32,5%), wsparcia w sytuacjach trudnych (30%),

argumentacji za prawdziwością wiary (27%). Warto także zauważyć, że ponad jedna czwarta (26%) młodzieży niczego nie oczekuje od Kościoła. Jednocześnie około 35% nastolatków oczekuje od księży postawy gotowości do dialogu i rozmowy o sytuacjach kryzysowych doświadczanych przez młode osoby. Może to wskazywać, że z jednej strony wspólnota Kościoła, poszukując w sobie otwartości na ludzi młodych, winna stawać się bardziej wspólnotą „słuchającą i otwartą na dialog". Z drugiej strony proste doktrynalne nauczanie nie gwarantuje owego kompromisu. Wydaje się, że daleko posunięta postawa apologetyczna to także zbyt odległa propozycja dla ludzi młodych.

Odwołując się do zaprezentowanych wyników badań dotyczących religijności młodzieży oraz założeń psychologicznych, można stwierdzić, że w pierwszym rzędzie należy zatroszczyć się o to, co wynika z podstawowych ludzkich potrzeb, takich jak: poczucie bezpieczeństwa, bliskości, przynależności, samorealizacji, bycie wysłuchanym, zrozumianym, szanowanym, uznanym, akceptowanym i kochanym. Kolejnym krokiem dopiero będzie poszukiwanie rozwiązań w kwestii przekazu treści wiary i moralności.

3. Poszukiwanie rozwiązań

Poszukując konkretnych rozwiązań, warto odnieść się do klasycznej zasady teologicznej, która podpowiada, że należy się zatroszczyć o to, co stanowi naturę człowieka, a działanie łaski Bożej stanie się bardziej widzialne. Nie oznacza to oczywiście chęci ograniczania skuteczności tej łaski. Chodzi raczej o potrzebę współpracy z nią poprzez troskę o to, co stanowi naturę życia człowieka. Stąd też wydaje się, że konieczne jest spełnienie czterech warunków, które mogą wspomóc proces ugruntowania osobistej tożsamości religijnej i odnalezienie własnego miejsca we wspólnocie Kościoła przez ludzi młodych. Po pierwsze, należy dołożyć wszelkich starań w celu wypracowania zdolności kształtowania relacji na poziomie osobowym. Po drugie, należy okazać wrażliwość na potrzeby osób młodych. Po trzecie, wspólnota Kościoła musi zatroszczyć się o prawidłowy przebieg tzw. procesu przeniesienia. Po czwarte, należy z autentyczną wiarą wspierać ludzi młodych, aby odnaleźli oni swoje miejsce we wspólnocie Kościoła w wymiarze lokalnym. Ten czwarty warunek można jednocześnie uznać za owoc całego wysiłku wychowawczego, katechetycznego i duszpasterskiego.

3.1. Troska o relacje

Odnosząc się do obrazu Chrystusa nauczającego, nie sposób nie zauważyć, że Mistrz z Nazaretu, jako doskonały Nauczyciel i Pedagog, troszczył się o relacje z ludźmi. To właśnie w krajobraz zwyczajnych ludzkich spotkań jest wpisane piękno orędzia

zbawczego, z którym Chrystus przychodzi do człowieka (*DK* 107). Poprzez realizację swojego powołania względem osób młodych rodzice i katecheci uczestniczą w misji Jezusa. Polega ona na prowadzeniu do synowskiej relacji z Ojcem. Owa relacja o charakterze nadprzyrodzonym jest możliwa lub jest o wiele bardziej skuteczna, kiedy człowiek ma właściwe doświadczenie kontaktu na poziomie ludzkim. Ta troska o kształt relacji, jak podkreśla Dariusz Kurzydło, jest szczególnie istotna właśnie u ludzi młodych, którzy poszukują własnej przestrzeni na styku rzeczywistości aksjologicznych, kulturowych i religijnych (Kurzydło 2021, 137).

Owa troska o relacje jest także widoczna w najnowszych dokumentach katechetycznych. *Dyrektorium* mówi wręcz o „dynamice relacyjnej", która jest sposobem na współczesne duszpasterstwo (*DK* 301). Zgodnie z tą zasadą człowiek prowadzony przez Ducha Świętego (w wymiarze widzialnym przez rodziców i katechetów), mimo swoich własnych niedoskonałości, poszukuje rzeczywistego braterstwa (*DK* 303). Jak podkreśla papież Franciszek, cały proces ewangelizacyjny jest o tyle skuteczny, o ile dokonuje się w relacji „osoby do osoby", to znaczy w zwyczajnych sytuacjach życiowych, takich jak: spotkanie, rozmowa, okazanie szacunku, wspólne przeżywanie radości, poświęcony czas (*EG* 127).

Powyższe założenia teologiczne znajdują swoje odzwierciedlenie także w kontekście psychologicznym. Wspólnota Kościoła, która staje dziś wobec człowieka młodego, jako warunek konieczny w realizacji swojego posłannictwa musi potraktować poważnie zadanie wprowadzania młodzieży w dojrzałe relacje interpersonalne. Punktem wyjścia mogą tu być relacje rodzinne, następnie rówieśnicze i szeroko pojęte relacje społeczne. Przy odpowiednim wsparciu katechetycznym powinny one zmierzać w kierunku relacji do Boga (Kopiczko 2020, 59). Wydaje się to o tyle istotne, że właściwie ukształtowane i bliskie relacje z Bogiem mogą spełniać funkcję ochronną przed problemami o charakterze psychologicznym, zapewniając wsparcie społeczne, poczucie przynależności do danej grupy w sytuacji doświadczania różnych trudności (Goeke-Morey et al. 2014, 752).

W konsekwencji można stwierdzić, że zaangażowanie religijne młodzieży, które jest owocem dobrze przeżywanych relacji, przyczynia się do rozwijania ich kompetencji społecznych; rodzi także poczucie odpowiedzialności społecznej (Wills, Yaeger, and Sandy 2003, 29–30). Widoczna jest swoista zależność. Z jednej strony zdolność do budowania relacji osobowych uzdalnia do relacji z Bogiem, a ta z kolei wzmacnia relacje społeczne z otoczeniem.

Należy zatem podkreślić, że religijność może sprzyjać większemu przywiązaniu do rówieśników. Nastolatkowie zaangażowani we wspólnoty religijne mają zazwyczaj więcej przyjaciół. W budowanych relacjach doświadczają intensywniejszej pomocy i wzajemnego wsparcia (Smith and Denton 2009, 218–21). Zdaniem Eveline Crone i Ronalda Dahla (2012, 642) w okresie adolescencji następuje zmiana nastawienia z perspektywy skoncentrowanej na siebie na ukierunkowaną prospołecznie. Młodzież w okresie dorastania zaczyna interesować się i angażować w budowanie

i odkrywanie nowych sieci społecznych, a za główny priorytet w swoich aktywnościach uznaje przynależność do określonej grupy czy wspólnoty osób (Smith and Denton 2009, 218–20).

We wspólnocie wyznającej wiarę może nastąpić proces wychowania do służby. Wspólnota religijna pobudza bowiem wrażliwość i promuje wartości prospołeczne. Może to owocować zaangażowaniem w służbę potrzebującym oraz szeroko rozumiane działania wolontariackie (Markstrom et al. 2010, 61).

3.2. Wrażliwość na dorastanie i dojrzewanie

Troszcząc się o rozwój wiary, wspólnota Kościoła nie może zapomnieć, że równolegle lub nawet uprzednio należy zatroszczyć się o właściwy rozwój osobowościowy. Często bowiem można dostrzec zjawisko, gdy osoby dojrzałe w wierze i posiadające ukształtowaną osobowość stawiają zbyt wygórowane wymagania osobom młodym. Potrzeba zatem świadomości, że okres adolescencji jest czasem podążania drogą ku dojrzałej osobowości, a osoba w przedziale wiekowym od 12 do 16 lat nie jest jeszcze w tej sferze w pełni ukształtowana. Jest to raczej czas dorastania, rozwoju i dojrzewania. Adekwatne wydaje się być określenie, którym posługuje się *Dyrektorium*, gdzie jest mowa o okresie „poszukiwania i dojrzewania" (*DK* 33). To zadaniem wspólnoty Kościoła jest wspomaganie ludzi młodych, aby jak najlepiej przeżyli ten okres.

Jak stwierdzają autorzy dokumentu, wiara i doświadczenie Boga rodzi się w sposób powolny. Jest to czas obejmujący „etapy następujące po sobie stopniowo i progresywnie. Taka ewolucja wpisuje się w samą biografię człowieka, który z czasem rozwija się i dojrzewa. Kościół cierpliwie towarzyszy swoim dzieciom w poszanowaniu rzeczywistego tempa ich dojrzewania, tą dbałością dając wyraz swojemu macierzyństwu" (*DK* 64). Rozważny katecheta czy wychowawca powinien zatem towarzyszyć młodemu człowiekowi na jego drodze dojrzewania. Oznacza to umiejętność słuchania, bycie cierpliwym, posiadanie kompetencji pedagogicznych i komunikacyjnych. Nie może być tu mowy o postawach narzucania, przymuszania czy towarzyszenia, które polega na wydawaniu poleceń lub karceniu. Odwołując się do własnego doświadczenia z okresu dojrzewania, katecheta lub rodzic powinien towarzyszyć w sposób radosny i twórczy. Tylko taka postawa może prowadzić do dojrzałości i dorastania zarówno na płaszczyźnie natury, jak i wiary (*EG* 169–93; *DK* 114).

W okresie adolescencji jednym z kluczowych procesów na drodze rozwoju wiary jest tzw. interioryzacja. Zjawisko to może być określone jako „osobiste, wewnętrzne zaakceptowanie wartości, które stanowią elementy składowe dojrzałej osobowości" (Offmański 2003, 184). Oznacza to, że całe doświadczenie religijne z poprzednich lat w okresie adolescencji jest poddawane osądowi rozumowemu. Potrzebna jest niejako akceptacja uprzednich doświadczeń i przyjęcie ich jako swoich własnych. Niepokojące staje się zjawisko, w którym – często na skutek nieodpowiedniego towarzyszenia przez osoby dorosłe – proces ten jest zachwiany i dochodzi do odrzucenia lub nawet

całkowitego zanegowania dotychczasowych przeżyć religijnych. Pragnąc wesprzeć człowieka młodego, aby ten proces przebiegał możliwie łagodnie i bezkonfliktowo, należy okazać wyrozumiałość. Istotne jest również przejawianie troski o ludzi młodych i ich rozwój na płaszczyźnie myślenia abstrakcyjnego, umacnianie ich autonomii w kontaktach międzyosobowych. Należy również zatroszczyć się o odpowiedni bilans pomiędzy emocjami a dążeniami i pragnieniami, a przede wszystkim o odpowiedni kształt szeroko pojętej katechezy. Chodzi o właściwe proporcje i wymagania dostosowane do wieku zarówno w przestrzeni życia rodzinnego, parafialnego, jak i w odniesieniu do lekcji religii w szkole.

Zdaniem Marcina Malareckiego człowiek młody, który jest na etapie dorastania i dojrzewania, poszukuje aksjologicznych podstaw do kształtowania swoich postaw moralnych, świadomości, poszukiwania i odkrywania sensu swojego życia, formułowania własnej tożsamości. Stara się również samodzielnie pokonywać kryzysy i tworzyć własną hierarchię wartości. Światopogląd młodzieży i tworzony przez nią system wartości stanowią pewną próbę intelektualnego oraz wolicjonalnego ujmowania świata. Ma to wpływ na dokonywane oceny i motywacje do działania. Z racji na złożoność tego okresu dojrzewanie jest szczególnie istotnym, a zarazem trudnym etapem rozwojowym. Dlatego też potrzeba odpowiedniego towarzyszenia ludziom młodym w realizacji ich zadań i ról (Malarecki 2021, 58).

Z kolei Józef Makselon (1990, 292) dostrzega w fazie adolescencji wiele paradoksów, m.in. buntów, odejścia od wiary, ale i wiele nawróceń. Przyczyną takich tendencji jest niestabilność związana z wiekiem oraz podatność na oddziaływanie osób znaczących. Dorastanie to czas odrzucenia, modyfikacji wierzeń okresu dzieciństwa, często również etap przebudzenia religijnego. Troska o wiarę i swoistą równowagę duchową może okazać się pomocna w przezwyciężaniu wielu niepokojów okresu adolescencji, jednakże wymaga wsparcia i towarzyszenia osób bardziej dojrzałych, które są w stanie towarzyszyć młodzieży w sposób odpowiedzialny.

Jak pokazuje niezmienna od lat praktyka katechetyczna, młodzi ludzie w okresie dorastania przejawiają z jednej strony niestałość, niepewność religijną, z drugiej strony wykazują tendencję do entuzjazmu, angażowania się w życie religijne, wspólnotowe (Murawski 1989, 71–72). Stąd też potrzeba rozsądnego towarzyszenia im w tym okresie. Owa troska wychowawcza winna wypływać z pedagogicznej wrażliwości na potrzeby człowieka młodego i winna być ukierunkowana na wspólne rozeznawanie. Młodzi ludzie w tym okresie powinni uczyć się samodzielnie podejmować decyzje. Potrzebują jednak do tego konkretnych, mądrych granic i wymagań. Pragnąc tego, aby ich wybory były właściwe, należy im towarzyszyć przy ich rozeznawaniu. Wydaje się to być szczególnie ważne wobec faktu, który wypływa z badań, gdzie odnotowuje się, że zaangażowanie w praktyki religijne może mieć wpływ na wyższą samoocenę oraz szacunek do siebie. Może także przyczyniać się do zmniejszonego ryzyka występowania uzależnień, a przede wszystkim umacniać w człowieku młodym doświadczenie przynależności (Wong, Rew, and Slaikeu 2006, 161–63).

3.3. Przeniesienie doświadczeń

Analizując panoramę doświadczeń religijnych ludzi młodych, można dojść do wniosku, że często jest ona dość uboga, bowiem w wychowaniu religijnym kładzie się duży nacisk na kształtowanie moralności, znajomość zasad, prawd wiary, modlitw. Stosunkowo rzadko pojawia się troska o rozbudzanie we wspólnocie Kościoła doświadczeń religijnych. Wydaje się, że zwłaszcza we współczesnym świecie, pędzącym w kierunku rozwoju ilościowego, owo doświadczenie religijne mogłoby stać się kluczem do zatrzymania ludzi młodych we wspólnocie. Co więcej, doświadczenie, przeżywane i pogłębiane, mogłoby stać się podstawą do odnalezienia właściwego sobie miejsca i zadania w tejże wspólnocie. *Dyrektorium*, charakteryzując ten okres życia, zwraca uwagę na przechodzenie od sytuacji znanej, pewnej do sytuacji czegoś nowego i niezbadanego. Jest to także czas przepracowania stworzonego w dzieciństwie obrazu Boga i Kościoła (*DK* 245–46).

Wrażliwość pedagogiczna nakazuje zatem w okresie dorastania troskę o relacje z rówieśnikami, dbanie o doświadczenie dynamicznej i osobowej relacji z Bogiem. Owa rzeczywistość, w której człowiek młody ma poczucie obecności i działania Boga, daje mu potwierdzenie istnienia świata transcendentalnego. Jak podkreśla Czesław Walesa, owo doświadczenie jest efektem kontaktów osoby ze światem naturalnym, wyrasta niejako ze świata naturalnego i z wiedzy na temat wiary i religii. Innymi słowy, może się ono pojawiać u człowieka na podstawie pozytywnych lub negatywnych codziennych przeżyć. Budowanie własnego zaufania do Boga lub poczucie otrzymanego od Niego wsparcia jest często efektemdoświadczeń zaufania i bycia wspieranym przez bliskich. W konsekwencji otwartość na Boga i wspólnotę Kościoła może być pochodną otwartości na drugiego człowieka (Tatala and Walesa 2021, 39–40).

Poszukując sposobów wsparcia ludzi młodych w tym, aby odnaleźli swoje miejsce we wspólnocie Kościoła, oraz bazując na założeniach doświadczenia religijnego, wydaje się, że potrzeba odnieść się do jeszcze jednego zjawiska społeczno-psychologicznego, a mianowicie do tzw. „przeniesienia". Zjawisko to, opisywane i podejmowane zazwyczaj w kontekście psychoterapii (Suszek, Wegner, and Maliszewski 2015, 346), może mieć także zastosowanie w kontekście społecznym, podejmowanymkonkretnie w przypadku wspólnoty osób wierzących. Jest to zjawisko, które pojawia się stale w społecznych interakcjach i może być ukazane w kontekście pozytywnym. Badania wskazują, że osoby wchodzące do nowych społeczności mają skłonność do przypisywania nowo poznanym osobom cech dla nich istotnych i wynikających z dotychczasowego doświadczenia. W konsekwencji często na osoby nowo poznane przenoszone są cechy, zachowania, uczucia lub oczekiwania z osób znanych i cenionych dotychczas, np. rodziców. Ten proces, zazwyczaj przeżywany nieświadomie, może sprawić, że w danym miejscu osoba poczuje się dobrze lub źle, doświadczy akceptacji lub odrzucenia, ważności lub ignorancji (Walesa 1997, 117–20).

Obrazując to zjawisko konkretnym przykładem, można odnieść się do osób w okresie adolescencji, które w swoim domu rodzinnym często słyszały od rodziców słowa wyrażające ich więzi rodzinne. Mogły to być sformułowania typu: *jesteś dla nas ważny/ważna; pamiętaj, że Ciebie wspieramy; ufamy Tobie; jesteś naszą nadzieją; dobrze, że jesteś z nami* itp. Tymczasem wydaje się, że człowiek młody pojawiający się we wspólnocie kościelnej w konkretnej parafii niezwykle rzadko słyszy takie lub podobne słowa z ust duszpasterzy, katechetów lub innych wiernych świeckich. Co więcej, niejednokrotnie padają sformułowania przesadnego upomnienia lub krytyki odnośnie do wyglądu, stroju lub zachowania. Tymczasem warto w tym okresie wykazać nieco więcej wyrozumiałości i cierpliwości względem ludzi młodych (*DK* 248). Brak życzliwych słów, które mogą stwarzać dobre środowisko do odnalezienia swojego miejsca we wspólnocie, skutkuje często u ludzi młodych postawą buntu, zamknięcia, niechęci lub nawet ucieczką. Jedynym motywem uczestniczenia we Mszy Świętej lub nabożeństwie staje się przymus lub potrzeba zdobycia podpisu do indeksu.

Jak podpowiada praktyka psychologiczna, należy zatem wykazać w tym okresie wyjątkową wrażliwość na obecność ludzi młodych we wspólnocie Kościoła. Pamiętając, że okres dzieciństwa, dorastania, a przede wszystkim młodość to czas intensywnego uczenia się, gromadzenia nowych doświadczeń (Vander Zanden 1984, 125), warto dostrzegać i podkreślać obecność poszczególnych grup w całej panoramie parafialnej.

Teorie pedagogiczne podpowiadają, że młodzi ludzie, wynosząc pewne doświadczenia z dzieciństwa, w okresie dorastania poszukują identyfikacji z określonymi osobami, grupami, w tym grupami o charakterze wyznaniowym. Proces identyfikacji umożliwia im uzyskanie nowych zachowań, doświadczeń, rozwijanie nowych postaw, motywacji, uczuć, a także realizację własnych pragnień (Bandura 1971, 255). Młody człowiek dąży do „bycia takim jak" osoba, grupa, z którą się utożsamia (Winch 1962, 12, 24). Będzie to jednak możliwe przy odpowiednim wsparciu całej wspólnoty, która tworzy środowisko rozwoju wiary.

Warto w takim kontekście zauważyć także możliwe schematy zachowań i oddziaływań grup rówieśniczych. To właśnie owe wspólnoty rówieśnicze mogą stawać się przestrzenią preewangelizacyjną lub ewangelizacyjną, która będzie przyciągać innych młodych ludzi do konkretnej cząstki Kościoła, jaką jest parafia. Właśnie w taki sposób może dokonywać się socjalizacja religijna. Jedną z największych zalet grup rówieśniczych jest zapewnienie potrzeb związanych z afiliacją. Osoby młode same chętnie wspierają siebie w rozwiązywaniu problemów (Kokociński 2011, 57–60).

Zatem w środowisku parafii, która stara się wytworzyć wyrozumiały i otwarty na dialog i rozmowę klimat bądź też posiada dobrze działające wspólnoty rówieśnicze, o wiele łatwiej może nastąpić proces adaptacji we wspólnocie kościelnej. O wiele prościej może być wtedy ludziom młodym przenieść ich pozytywne doświadczenia rodzinne lub środowiskowe i wykorzystać swój młodzieńczy zapał do bycia we wspólnocie i jej świadomego tworzenia. Dokumenty katechetyczne wzywają do odnowy

katechezy w świecie młodych. Jednak aby to nastąpiło, potrzeba odpowiedniego zaangażowania się, słuchania, wzajemności, współodpowiedzialności oraz uznania pierwszoplanowej roli osób młodych (*DK* 219, 244).

3.4. Troska o wspólnotę

Dyrektorium, mówiąc o Kościele, stwierdza, że jest on tajemnicą komunii, jest ożywiany przez Ducha Świętego, daje nowe życie, ale także, że jego rolą jest tworzenie wspólnoty jako „naturalnego miejsca, w którym ma początek i dojrzewa życie chrześcijańskie" (*DK* 2020, 4). Jednym z centralnych zadań Kościoła jest troska o właściwe miejsce wierzącego i jego doświadczenie życia (*DK* 5). Wydaje się, że to zadanie jest szczególnie istotne wobec osób młodych (*DK* 244). Nie chodzi tu jedynie o widoczną przestrzeń zewnętrzną, lecz to, co jest trwałe i często niewidoczne dla oczu. Zwłaszcza w kontekście osób młodych chodzi o przestrzeń do budowania relacji, modlitwy, harmonijnego rozwoju oraz do służby. Podążając za myślą Marka Dziewieckiego można stwierdzić, że młodzi „pokochają Kościół wtedy, gdy – po pierwsze – poczują się w nim kochani i – po drugie – gdy zobaczą, że także w naszych czasach Kościół ma dla nich najlepszy pomysł na życie" (2023, 19).

Pojawia się zatem potrzeba promowania Kościoła i pokazywania go w świetle wartości budujących oraz pozytywnych. Taka wspólnota może w oczach ludzi młodych stać się miejscem atrakcyjnym. Wobec licznych głosów krytyki warto zatroszczyć się o pozytywny wizerunek medialny wspólnot parafialnych, aby młodzi ludzie chętnie tam przychodzili i mieli warunki do bycia w tej wspólnocie oraz mogli podejmować konkretne działania. Warto promować różnego rodzaju dobre inicjatywy, pamiętając, że to właśnie wspólnota religijna zapewnia osobom w niej uczestniczącym poczucie bezpieczeństwa i przynależności. Jak pokazuje praktyka psychologiczna, we wspólnotach występuje specyficzna, zideologizowana więź grupowa, umożliwiająca budowanie tożsamości przez odwołanie do wyższych wartości (Szauer 2019, 247). Pragnąc zatem dobra osób dorastających i poszukujących swojej własnej tożsamości, należy zadbać, aby w parafiach nie brakowało im przestrzeni i poczucia akceptacji.

Młodzi ludzie w grupie religijnej chcą „dowiedzieć się czegoś ciekawego", ale także pragną doświadczać więzi rówieśniczych i przyjaźni. Mają możliwość rozmów na ważne dla nich tematy. To właśnie odnalezienie własnego miejsca we wspólnocie religijnej staje się okazją do umocnienia, pogłębienia wiary, realizacji potrzeby modlitwy, nawiązania nowych relacji, rozwoju przywiązania oraz zainteresowania instytucją Kościoła (Szauer 2019, 250).

Potwierdzają to między innymi badania przeprowadzone w południowo-wschodniej Hiszpanii na grupie 531 osób młodych w wieku 16–20 lat. Wykazały one, że młodzież należąca do wspólnoty religijnej lepiej radziła sobie z sytuacjami trudnymi w swoim życiu (Torralba, Oviedo, and Canteras 2021, 4–6). Także w okresie dorastania dostrzegalna jest zmiana stylu funkcjonowania ludzi młodych, związana

z przejściem od stylu konwencjonalnego w kierunku indywidualnego i refleksyjnego. Młody człowiek we wspólnocie religijnej identyfikuje się z pewnymi wzorcami strategii radzenia sobie z sytuacjami trudnymi, które pomagają mu stawiać czoło takim wydarzeniom (Torralba, Oviedo, and Canteras 2021, 6). Młodzież przynależąca do wspólnot religijnych dostrzega więcej możliwości radzenia sobie z problemami niż ich niereligijni rówieśnicy.

Zatem troskę o kształt wspólnoty oraz o właściwe zdefiniowanie w niej swojego miejsca należy uznać za kluczowe zadanie w posługiwaniu wobec ludzi młodych. Świadomy wybór, którego muszą oni dokonać, może dać im poczucie spełnienia w wymiarze ludzkiego rozwoju i stanowienia o sobie samym oraz o swoim losie. To z kolei, w połączeniu z relacją z Bogiem, może rodzić poczucie bycia na właściwym miejscu w świecie (Joachimowska 2020, 47). Znalezienie swojego miejsca we wspólnocie Kościoła staje się wypadkową zakorzenienia w danej rzeczywistości oraz podejmowanych na jej rzecz aktywności. W świetle powyższych stwierdzeń należy jednak podkreślić, że troska o wspólnotę oraz miejsce ludzi młodych we współczesnym tyglu kulturowym wydaje się być nie alternatywą, ale koniecznością, która może młodym ludziom zagwarantować rozwój w wierze.

Podsumowanie

Badania socjologiczne w Polsce w ostatniej dekadzie wskazują na pogłębiające się tendencje polaryzacji postaw i poglądów związanych z wiarą. Zjawisko to dotyczy zwłaszcza ludzi młodych, którzy w okresie swojego dorastania i dojrzewania powinni odnaleźć swoje własne miejsce we wspólnocie Kościoła. Jednak coraz częściej tak nie jest. Ludzie młodzi z różnych powodów, często bezpowrotnie, odchodzą od Kościoła i wiary, a jak pokazują zjawiska społeczne ostatnich lat, nawet stają w opozycji do wyznawców Chrystusa i ich poglądów.

W powyższym artykule podjęto próbę analizy zasadniczych elementów stanowiących o przynależności do Kościoła osób w wieku wczesnej adolescencji. Przypomniane zostały elementy charakterystyczne dla tego okresu. Warto w tym miejscu podkreślić, że jest to czas dynamicznych zmian, nabywania nowych doświadczeń, ale także poszukiwania sposobów realizacji swoich własnych pomysłów na życie.

Z analizy teorii wynika, że jest to okres swoistego braku równowagi pomiędzy możliwościami a pragnieniami nastolatka. Dlatego też potrzeba solidnego wsparcia i rozważnego towarzyszenia, aby zażegnany został konflikt pomiędzy potrzebami, obawami a poczuciem przynależności. To właśnie wspólnota Kościoła, kierowana ewangelicznym nakazem troski o słabych, w pierwszym rzędzie ma zatroszczyć się o dobre relacje na poziomie osobowym. Dopiero następnym krokiem, podjętym z dużą dozą wrażliwości i odpowiedzialności, ma być troska o relację nadprzyrodzoną

z Bogiem. To wszystko ma prowadzić do autentycznego doświadczenia wspólnoty i osobowej wiary. Nieustannie towarzyszyć ma temu chęć zrozumienia młodego człowieka wyrażona w postawie otwartości, dialogu i autentyczności.

Ksiądz Franciszek Blachnicki już przed ponad pięćdziesięciu laty powtarzał wczesnochrześcijańską maksymę Tertuliana: *Fiunt, non nascuntur christani* – stajemy się, a nie rodzimy się chrześcijanami (Blachnicki 1978, 38). W myśl tej zasady cała wspólnota Kościoła powinna dołożyć starań, aby ludzie młodzi, którzy są na początku drogi owego „stawania się", czuli się dobrze we wspólnocie wyznawców Chrystusa. Rozwaga, doświadczenie życiowe i dojrzałość w wierze mogą skutecznie, nawet w świecie sekularyzującym się,pomóc człowiekowi młodemu się rozwijać i właściwie kształtować we wspólnocie Kościoła, gdzie odnajdzie swoje miejsce i w odpowiednim momencie podejmie służbę.

Bibliografia

Allen, Kelly, Margaret L. Kern, Dianne Vella-Brodrick, John Hattie, and Lea Waters. 2018. "What Schools Need to Know About Fostering School Belonging: A Meta-Analysis." *Educational Psychology Review* 30 (1): 1–34. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-016-9389-8.

Ano, Gene G., and Erin B. Vasconcelles. 2005. "Religious Coping and Psychological Adjustment to Stress: A Meta-Analysis." *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 61 (4): 461–80. https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.20049.

Arslan, Gökmen. 2021. "School Belongingness, Well-Being, and Mental Health among Adolescents: Exploring the Role of Loneliness." *Australian Journal of Psychology* 73 (1): 70–80. https://doi.org/10.1080/00049530.2021.1904499.

Bandura, Albert. 1971. "Social-Learning Theory of Identificatory Processes." In *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, edited by David A. Goslin, 2nd ed., 213–62. Chicago: Rand-McNally.

Bardziejewska, Mariola. 2005. "Okres dorastania: Jak rozpoznać potencjał nastolatków?" In *Psychologiczne portrety człowieka*, edited by Anna Brzezińska, 345–78. Gdańsk: Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne.

Baumeister, Roy F., and Mark R. Leary. 1995. "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation." *Psychological Bulletin* 117 (3): 497–529. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497.

Blachnicki, Franciszek. 1978. "Ewangelizacja w procesie budowania 'nowej parafii.'" *Koinonia* 1: 27–43.

Boguszewski, Rafał, and Marta Bożewicz. 2019. "Religijność i moralność polskiej młodzieży – zależność czy autonomia?" *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 62 (4): 31–52. https://doi.org/10.31743/zn.2019.62.4.02.

Chęć, Magdalena. 2020. *Zachowania ryzykowne i problemowe młodzieży: Uwarunkowania psychospołeczne i rola aktywności wolnoczasowej*. Warszawa: Difin.

Crone, Eveline A., and Ronald E. Dahl. 2012. "Understanding Adolescence as a Period of Social–Affective Engagement and Goal Flexibility." *Nature Reviews Neuroscience* 13 (9): 636–50. https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn3313.

Cybal-Michalska, Agnieszka. 2010. "Dylematy tożsamościowe młodzieży w rzeczywistości popkulturowej." In *Kultura popularna: Konteksty teoretyczne i społeczno-kulturowe*, edited by Agnieszka Gromkowska-Melosik and Zbyszko Melosik, 129–40. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls."

Dyczewski, Błażej Adam. 2022. *Zachowaj Trzeźwość Umysłu: Społeczna Diagnoza Uczniów 2021: Lustro: Raport ogólnopolski. Ewaluacja badania*. Poznań: Stowarzyszenie Producentów i Dziennikarzy Radiowych.

Dziewiecki, Marek. 2023. "Młodzi a wspólnota Kościoła." *Zeszyty Formacji Katechetów* 89 (1): 14–22.

Ebstyne King, Pamela. 2003. "Religion and Identity: The Role of Ideological, Social, and Spiritual Contexts." *Applied Developmental Science* 7 (3): 197–204. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532480xads0703_11.

Fowler, James W. 1981. *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest of Meaning*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Fowler, James W., and Mary Lynn Dell. 2010. "Stages of Faith from Infancy Through Adolescence: Reflections on Three Decades of Faith Development Theory." In *The Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence*, edited by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, Pamela Ebstyne King, Linda Wagener, and Peter L. Benson, 34–45. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412976657.n3.

Franciszek. 2013. Adhortacja Apostolska *Evangelii Gaudium* (= *EG*).

Gable, Shelly L. 2005. "Approach and Avoidance Social Motives and Goals." *Journal of Personality* 74 (1): 175–222. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2005.00373.x.

Gabriel, Karl. 1994. "Jugend, Religion und Kircheimgesellschaftlichen Modernisierungsprozess." In *Jugend, Religion und Modernisierung*, edited by Karl Gabriel and Hans Hobelsberger, 53–73. Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Gärtner, Christel. 2022. "Secularity as a Point of Reference: Specific Features of a Non-Religious and Secularized Worldview in a Family across Three Generations." *Religions* 13 (6): article no. 477. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13060477.

Gaś, Zbigniew B., ed. 2015. *Kłopoty z dorosłością*. Lublin: Wyższa Szkoła Ekonomii i Innowacji w Lublinie.

Głąbiński, Janusz. 2019. *Formacja osoby w kontekście społecznym: Krytyczna analiza wybranych materiałów dydaktycznych do nauczania religii w gimnazjum i liceum powstałych w Polsce po 2001 roku*. Kraków: Uniwersytet Papieski Jana Pawła II w Krakowie. Wydawnictwo Naukowe.

Goeke-Morey, Marcie C., Laura K. Taylor, Christine E. Merrilees, Peter Shirlow, and E. Mark Cummings. 2014. "Adolescents' Relationship with God and Internalizing Adjustment over Time: The Moderating Role of Maternal Religious Coping." *Journal of Family Psychology* 28 (6): 749–58. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037170.

Good, Marie, Teena Willoughby, and Jan Fritjers. 2009. "Just Another Club? The Distinctiveness of the Relation Between Religious Service Attendance and Adolescent Psychosocial Adjustment." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 38 (9): 1153–71. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-008-9320-9.

Grabowska, Mirosława. 2021. "Religijność młodych na tle ogółu społeczeństwa." *Komunikat z Badań CBOS* 144: 1–19.

Greenfield, Emily A., and Nadine F. Marks. 2007. "Religious Social Identity as an Explanatory Factor for Associations Between More Frequent Formal Religious Participation and Psychological

Well-Being." *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 17 (3): 245–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/10508610701402309.

Hagerty, Bonnie M.K., Judith Lynch-Sauer, Kathleen L. Patusky, Maria Bouwsema, and Peggy Collier. 1992. "Sense of Belonging: A Vital Mental Health Concept." *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 6 (3): 172–77. https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-9417(92)90028-h.

Jankowiak, Barbara, and Ewa Wojtynkiewicz. 2018. "Kształtowanie się tożsamości w okresie adolescencji a podejmowanie zachowań ryzykownych w obszarze używania alkoholu przez młodzież." *Studia Edukacyjne*, no. 48: 169–85. https://doi.org/10.14746/se.2018.48.11.

Joachimowska, Magdalena. 2020. "O potrzebie odnalezienia swojego miejsca w świecie – humanistyczne inspiracje do działań wychowawczych." *Horyzonty Wychowania* 19 (52): 45–55. https://doi.org/10.35765/hw.1845.

Kohut, Heinz. 1977. *The Restoration of the Self*. New York: International Universities Press.

Kokociński, Maciej. 2011. *Rola grupy rówieśniczej w socjalizacji młodzieży*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Komunikacji i Zarządzania.

Kopiczko, Tomasz. 2020. "Trudności komunikacyjne zagrożeniem dla wychowania religijnego w rodzinie. Zarys problematyki." *Studia Katechetyczne* 16: 57–74. https://doi.org/10.21697/sk.2020.16.4.

Kurzydło, Dariusz. 2021. "Nowi adresaci katechezy." *Studia Katechetyczne* 17: 129–44. https://doi.org/10.21697/sk.2021.17.8.

Lee, Richard M., and Steven B. Robbins. 1995. "Measuring Belongingness: The Social Connectedness and the Social Assurance Scales." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 42 (2): 232–41. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0167.42.2.232.

Magaldi-Dopman, Danielle, and Jennie Park-Taylor. 2010. "Sacred Adolescence: Practical Suggestions for Psychologists Working with Adolescents' Religious and Spiritual Identity." *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 41 (5): 382–90. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020941.

Makselon, Józef, ed. 1990. *Psychologia dla teologów*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PAT.

Malarecki, Marcin. 2021. "Dorastanie we współczesności." *Zeszyty Formacji Katechetów* 81 (1): 57–66.

Malik, Sara Fatima, and Jamil A. Malik. 2023. "Mediating Role of Sense of Belonging between Diffusive Identity Style and Personal Accountability: Moderation by Friends' Support in Pakistan." *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth* 15 (1): 1–13. https://doi.org/10.29173/cjfy29903.

Mariański, Janusz. 2022. "Religijność młodzieży szkół średnich w procesie przemian (2015–2022) – analiza socjologiczna." *Chowanna* 59: 1–34.

Markstrom, Carol A., Erron Huey, Bethanie Morris Stiles, and Amanda L. Krause. 2010. "Frameworks of Caring and Helping in Adolescence: Are Empathy, Religiosity, and Spirituality Related Constructs?" *Youth & Society* 42 (1): 59–80. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118x09333644.

Maslow, Abraham H. 1943. "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review* 50 (4): 370–96. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346.

Mastalski, Janusz. 2007. *Samotność globalnego nastolatka*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Papieskiej Akademii Teologicznej.

Melosik, Zbyszko. 2013. *Kultura popularna i tożsamość młodzieży: W niewoli władzy i wolności*. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls."

Murawski, Roman. 1989. "Rozwój religijny." In *Teoretyczne założenia katechezy młodzieżowej*, edited by Roman Murawski, 70–94. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie.

Offmański, Andrzej. 2003. "Kateheza młodzieżowa na poziomie szkół ponadgimnazjalnych." In *Katechetyka szczegółowa*, edited by Józef Stala, 169–217. Tarnów: Biblos.

Oleszkowicz, Anna, and Alicja Senejko. 2011. "Dorastanie." In *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka: Podręcznik akademicki*, edited by Janusz Trempała, 259–86. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Osewska, Elżbieta. 2020. *Rodzina i szkoła w Polsce wobec współczesnych wyzwań wychowawczych*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II w Krakowie.

Paloutzian, Raymond F., Sebastian Murken, Heinz Streib, and Sussan Rößler-Namini. 2013. "Conversion, Deconversion, and Spiritual Transformation: A Multilevel Interdisciplinary View." In *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park, 2nd ed., 399–421. New York: The Guilford Press.

Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji. 2020. *Dyrektorium o katechizacji*. Translated by Aleksandra Soroka-Kulma. Kielce: Jedność (= *DK*).

Płaziński, Artur. 2019. "Rola szkoły katolickiej wobec wyzwań społeczeństwa ponowoczesnego." *Kieleckie Studia Teologiczne* 18: 147–56.

Rawicka, Iwona. 2020. "Współczesna młodzież, jej poglądy i wyznawane wartości." *Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne Śląska Opolskiego* 40 (1): 135–54. https://doi.org/10.25167/sth.1948.

Rydz, Elżbieta. 2007. "Kształtowanie się religijności młodzieży w wieku gimnazjalnym." In *Wychowanie młodzieży w średnim wieku szkolnym*, edited by Józef Stala, 23–42. Tarnów: Biblos.

Samulnik, Tomasz. 2022. *Doświadczenie a teologia*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Segiet, Katarzyna, ed. 2015. *Młodzież w dobie przemian społeczno-kulturowych*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu im. Adama Mickiewicza.

Skymba, Haley V., Cali Joyce, Eva H.Telzer, and Karen D. Rudolph. 2022. "Peer Adversity Predicts Interpersonal Needs in Adolescent Girls." *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 32 (4): 1566–79. https://doi.org/10.1111/jora.12741.

Smith, Christian, and Melinda Lundquist Denton. 2009. "Adolescent Religion and Life Outcomes." In *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*, edited by Smith Christian and Melinda Lundquist Denton, 218–58. Oxford: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/019518095x.003.0008.

Suszek, Hubert, Emilia Wegner, and Norbert Maliszewski. 2015. "Przeniesienie i jego użyteczność w psychoterapii w świetle badań empirycznych." *Roczniki Psychologiczne* 18 (3): 345–62. https://doi.org/10.18290/rpsych.2015.18.3-4pl.

Szauer, Remigiusz. 2019. "Moralność małżeńsko-rodzinna w ujęciu uczniów szkół średnich i uczelni wyższych w diecezji koszalińsko-kołobrzeskiej. Studium socjologiczno-pastoralne." *Studia Koszalińsko-Kołobrzeskie* 26: 185–202. https://doi.org/10.18276/skk.2019.26-09.

Tajfel, Henri. 1972. "Social Categorization." In *Introduction à la psychologie sociale*, edited by Serge Moscovici, 272–302. Paris: Larousse.

Tatala, Małgorzata, and Czesław Walesa. 2021. "Porównanie doświadczeń religijnych w okresie wczesnej, średniej i późnej dorosłości." *Psychologia Rozwojowa* 26 (1): 37–48. https://doi.org/10.4467/20843879pr.21.003.14117.

Torralba, Josefa, Lluis Oviedo, and Manuel Canteras. 2021. "Religious Coping in Adolescents: New Evidence and Relevance." *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8 (1): article no. 121. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-021-00797-8.

VanderZanden, James Wilfrid. 1984. *Social Psychology*. 3rd ed. New York: Random House. http://catalog.hathitrust.org/api/volumes/oclc/9643101.html.

Walesa, Czesław. 1997. "Psychologiczna analiza zmian w rozwoju religijnym człowieka." *Roczniki Filozoficzne* 45 (4): 109–32.

Wills, Thomas Ashby, Alison M. Yaeger, and James M. Sandy. 2003. "Buffering Effect of Religiosity for Adolescent Substance Use."*Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* 17 (1): 24–31. https://doi.org/10.1037/0893-164x.17.1.24.

Winch, Robert F. 1962. *Identification and Its Familial Determinants; Exposition of Theory and Results of Pilot Studies. Advanced Study in Sociology*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill.

Wong, Y. Joel, LynnRew, and Kristina D. Slaikeu. 2006. "A Systematic Review of Recent Research on Adolescent Religiosity/Spirituality and Mental Health." *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 27 (2): 161–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840500436941.

Ziebertz, Hans-Georg, Chris Hermans, and Ulrich Riegel. 2010. "Interkulturalität, Identität Und Religion." In *Gender in Islam Und Christentum. Theoretische Und Empirische Studien*, edited by Hans-Georg Ziebertz, 79–92. Berlin: LIT.

Zuhri, Muhammad Noor. 2023. "Cognitive Psychology Development In The Early Adolescence." *Journal of Education on Social Issues* 2 (1): 44–51.

Preparing Catholic Educators for Flourishing in a Secularized Society: A Case Study

CLARE KILBANE iD
McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame, ckilbane@nd.edu

REBECCA ROOK iD
Franciscan University of Steubenville, rrook@franciscan.edu

AMY ROBERTS iD
Franciscan University of Steubenville, aroberts@franciscan.edu

Abstract: As culture experiences secularization, and the importance of religion and prevalence of people holding religious worldviews diminishes, the work of forming Catholics who can live out their professional and Christian vocations as teachers in different types of schools becomes simultaneously more crucial and more complex. This article explores the importance of preparing Catholic teachers for employment in contemporary educational settings in the United States to respond to accelerating secularization. It argues that the Catholic Church's vision for education can be implemented within the limitations of US education policy, especially through the careful preparation of Catholic teachers in Catholic Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs). First, it presents the unique context of US education, illustrating the setting in which such programs function and the associated challenges. Next, it shares the Church's vision for well-prepared Catholic educators, identifying three key anthropological conflicts linked to secularization and explaining how the Church's teaching on Catholic education as presented by Archbishop Michael Miller's "Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools" provides needed guidance for EPPs located in Catholic universities. Next, it offers a case study presenting one EPP's efforts to respond to secularization through its program redesign according to a framework that integrates Miller's Five Marks. Finally, it explains the difficulties facing Catholic EPPs as they integrate their mission with the demands of professional preparation.

Keywords: Secularization; anthropology, Catholic education, education, Catholic teacher preparation

1. Introduction and Method

As culture experiences secularization, and the importance of religion and prevalence of people holding religious worldviews diminishes, the work of forming Catholics who can live out their professional and Christian vocations as teachers in different types of schools becomes all the more crucial, and yet, it also becomes more complex. This article explores the importance of preparing Catholic teachers for employment in contemporary educational settings in the United States along with the developing understanding and response of its authors (as practitioners) to the reform of Catholic Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs) in the face of an aggressive secularization.

Because EPPs in Catholic institutions of higher education (IHEs) serve the larger mission of the Church to proclaim the gospel to all nations (John Paul II 1998a, no. 2) they bear responsibility for producing graduates who can serve as both effective teachers and Christian witnesses (i.e., "educator-witnesses"). It argues that the Catholic Church's vision for education can be implemented within the limitations of US education policy, especially through the careful preparation of Catholic teachers in Catholic EPPs. First, it presents the unique context of US education, illustrating the setting in which EPPs function. Next, it shares the Church's vision for well-prepared Catholic educators, identifying key anthropological conflicts linked to secularization and explaining how the Church's teaching on Catholic education as presented by Archbishop Michael Miller's "Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools" offers guidance for EPPs located in Catholic IHEs. Next, it offers a case study presenting one EPP's efforts to respond to secularization through its program redesign. Finally, it explains the difficulties facing EPPs at Catholic IHEs as they balance and integrate their mission with the demands of professional preparation.

2. The Context of Education in the US

EPPs in the US exist in and prepare teachers for employment in a unique educational context, particularly regarding personal liberty and limited government. The nation's colonial legacy and the ideals important at its founding are distinct and deeply engrained in US law, culture, and citizens. They have shaped and continue to influence all aspects of education, including the variety of schools that exist, and also how they are organized, financed, and administered. Additionally, they factor into the singular experience of secularization in the US and its effects on educational policy, curriculum, and instruction. The following sections briefly explore these ideals to demonstrate the context in which Catholic EPPs and their graduates function and the obstacles they must negotiate.

2.1. The Ideal of Personal Liberty

From its inception, the US has valued personal liberty, aspiring to create a society where citizens are free from oppressive restrictions imposed by authority on their way of life, behavior, or political views. Because education was considered a liberating force for citizens and therefore a universal right, government-sponsored, "public" schools were established and continue to be open to all citizens. Elementary and secondary tuition is free, due to government funding, with 48.6% from the state, 36.6% from local municipalities, and the remainder from federal and private sources (NCES 2020). Post-secondary attendance, though not free, is highly subsidized. As

of fall 2019, 91% of the 53 million school-aged students in the US were enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, while 13.5 million or 72.5% of all post-secondary students attend public institutions (NCES 2023).

Ensuring personal liberty involves protecting certain freedoms even when these could conflict between individuals. This is especially evident in US education concerning religious freedom. Extensive investment creates public education systems where students of many different religions (and none at all) can coexist. Consequently, there is a constant struggle to ensure that curriculum, instruction, and policy remain "religiously neutral." Religious freedom also permits the establishment of other types of schools, including those with religious charters. This includes Catholic schools, which make up the largest network of non-public schools in the nation. In 2022–23, some 1,693,493 students were educated in 5,920 schools across all 50 states (NCEA 2023). The majority of the 5.1 million or 27.4% of postsecondary students who attend private institutions attend Catholic ones (Education Data Initiative 2023). Unlike private schools in other countries, those in the US at all levels are not government-sponsored or financed. Instead, they depend almost entirely on revenue from student tuition. However, the "school choice" movement, which advocates for government dollars to "follow" students to any school chosen by students' parents (in the name of religious freedom), is currently challenging this long-standing policy. In many US states, public support for private education is growing due to widespread dissatisfaction with public education (Porter-Magee, Smith, and Klausmeier 2022). Poor management of public schools during the Covid-19 pandemic and the incursion of controversial ideologies (e.g., critical race theory, gender theory, ideas about the role of parents) in their curriculum and policy prompted many parents to seek educational alternatives (see Robinson 2023).

2.2. The Ideal of Limited Government

The ideal of limited government influences US education and its experience of secularization. In striving for this ideal, the force of government is restricted and it has no more power than is indicated by the constitution or law. The 10th Amendment to the US Constitution reserves the administration of education to the states rather than the federal government, allowing them to oversee it in ways appropriate for their citizens. Each state's distinctiveness in its history, geography, economy, population, and more creates varying needs and approaches to teacher licensure, elementary and secondary curriculum, pupil assessment, and school finance. However, all State Education Agencies (SEAs) cooperate with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) or local school "districts" organized geographically by city, county, and other civic boundaries. Each LEA has its own administration which oversees school finance, personnel, facilities management, school operations, and strategic planning. Additionally, they involve community members on elected or appointed school "boards."

Schools that are not public, called "private" schools (which include Catholic schools), participate within this larger ecosystem and are inevitably influenced by them because policy, administration, and oversight are primarily geared toward public education. Though they function independently and have more freedom, private schools are typically subject to state operation guidelines for aspects such as educational curriculum and teacher credentialing. They must comply with government requirements to monitor pupil attendance, assess their progress, and more. Private schools are under federal oversight with the "equal protection clause" of the 14th Amendment that states, "no state can deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." This means that federal laws, including those outlined by constitutional amendments and decisions of the Supreme Court, apply to them. For example, given that US law outlaws discrimination based on race, private schools must adhere. As secularization intrudes more into American life, law, and public education, private schools can expect its influences to become more frequent, severe, and restrictive.

As EPPs prepare future US teachers, they must do so in ways that correspond to this unique educational context and the ways secularization manifests in different types of schools. Although public and Catholic schools each have a distinct mission, they have historically been similar regarding teacher licensure, curriculum, and instruction, as well as with many policies and practices. As secularization progresses and a religious worldview diminishes, public and Catholic schools that intend to remain true to their mission will become increasingly distinct from one another. Catholic EPPs need a clear vision for the effective preparation of educators to appropriately fulfill the mission of the school where they are employed.

3. A Catholic Vision for Educator Preparation

The Catholic Church offers an efficacious vision for education that applies to all schools, not just Catholic ones. Education, a universal and inalienable right, "aims at the formation of the human person in the pursuit of his ultimate end and the good of the societies of which…he is a member" (Paul VI 1965, no. 1). The Church's educational mission originated with Jesus' Great Commission and assists her members with their whole life, "even the secular part of it insofar as it has a bearing on [their] heavenly calling" (Paul VI 1965, Introduction). Schools "offer a culture aimed at the integral formation of individuals…develop with special care the intellectual faculties…form the ability to judge rightly, hand on the cultural legacy of previous generations, foster a sense of values, prepare for professional life" (Congregation for Catholic Education 2022, no. 19). Through these tasks, educators do not simply hand on information, they form persons (Congregation for Catholic Education 1982,

no. 16). The social setting of a school forms students in human relationships so that they can "become a person capable of building a society based on justice and solidarity" (Congregation for Catholic Education 2022, no. 19). This educational outcome requires the formative encounter, dialogue, and search for truth between people of different cultures inherent to the school setting and educational project (see Congregation for Catholic Education 2013, nos. 32–33, 61). The desired end is not consensus leading to relativism, but simultaneous respect for others and respect for truth (Congregation for Catholic Education 2013, Conclusion; Benedict XVI 2008). How Catholic educators carry out the Church's vision varies according to whether they teach in a Catholic or public school, but a Catholic EPP can prepare teachers to function effectively in both.

Catholic educators must work effectively with students and colleagues who hold differing beliefs about reality and the human person, especially if they work in US schools that do not have a Catholic mission (or "secular schools," which include public and some private schools). Those working in Catholic schools must understand how to actively monitor and carefully respond when compromising secular influences intrude through curriculum standards, instructional materials, or the constituents' expectations. Given that most pre-service teachers[1] are uncertain where they will be employed until after their program is completed, EPPs must design programs in a way that communicates the truth about the human person in both types of schools.

3.1. Anthropological Conflicts Significantly Impacting Education

Catholic EPPs can prepare pre-service teachers by teaching them the truth of the human person so that they can navigate the challenges arising from conflicts between Christian anthropology and the loose assemblage of popular understandings that might be called a "secular anthropology." An educator's tacit anthropology impacts the way he or she educates (Congregation for Catholic Education 1997, no. 10; 1988, no. 63). Consequently, educators must become aware of and refine their own through an intentional and ongoing formation in Christian anthropology and truth to counteract faulty influences from secular culture. Without doing so they could educate according to the culture's erroneous and incomplete understanding of the human person and reality. Three key anthropological conflicts that present singular challenges for Catholic educators include the relationship between the material and the spiritual in the human person, the relationship of the human person to other persons, and the purpose of education in developing the human faculties. Catholic EPPs can form pre-service teachers as "educator-witnesses," professionals

---

1   The term pre-service is used to indicate a student in the process of formation for being a teacher.

who live and teach according to the truth of the human person amid advancing secularization.

3.1.1. Focus On the Material Apart from the Spiritual

Although Christian anthropology holds that the human person is a union of the material and spiritual, secular anthropology commonly focuses on the material without accounting for the spiritual (*CCC* 362–365; O'Shea 2012, 2–3). Even if the person's spiritual dimension may not be explicitly denied in an educational setting, its neglect eliminates the possibility of discussing its existence and importance. The implications of this are apparent in legal trends that restrict teachers' ability to speak or teach evangelistically about God. This restriction strips the educational endeavor of its potential to form students according to their eternal destiny. Moreover, ignoring reality's spiritual dimension fails to help students recognize how material and temporal reality point to an analogous transcendent and supernatural one (O'Shea 2018, 9). Although students can receive formation for their spiritual life outside of school (e.g., in their family), innumerable opportunities for human formation arise during the school day. If these are devoid of reference to spiritual truths, students' time spent at school could reasonably prevent them from learning how to integrate their spiritual and temporal lives. Lack of experiences that assist a young person in integrating the spiritual and temporal aspects of themselves can lead them to regard matters of God and faith as ancillary to their lives and relegated to "Sunday" or "church," experiences added to the rest of life (if desired) but not necessarily relevant to it.

An effective Catholic formation involves directing educators' attention and efforts to their own spiritual lives and destiny, not just that of their students (Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization 2020, nos. 121, 135; Congregation for Catholic Education 2007, no. 26; 1982, no. 60). Otherwise, they may not realize their call to unite with God and offer themselves as a gift to their students, regarding teaching as a job that provides for their material needs, but not necessarily their spiritual ones. They may not recognize the sacredness of their vocation as a teacher—forming fallen immortal persons called to a life vivified by God's grace. Although Catholic educators in public schools may not be free to promote students' spiritual formation as explicitly as those in Catholic schools, they seem more likely to do the hard work of human formation if they regard their students as images of God who are called to eternal union with him than they would be if they see their students as just another entity to push through the system. A Catholic EPP can prepare educator-witnesses to address both dimensions of the person.

3.1.2. Focus on the Person as "Individual" Rather than "Relation"

The second, common deviation from Christian anthropology in the secularized culture's functional anthropology treats a person as removed from his fundamental identity as relation (Ratzinger 1990, 444; 1970, 132 and 137). Christian anthropology

understands the human person as an image of God, reflecting his nature as a communion of Persons by analogously existing in communion with God and others (*CCC* 356–357). In God's plan, a person first experiences communion in the family, with parents as principal educators who lay the foundation for her future communion with God. Schools, as communities of learners, should assist parents in educating students for community and analogous communion with God and others. This understanding of identity as a gift from God contrasts with the tendency in a secular society to encourage individuals to construct their own identity apart from God, from loving commitment to persons, from the evidence provided by their own bodies (Ouellet 2015, 213–15). The person holding a secular understanding of the person as being primarily an individual may look for "freedom from" religion, social norms, and responsibilities rather than "freedom for" communion, gift of self for others' enrichment, and personal enrichment through relationship and loving self-gift (Benedict XVI 2008; Francis 2013, no. 10). The corresponding implications for schools include filling the gap when some parents choose personal gratification over the fulfillment of parental responsibilities in self-gift to their children, or rectifying students' secular views of the human person. A Catholic EPP can provide the formation educator-witnesses need to teach according to the communal order established by God's plan, in harmony with the identity given by God, expressed by and gifted through the human body.

3.1.3.   Focus on Prosperity and Success over the Discovery of Truth

A third deviation from Christian anthropology directs the cultivation of the human faculties toward material prosperity and societal improvement, rather than the pursuit of truth and sanctity (Benedict XVI 2008; John Paul II 1998b, no. 5). In particular, the influential American educational philosopher John Dewey applied Darwin's theory of evolution to truth and learning. Doing so led to his view of education suggesting that truth evolves under the influence of the learner's environment (Dewey 1965b, 1–2). In this view, truth is subjective and determined by experience and empirical methods rather than existing objectively and being discovered through them (Dewey 1965a, 94–95). If truth must be determined, it can change or can vary from person to person and is, therefore, less likely to lead students to God who is Truth (*CCC* 144, 214). In this context, education strives to make students productive members of society, with "success" defined in terms of grades, test scores, financial earnings, or worldly achievements.

As One, Good, Truth, and Beauty, God creates everything to manifest these imprints of him in integrated ways (O'Shea 2018, 13). The person's engagement with the transcendentals enables him to encounter not only the created manifestations but, analogously, God himself (O'Shea 2018, 9). In this context, education forms the human powers so that they lead the person to union and communion with God, a higher good than material prosperity. In particular, the student can discover

objective truth as a stable reality that includes the material and the spiritual (John Paul II 1998a, no. 3). Efforts to discover truth lead the student to an encounter with God who is Truth (John 8:36; 14:6). But the student does not discover truth by exercising the intellect alone. Discovering truth requires all the human faculties working together (Taylor 1998, 41; cf. Rowland 2017, 19–20). To this end, teachers can direct students to evaluate ethical questions in light of their conformity to God's goodness. They can assign works of art that, even if they do not explicitly mention God or matters of faith, nevertheless attract students to the truth and goodness the works convey. A Catholic EPP can model the discovery of truth using all the human faculties and show educators that doing so can lead to God.

3.2. The Church's Vision for Education amid Anthropological Conflicts

The Church's vision for education corresponds to the truth of the human person, although the vision can be implemented more fully in Catholic schools than in public ones. Catholic schools (including IHEs) can simultaneously "promot[e] the formation of the whole man" and fulfill "the saving mission of the Church" (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977, nos. 8–9) precisely because educators are free to teach about the Church and their own faith through overt words and actions. By integrating evangelization and human formation, its educators can form students to "imbue their whole life" with a Christian spirit (Congregation for Catholic Education 2022, no. 13). This task necessitates navigating the pressures on Catholic schools from secularization, for the temporal and eternal good of the whole educated person. Catholic educators in public and other types of schools that might be referred to as "secular" implement the Church's vision for education analogously. Despite working "within the limitations proper to a school that makes no attempt to educate in the faith," they nevertheless can "help students to discover true human values" (Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, no. 49). Catholic EPPs can prepare Catholic school teachers to fulfill this vision and to effectively respond to the challenges that secular culture inevitably presents.

Archbishop J. Michael Miller, CSB, former Secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education, distilled the post-conciliar documents on Catholic education into "Five Essential Marks of Catholic Schools" (Miller 2006, 17–19). Although not an exhaustive expression of Catholic educational philosophy, the points identified offer a succinct articulation of the Church's vision that Catholic EPPs can communicate to pre-service teachers. These marks can also function as a barometer for Catholic IHEs and EPPs to assess their effectiveness in implementing the Church's vision. Miller articulates these as: inspired by a supernatural vision, founded on a Christian anthropology, animated by communion and community, imbued with a Catholic worldview throughout the curriculum, and sustained by Gospel witness (Miller 2006, 17).

A Catholic school is first and foremost "inspired by a supernatural vision" (Miller 2006, 20). In contrast to the secular school which must ignore the spiritual and supernatural dimension of the human person, a Catholic school's fundamental mission is forming students to live on earth so that they can spend eternity with God. A Catholic school can require students to take religion classes, schedule liturgies for the entire school community, and decorate with explicitly religious artwork. A Catholic school can enact discipline to point students to their eternal destiny and teach students that living as a member of the school community helps them live as a member of the Body of Christ. Holding a supernatural vision empowers the Catholic school to respond to the limited and short-sighted view of a secular anthropology.

Second, Catholic schools are "founded on a Christian anthropology" (Miller 2006, 22). While the secular school ignores the students' spiritual dimension and proposes that they can define themselves even to the point of contradicting reality, a Catholic school can explicitly teach students that their identity flows from their creation in God's image and is formed by responding to his call to be holy as he is holy. The Catholic school can openly acknowledge the wound of original sin with its implications for students' identity. It can announce the good news that Jesus Christ has redeemed them and called them to be saints. It can cultivate students' intellects and wills as a means of "enabling each [student] to attain an integral formation that includes the Christian dimension and recognizes the help of grace" (Congregation for Catholic Education 1988, no. 99). By operating from a Christian anthropology, a Catholic school opens possibilities for students' prosperity in ways that a secular anthropology cannot.

The third mark, "animated by communion and community" (Miller 2006, 28), naturally flows from the first two. Like all schools, a Catholic school is a community; students and teachers alike image God as being made for communion with other persons. This communion "always involves a double dimension…vertical (communion with God) and horizontal (communion with people)" (Congregation for Catholic Education 2007, no. 8). Through Mass and other liturgical offerings, through school prayer, through religion classes, Catholic schools can cultivate the vertical dimension of communion in a way not available to secular schools. When teaching students how to behave toward others, a Catholic school can speak about the dignity of every person as an image of God and the responsibility to treat all persons accordingly. In contrast to the secular view of "individualism" that encourages students to define themselves apart from "relation," the Catholic school can point students to discover their mission from God and the ways he invites them to make a gift of themselves to others, and thereby discover their identity.

Fourth, a Catholic worldview must imbue the whole curriculum in a Catholic school, not just religion class (Miller 2006, 42; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977, no. 50). Secular schools, ignoring God and the spiritual dimension

of the person, educate to worldly success rather than to the discovery of truth. Catholic schools do not dismiss their role in educating students for success and financial provision in this life, but they subordinate that good to the higher good of knowing truth and its Source. The various subjects of study together form an integrated whole because they all come from the Creator of every academic discipline. The efforts of students and teachers alike to discover truth "become the path for a personal encounter with the truth, a 'place' of encounter with God himself" (Congregation for Catholic Education 2002, no. 39). In a Catholic school, encounter with God is not limited to religion class or liturgies, though these are indispensable. Rather, in the hands of teachers who adhere to the principle of "truth cannot contradict truth," who understand curriculum as an integrated whole originating in God, and who conduct their classes accordingly, the whole educative process can direct students to encounter God.

Finally, the entire endeavor of a Catholic school is sustained by Gospel witness (Miller 2006, 53). Recalling that "the Catholic school depends upon [teachers] almost entirely for the accomplishment" of its mission because "teachers by their life as much as by their instruction bear witness to Christ, the unique Teacher" (Paul VI 1965, no. 8), teachers model for their students each of the marks. A Catholic school cannot manifest these marks without teachers who implement them, and a school can hardly be Catholic without the commitment and witness of its teachers (Congregation for Catholic Education 1988, no. 26).

Although Archbishop Miller articulated the Marks for Catholic schools, his fifth Mark indicates that each must be applied and embodied by the teachers themselves. Even if Catholic EPPs must demonstrate how to adapt the Marks to the limitations of the secular educational setting, it seems reasonable to apply Miller's Five Marks to Catholic educators themselves to identify the essential qualities needed in educator-witnesses responding to secularization. Consequently, a Catholic EPP needs to instill and cultivate these Marks in pre-service teachers so that they are hallmarks by which to live out their teaching vocation whether employed in Catholic or secular schools. Graduates of Catholic EPPs can then flourish as educator-witnesses who will evoke a response from those influenced by secularization (Paul VI 1975, no. 41).

An educator-witness in a secular school cannot teach openly about the Catholic faith, but with a "supernatural vision," he can evangelize through his joyful witness, pray for his students' salvation, conscientiously fulfill his duties (rather than just "checking the box"), and demonstrate sacrificial concern for his students' welfare. He can educate the students' spiritual dimension even if only preparing them for analogous encounters with God through discovering truth. He cannot proclaim that students are created in God's image, wounded by the Fall but called to sanctity with the grace of Christ. However, by operating from a Christian anthropology he can treat students with the dignity they deserve as images of God and potential saints. Although disciplinary measures in a secular school cannot reference any religious

or moral standards, an educator-witness can forego convenience or popularity to provide the human formation every student needs to become "strong and responsible individuals, capable of making free and correct choices" that build communion and community through authentic self-gift (Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, nos. 17–19). If educator-witnesses in secular schools cannot explicitly teach their students how to share their lives with God (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977, no. 45), they can still form them in the virtues needed to relate to others in healthy and mutually interdependent ways. Educator-witnesses realize that "whatever is true is a participation in Him who is the Truth" so they direct their students to discover truth, which communicates a Catholic worldview (Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, no. 16). In a secular school, the Catholic educator can lead students in the quest for truth across the curriculum, can form students in justice and goodness, can facilitate dialogue among those of differing viewpoints to strengthen community. Although "religiously neutral" education does not legally permit an evangelistic proclamation of the Gospel or education in matters of faith, because God is himself One, Truth, Goodness, Beauty, the pursuit of these values that occur in any school lays foundations that can ultimately lead people of goodwill to him without "overstepping" imposed boundaries. Educator-witnesses model professional dedication (Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, no. 17; 2022, no. 14), personal integrity, ethical behavior, and generous service among other Gospel values to inspire their students to imitate.

A Catholic EPP is well-positioned to form educators as professionals (Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, no. 17) and as witnesses. It can equip graduates in these and other ways to carefully navigate the pressures of secularization and even mitigate its influences. The following section presents a case study featuring a Catholic EPP and its innovative response to the challenges of Catholic teacher preparation in the context of dynamic secularization.

4. Redesigning a Catholic EPP to Prepare Educators for Work in a Secularized Society: A Case Study

The EPP featured in this case study exists within a small, private IHE with a Catholic mission located in a small, midwestern city in the US. It enrolls approximately 3,700 students annually, representing all 50 states and numerous countries. The IHE is designated as a "Faithfully Catholic" institution by the Cardinal Newman Society, meeting criteria related to its Catholic identity. 94% of its faculty identify as Catholic and 96% all of its undergraduate students. The EPP employs seven full-time faculty and nine part-time faculty and practicum advisors. Annually, the program graduates

approximately 40 teachers per year completing licensure teaching tracks for elementary, middle, and secondary placements.

Existing in an IHE, like most US EPPs, it has two major duties: to educate students in an approved program of study in accordance with its particular institutional mission and to prepare students to meet the professional requirements governing teacher credentialing set by the state. Its redesign was intended to respond more efficaciously to both. It aimed to enhance the EPP's fidelity to its mission in a Catholic university, improving its formation of "men and women to serve God and one another so they can be a transforming Christian presence in the world" (Franciscan University of Steubenville, n.d.). It aspired to enhance the preparation of faithful Catholics for work in different types of schools that are increasingly influenced by secularization so that they could be educator-witnesses.

4.1. Redesign Efforts

The EPP redesign reported here progressed over five years and continues to date. Although it began incidentally, it has become more intentional and strategic over time as those involved have expanded their knowledge and deepened their commitment to its goals and as the effects of secularization have become more problematic. Its most important features have involved the development of a conceptual framework, support for its faculty, course redesign, learning from graduates, and leveraging supplemental support from other university experiences as the following sections explain.

4.1.1. The PROFEss Framework and Its Enhancement with the Five Marks

The redesign was initiated when the PROFEss[2] framework (McVey and Poyo 2019), a model for preparing Catholic educators, was developed by two faculty members. Its four domains view the Christian educator as one who: provides professional and pedagogical expertise (P), exercises relational charity (RO), offers formational guidance (F), and facilitates evangelistic education (Ess) for students (See Figure 1).

---

2   An acronym for the conceptual framework employed by the EPP in this study. This framework views the Christian educator as one who provides professional and pedagogical expertise (P), exercises relational charity (RO), offers formational guidance (F), and facilitates evangelistic education (Ess) for students.
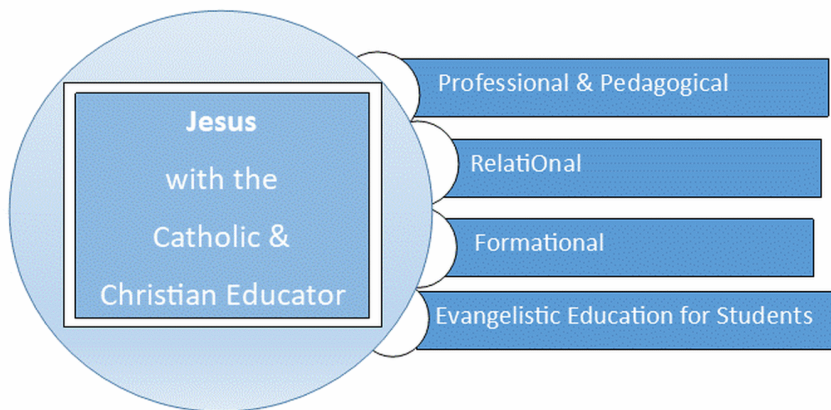
Figure 1. The PROFEss Framework

PROFEss became the EPP's guiding conceptual framework in 2020. In 2021, the enrollment of several religious sisters and a need to mitigate the increasing influence of secularization on the state's educator licensure standards led to the EPP's efforts to enhance this framework, increasing its potency. University leadership became engaged at this time, offering support that enabled the involvement of a faculty member in the university's Theology/Catechetics department and a consultant from the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame. In a series of meetings, this leadership team applied Miller's Five Marks to each domain to create the Enhanced PROFEss Framework, enabling it to serve as the foundational document for the EPP redesign. Later, the EPP outlined more specific expectations for the preparation of graduates for work in public and Catholic schools as educator-witnesses by developing actionable goals for each domain as demonstrated in Table 1. The enhancements to the PROFEss framework better positioned the program to prepare pre-service teachers for the challenges of secularization.

Table 1. EPP Goals for the PROFEss Domains

Domain	Goals
Professional & Pedagogical	Pre-service teachers will: • possess expertise within their teaching areas and understand how to frame their students' acquisition of professional skills, knowledge, and dispositions within a Catholic framework, considering: a) what the topic under study suggests about the full development of the human person, b) the meaning, purpose, and fulfillment of his or her life, c) civic participation, and d) sustained employment. • understand secular and Catholic understandings of what "the curriculum is" and be able to function effectively within communities with different understandings. • be aware of current issues in the profession that relate to student support (e.g., gender confusion, same-sex attraction, etc.), curriculum & instruction (e.g., common core, liberal education, constructivism, etc.) classroom management, and school discipline (e.g., trauma-informed practices) and other aspects of professional work which might professionally challenge teachers of faith and be able to recommend appropriate means for negotiating these.
Relational	Pre-service teachers will: • cooperate effectively with all of their professional colleagues (in the school and through professional associations beyond), striving to cultivate strong relationships and a sense of communion around the values and other aspects of the mission they share. • honor parents as "primary teachers" and assist them in understanding their role as head of the "domestic Church," equipping them with the resources to fulfill it. • develop authentic, personal relationships with their students and strive to maintain these relationships beyond their immediate connection (e.g., a school year), demonstrating a true concern for their person and future. • understand the distinct way that relationships, community, instruction, curriculum, other learning experiences, and student development are understood in a Catholic school and appreciate how these, along with the school's procedures, practices, policies, and environments affect students.
Formational	Pre-service teachers will: • possess an understanding of Catholic anthropology and its relationship to the Catholic philosophy of education which seeks to promote the development of the whole child as it relates to his/her physical, social, emotional, psychological, intellectual, moral, and spiritual dimensions. • be proficient in integrating issues of life and human dignity along with other aspects of the Catholic worldview and moral teachings within the academic curriculum, allowing students to understand the world "by the light of faith."
Evangelistic	Pre-service teachers will • witness the hope experienced from their personal encounter with Christ and the knowledge of their salvation through this love to their students, school families, and the community beyond them.

4.1.2. Support for the Faculty

Reflecting the Mark of Gospel witness, EPP faculty members were understood as critical to the redesign's success. However, the leadership realized they would need special support to fulfill their important roles because none of them had benefitted from the study of Catholic educational philosophy or Church teachings on Catholic education. All had matriculated from doctoral programs in education at IHEs where there was a focus on US public education, and concomitantly a secular anthropology.

The leadership team developed and delivered four professional development sessions beginning in spring of 2021. During one 90-minute session each term, EPP faculty had an opportunity to learn and grow together, expand their understanding of the program's Catholic mission, and consider how to address the enhanced PROFEss framework in their courses and various aspects of the program. Each session cultivated greater solidarity and recognition of the EPP's mission, promoted dialogue, and enabled collaboration for program improvement according to Catholic anthropology.

The first professional development session in spring 2022 focused on the program's mission of forming Catholics for public and Catholic schools, exploring teaching as both a temporal and spiritual vocation. The group studied various excerpts from Church documents about how Christian educators are presented with special responsibilities and unique benefits, such as the opportunity to grow in personal holiness and loving relationships with their students, whom they teach and form through their witness to Christ in word and action. Emphasizing that the faculty were fulfilling their own vocations while preparing the EPP's pre-service teachers for theirs, this session signaled the importance of addressing the spiritual dimension of the person.

The second session in fall 2022 focused on the goals of Catholic education as distinct from those of public education. It addressed the importance, in light of secularization, of the EPP's formation of graduates. Before the session, faculty read an assigned article, and then discussed it together to stimulate deeper thinking about the Marks, how they distinguish Catholic educators, and ways Catholic educators can imbue their pedagogy and curriculum with a Catholic worldview. The group discussed soliciting the expertise of faculty colleagues from other departments (who teach EPP students in other degree coursework) in the redesign efforts, believing that doing so would increase the probability of an integrated search for truth rather than merely temporal success.

During the third session in spring 2023, EPP faculty who had begun engaging in course redesign presented their revisions to their colleagues to demonstrate the integration of the Marks. Faculty engaged in an activity to identify current methods for addressing the goals from the PROFEss Framework Relational Domain within the EPP courses, as well as to formulate additional methods for doing so.

During the fourth session in fall 2023, faculty explored the goals in the Relational Domain more deeply. Because of the significant role parents play in the child's formation for communion and community, faculty focused on educating the EPP's students to support the work of parents. The group discussed how secularization influences parental roles, rights, and responsibilities as understood in different types of schools, as Table 2 demonstrates.

Table 2. Example Comparing Roles of Parents in Public and Catholic Schools

Parents	Public Schools	Catholic Schools
Roles	• Parents have a distinct role in caring for their children when compared with other adults, but it may or may not be considered a distinct and privileged role. • Public schools recognize that there are many types of families and therefore many types of parents and "parenting" situations. Some parents are legally married and committed to staying together for a lifetime. Others are not married. Some parents are unmarried, but parent together. Other parents are divorced and may or may not parent together. Some parents are male and female couples, some are of the same sex. • Many other adults may be acting in the place of parents- extended family members, guardians, foster parents, and other caregivers. Increasingly, the term "parents" is intentionally NOT USED to refer to the adults who are responsible for students. The term "caregiver" or "guardian" might be used instead.	• Catholic schools ascribe to *Gravissimum Educationis*, which explains the distinct and important role of parents: "Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs." • Catholic schools also recognize there are different types of marriages, families, and different adults who may be caring for children. To live their Christianity, teachers need to be sensitive to the many different situations of those with whom they work. However, there is an appreciation that the ideal for parenting/family life exists and is worth striving for. • Catholic schools recognize that there is a special significance to parental love and the care that extends from it. It is more than a sentimental attachment-it wants the best for the child, not just now but for eternity. It is characterized by self-gift and personal sacrifice. This love animates, guides, and inspires all educational activities and is a natural outgrowth of the "sacred" role of parents.

The group discussed existing and new plans for addressing different goals in this domain, such as "Pre-service teachers will honor parents as 'primary educators' and assist them in understanding their role as head of the 'domestic Church,' equipping them with the resources to fulfill it." In addition, they considered methods for helping pre-service teachers recognize the sacred role of parents in their various pedagogy courses, personally reflecting on questions such as, "Do I strive to humanize parents by helping the pre-service teachers understand what parenting involves as well as its gifts and challenges? Do I cultivate their empathy for parents and inspire them to learn more about those they serve?" This activity stimulated discussion about means to better support parents as children's primary educators and models of self-gift, in contrast to the secular view of parents' role and personal identity.

4.1.3. Course Redesign

Overlapping with these professional sessions, the EPP began the process of redesigning its courses to correspond with the enhanced PROFEss framework beginning in Summer 2022. Each faculty member met one-on-one with the leadership team, led by the consultant. This individualization fostered recognition of the unique interests and expertise of the faculty members and adjusted for the particular demands and conventions of the different course subjects.[3]

Across the courses however, the faculty identified three ways the integration of the enhanced PROFEss Framework could impact a course: the pedagogical approaches employed in the course, the choice of content taught, and how the significance of the courses was addressed. If done properly, this integration continues to address licensure standards but also enhances the course by providing an additional dimension for EPP students to consider. For instance, a class preparing EPP students to teach mathematics (i.e., Math "methods") would not alter the required content, but it might shift the instructional approach from teacher-centered lecturing to a more student-centered method of "guided discovery" to align with the Christian anthropological view that humans are made to seek and discover Truth.

During this process, each faculty member was asked to consider and communicate to their pre-service teachers how their course and the skills, knowledge, and dispositions it cultivates relate to the following four dimensions: employment, citizenship, human development/formation, and relationship with God and others. This approach was chosen to ensure that each course would continue to prepare pre-service teachers to meet state licensure standards but also extend their ability to teach according to Christian anthropology and a Catholic worldview as "educator-witnesses."

In addition to redesigning its pedagogy courses, the faculty further enhanced courses by placing additional emphasis on integrative or interdisciplinary education

---

3   The EPP recognized the "right" way to integrate the Catholic faith and worldview differs by course.

that not only makes significant cross-curricular connections but also meaningfully addresses aspects of faith. This effort intended to further enrich the pre-service teachers' recognition of the unity of all truth and education as the pursuit of truth. Several approaches were used. In some instances, the EPP faculty invited a content specialist from another department to guest lecture in their class. For example, the instructor of "Classroom Organization and Management," invited an expert from the Theology/Catechetics Department to guest lecture on St. John Bosco's Preventive System. In other cases, a special, interdisciplinary section of a core course was developed so that it presented its content in alignment with the EPP redesign. For example, a special section of "Foundations of Catholicism" was developed to allow important anthropological questions to be discussed with their practical implications for the field of education. Pre-service teachers were challenged to apply the teaching that every human person is created in God's image and therefore with equal dignity to the educational setting to uproot unjust discrimination. Similarly, school policies on gender in public and Catholic schools were examined and discussed during classes teaching unity of the human person's body and soul. All these approaches helped equip the pre-service teachers with greater wisdom and strategies for serving as effective educator-witnesses.

4.1.4.   Learning from Program Graduates

The leadership team believed that the redesign efforts would benefit if faculty members could understand the extent to which past EPP graduates felt prepared for their employment in public and Catholic schools. To gain these insights, members of the leadership team conducted a focus group interview with graduates working in these settings during Fall 2022. These were recorded and shared later with EPP faculty.

During the interview, the participating graduates with experience ranging from 3 to 20 years examined how they integrated their faith within their work as educators, what bearing it had on their classroom practices, the difficulties that confronted them, and their means for overcoming them. Key themes surfaced (Thomas 2006) to share with EPP faculty. Notably, all the graduates expressed the importance of their formation in virtue. They believed this crucial for witnessing their faith (both implicitly and explicitly) in the different types of school environments they inhabited. It contributed to their ability to negotiate challenges encountered working in this environment. Specifically, they pointed to the need for fortitude as they adhered to their values and beliefs when challenged by ideas and practices that are opposed to them. Their responses indicated the Five Marks were effective guidance for responding to encroaching secularizing influences.

One explained how her education had empowered her to robustly enrich that of her students. Now a teacher of English/Language Arts in a public secondary school, she was not only a successful professional, but one who felt confident functioning

in her role as an educator-witness who enabled interested students to explore ideas related to faith and religion where they occurred naturally in her subject area. She believed she could teach the works of Shakespeare more effectively because, "Without a strong Catholic education grounded in scripture, it would be very easy to skip over or dismiss Shakespeare's scripture references. Instead, I see these references as an opportunity to invite my students to encounter God's word as a form of literature and to let their minds be illuminated by the truth they encounter therein." In this way, she facilitated her students' discovery of the truth of God, the human person, and the spiritual dimension of reality.

The graduates discussed various ways that new ideologies infiltrated their school policies, curriculum standards, and in-service professional development experiences. Interviewees underscored the importance of the EPP redesign efforts to address advancing secularization. The themes that emerged, corresponding with the Marks and Christian anthropology, generated greater enthusiasm for the EPP redesign once shared with the EPP faculty.

4.1.5. Leveraging Other Experiences to Prepare Pre-service Teachers

To maximize the use of resources needed to prepare teachers according to the PRO-FEss Framework and recognize the finite impact possible within the EPP requirements, the faculty looked beyond the EPP confines to identify additional opportunities for pre-service teachers' formation. They acknowledged the university's core courses, including those in theology, philosophy, and the liberal arts, as contributing to cultivating educator-witnesses. Going beyond academics, they identified the formative benefits of co-curricular opportunities provided within the IHE's offerings, including mission trips, pilgrimages, and participation in faith-centered athletic teams and households (intentional faith communities that emphasize regular participation in the sacraments as well as growth in Christian community and accountability). Co-curricular opportunities such as these cultivate habits of mind and action that strengthen one's ability to be a living witness to the Gospel. They instill a supernatural vision integrated with temporal responsibilities, overcoming the secular divorce of the material and the spiritual as well as cultivating a facility for communion. These experiences each contribute to the education and formation of educator-witnesses so that they permeate their whole being rather than remaining an abstract academic exercise.

4.2. The Challenges for Catholic EPPs in the US

Because they exist in and for the larger educational "ecosystem" increasingly influenced by secularization, EPPs in the US face a host of challenges, especially prioritizing the mission over secularization's influence through accreditation. Each challenge affects the EPP's planning and operation as well as program redesign efforts. EPPs

in Catholic IHEs face additional challenges not faced by their secular counterparts but crucial to their mission and success. The leadership team of the EPP featured in the case study came to understand these challenges and share them here for their relevance to similar programs.

4.2.1.   The Challenges of Compliance and Accreditation

The most significant challenges for all US EPPs involve compliance and accreditation. EPPs must not only comply with their university's requirements for conferring degrees but also the criteria and standards specific to professional teacher licensure programs overseen by the state. Licensure is important because teachers can only work in public schools if they possess a license specific to their area of concentration (e.g., level and subject) granted by the state where they are employed (Todd-Smith and Campana 2022). Furthermore, many Catholic schools likewise require teachers to possess a license (Catholic Conference of Ohio 2020; Zech 2016).

To ensure compliance, every EPP navigates a process called program accreditation. This periodic (every 7 years), rigorous, external review is demanding, but ensures the state will grant a license to students who complete the EPP's program. Most EPPs undergo a tiered process of accreditation that involves three levels of formal review: institutional accreditation by an accrediting body recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, programmatic accreditation by a nationally recognized programmatic accrediting body, and state approval of the licensure programs. EPPs typically need these various levels of recognition to be eligible for federal funding (e.g. student access to federal financial aid for university tuition). The state review and program accreditation processes are lengthy and arduous, involving the production of detailed self-studies and the presentation of evidence that the program fulfills and is aligned with numerous standards. These standards inevitably become the primary focus of the EPP's course of study, as the state reviewers and programmatic accreditors monitor EPPs on a cyclical basis to ensure they are being met (Todd-Smith and Campana 2022). These standards can insert secular ideologies into EPP programs.

All EPPs experience difficulties when attempting to prepare pre-service teachers because accreditation can prove vital to a program's survival. It drives the EPP's curriculum, requires already limited resources (e.g., time, energy), and places demands on faculty. The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) overwhelmingly dominates EPP accreditation, with roughly 87% of accredited EPPs being CAEP-accredited (Todd-Smith and Campana 2022). Research demonstrates that fulfilling accreditation duties significantly impacts faculty workload and reduces the time available for investing in other important needs, such as scholarship, teaching, and undertaking innovative initiatives (Gillen 2020; Lewis 2016). In fact, time constrained the EPP featured in the case study, as the precedence of CAEP accreditation tasks prevented completion of the professional development activities related to

parents. However, constraints related to time are just one burden of accreditation. It also poses curricular challenges, as CAEP regulates the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions required from EPPs, who must evidence fulfillment of numerous standards related to these aspects through a prescribed set of procedures. This one-size-fits-all model of EPP standardization by accrediting bodies like the CAEP makes it difficult for EPPs to find room within their programs and curricula for addressing topics outside of those predetermined as essential by the accreditors (Graves 2021; Romanowski and Alkhateeb 2020).

4.2.2. Special Challenges for Catholic EPPs

Accreditation presents challenges for all EPPs, but Catholic ones experience even more. EPPs at Catholic IHEs have fewer resources than those at public ones, for the latter receive significant financial support from the state whereas the former rely almost exclusively on student tuition revenue. This means that Catholic EPPs typically employ fewer faculty members to design and teach classes, oversee compliance, and manage accreditation. They also have fewer resources to support other aspects of their programs.

Although these difficulties are not insignificant, arguably the greatest challenge for Catholic EPPs is balancing the goals of their distinctive institutional mission with the prevailing goals and standards of the profession. Those EPPs that prioritize their Catholic mission must design programs that not only address the forces of secularization permeating all types of schools and professional standards but do so in a way that does not jeopardize their successful accreditation. In effect, these EPPs must prepare teachers for not just one but two types of school settings, and settings that are becoming increasingly different. Without adding additional time to degree completion, pre-service teachers in Catholic EPPs must learn more than their counterparts in public EPPs. This became apparent to the EPP faculty featured in the case study who had to develop a conceptual framework for their efforts, develop strategies for deployment, and employ creativity to negotiate the obstacle of time obstacles. They became more intentional about their goals, the models for course redesign, and leveraging pre-service teachers' other university experiences to supplement their formation and education.

Further, Catholic EPPs must equip their pre-service teachers to recognize and address the increasing conflicts between Catholic anthropology and the beliefs about reality that surface in a secularized culture. An analysis of the standards involved in teacher licensure makes some of these conflicts more evident. For example, the Catholic understanding of one's identity as a gift (including biological sex) contradicts the increasingly common understanding functioning in public schools that one self-authors one's identity. Those seeking a license as middle-level educators must meet a program standard that includes language about "affirming" the diversity of all young adolescents, including their sexual orientation (AMLE 2022). Negotiating

instances like this is a significant challenge for EPP faculty and pre-service teachers that will likely become more frequent.

Negotiating these challenges is difficult, especially with the increasing number and variety of secular influences making their way into various aspects of education. But it is precisely the widening and worsening effects of secularization that make it critical for Catholic EPPs to strategically redesign their programs. Such efforts provide pre-service teachers with the skills, knowledge, and dispositions needed to flourish in any type of school setting where they live out their professional and Christian vocations. It is not only critical to pre-service teachers seeking to serve in Catholic schools but also to those hoping to stem the tide of secularization in public schools.

Conclusions

Preparing Catholic teachers for employment in contemporary educational settings requires intentional program design to stem the tide of advancing secularization. Irrespective of the specific manifestations of secularization in any given nation or culture, Catholic EPPs must implement the Church's vision for education to form educator-witnesses who can skillfully use all the means at their disposal to proclaim the Gospel as appropriate to their educational settings. The EPP featured in this case study has begun a program redesign to apply this vision more fully. While bene-fitting from the American ideals of limited government and personal liberty that make implementing the Catholic vision possible to varying degrees in Catholic and secular schools, the EPPs face challenges when maintaining the professional stand-ards demanded by accreditation and licensure, which can inject secular tenets into the program. Using Archbishop Miller's Five Marks, which conform to Christian an-thropology and thereby counteract the effects of secular anthropological views, this EPP developed a framework (called PROFEss) that sets actionable goals to enhance pre-service teachers' formation. This work-in-progress continues to evolve to better integrate the Catholic mission with the demands of professional preparation. This article aims to encourage and assist faculty in other EPPs to implement the Catholic Church's vision for education through the careful preparation of Catholic teachers in Catholic EPPs.

Bibliography

AMLE (American Middle Level Educators). 2022. *2022 Revised Middle Level Teacher Preparation Standards Overview*. https://www.amle.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/CAEP-Public.pdf.

Benedict XVI. 2008. *Meeting with Catholic Educators*. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080417_cath-univ-washington.html.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. 2005. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana (= *CCC*).

Catholic Conference of Ohio. 2020. *Common Misconceptions Regarding Catholic Schools*. https://www.ohiocathconf.org/Portals/1/Education/misconceptions-schools-ec.pdf?ver=2020-02-21-112216-740#:~:text=Every%20teacher%20in%20a%20Catholic,approved%20Ohio%20license%20or%20certificate.

Congregation for Catholic Education. 1982. *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Congregation for Catholic Education. 1988. *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School: Guidelines for Reflection and Renewal*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Congregation for Catholic Education. 1997. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Congregation for Catholic Education. 2002. *Consecrated Persons and Their Mission in Schools*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Congregation for Catholic Education. 2007. *Educating Together in Catholic Schools: A Shared Mission between Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Congregation for Catholic Education. 2013. *Educating to Intercultural Dialogue in Catholic Schools: Living in Harmony for a Civilization of Love*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Congregation for Catholic Education. 2022. *The Identity of the Catholic School for a Culture of Dialogue*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Dewey, John. 1965a. "The Experimental Theory of Knowledge." In *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays in Contemporary Thought*, 77–111. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Dewey, John. 1965b. "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy." In *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy and Other Essays in Contemporary Thought*, 1–19. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Education Data Initiative. 2023. *College Enrollment and Student Demographic Statistics*. https://educationdata.org/college-enrollment-statistics.

Francis. 2013. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html.

Franciscan University of Steubenville. n.d. *The Mission, Vision, and Charisms of Franciscan University of Steubenville*. Accessed December 15, 2023. https://franciscan.edu/mission-charisms/.

Gillen, Andrew. 2020. *The Case for Escape Hatches from Higher Education Accreditation*. https://www.texaspolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Gillen-Escape-Hatches-from-Higher-Ed-Accreditation.pdf.

Graves, Lauren Bell. 2021. "Faculty Perceptions of Accreditation in the Field of Educator Preparation." PhD Thesis, University of Kentucky Libraries. https://doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2021.054.

John Paul II. 1998a. "*Ad Limina* Address to the Bishops of the Ecclesiastical Regions of Chicago, Indianapolis and Milwaukee (USA)." https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1998/may/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19980530_ad-limina-usa-vi.html.

John Paul II. 1998b. "*Encyclical Letter* Fides et Ratio." https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html.

Lewis, Sabrina E. 2016. "Perceptions of University Faculty Regarding Accreditation in a College of Education." PhD Thesis, University of South Florida. https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=7496&context=etd.

McVey, Mary K., and Susan R. Poyo. 2019. "Preparing Catholic Educators to Educate and Evangelize in 21st Century Schools, Action Research of an Analysis of Educator Preparation Program Requirements Including Professional and Pedagogical, Relational, Formational and Evangelistic Education for P-16 Students (PROFEss)." *Journal of Catholic Education* 22 (2): 106–18. https://doi.org/10.15365/joce.2202062019.

Miller, J. Michael. 2006. *The Holy See's Teaching on Catholic Schools*. Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press.

NCEA (National Catholic Education Association). 2023. "Catholic School Data." https://ncea.org/NCEA/Who_We_Are/About_Catholic_Schools/Catholic_School_Data/NCEA/Who_We_Are/About_Catholic_Schools/Catholic_School_Data/Catholic_School_Data.aspx?hkey=8e90e6aa-b9c4-456b-a488-6397f3640f05.

NCES (National Center for Education Statistics). 2020. "Table 236.25. Current Expenditures for Public Elementary and Secondary Education, by State or Jurisdiction: Selected Years, 1969–70 Through 2017–18." https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_236.25.asp.

NCES (National Center for Education Statistics). 2023. "Public School Enrollment." https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/cga/public-school-enrollment#:~:text=Between%20fall%202010%20and%20fall,million%20to%2050.8%20million%20students.

O'Shea, Gerard. 2012. "Nature and Grace and the Appearance of Insincerity. Silencing the Catholic Voice." *Solidarity: The Journal of Catholic Social Thought and Secular Ethics* 2 (1): article no. 6.

O'Shea, Gerard. 2018. *Educating in Christ: A Practical Handbook for Developing the Catholic Faith from Childhood to Adolescence, for Parents, Teachers, Catechists and School Administrators*. Brooklyn, NY: Angelico Press.

Ouellet, Marc. 2015. "Co-Operators of the Truth of the Human Person." In *God and Eros: The Ethos of the Nuptial Mystery*, edited by Colin Patterson and Conor Sweeney, 212–25. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books.

Paul VI. 1965. Declaration on Christian Education *Gravissimum Educationis*. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_gravissimum-educationis_en.html.

Paul VI. 1975. Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_p-vi_exh_19751208_evangelii-nuntiandi.html.

Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization. 2020. *Directory for Catechesis*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Porter-Magee, Kathleen, Annie Smith, and Matt Klausmeier. 2022. "Catholic School Enrollment Boomed During Covid. Let's Make It More Than a One Time Bump." https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED624233#:~:text=The%202022%20NCEA%20enrollment%20results,Catholic%20elementary%20and%20secondary%20schools.

Ratzinger, Joseph. 1970. *Introduction to Christianity*. New York: Herder & Herder.

Ratzinger, Joseph. 1990. "Retrieving the Tradition: Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology." *Communio* 17 (3): 439–54.

Robinson, Gerard. 2023. "The Limits of School Choice Debate," September. https://www.aei.org/op-eds/the-limits-of-school-choice-debate/.

Romanowski, Michael H., and Hadeel Alkhateeb. 2020. "The McDonaldization of CAEP Accreditation and Teacher Education Programs Abroad." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 90: article no. 103028. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103028.

Rowland, Tracey. 2017. "Catholic Education as a Theological Project." In *Reclaiming the Piazza II: Catholic Education and the New Evangelization*, edited by Ronnie Convery, Leonard Franchi, and Raymond McCluskey. Leominster: Gracewing.

Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education. 1977. *The Catholic School*. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Taylor, James S. 1998. *Poetic Knowledge: The Recovery of Education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Thomas, David R. 2006. "A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data." *American Journal of Evaluation* 27 (2): 237–46. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748.

Todd-Smith, Laurie, and Alexandra Campana. 2022. "Teacher Education Preparation: How National Accreditation Standards Influence Teaching." *America First Policy Institute*, September. https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/20220926-teacher-education-preparation-how-national-accreditation-standards-influence-teaching.

Zech, Charles. 2016. "The Catholic School System As We Know It Must Change. Ch." *America* 215 (5). https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2016/08/18/catholic-school-system-we-know-it-must-change.

(Re)vision of Religious Education of Children and Youth in Secularized Polish Society

ANNA ZELLMA (ID)
University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, anna.zellma@uwm.edu.pl

Abstract: Rapidly progressing multifaceted secularization processes in Polish society strongly influence the shape of religious education of children and adolescents in the school environment. They determine a number of dimensions of the social and mental activity of young people. Their effects are visible, especially in the attitudes of children and youth to God, the Church, religious lessons, moral norms, and religious practices. This situation raises new challenges for the religious education of the young. Reading this as a "sign of the times," this article revises religious education in Polish schools. The need to reorganize the model of religious education lessons and to introduce changes in the curricular assumptions of religious education teaching, in student textbooks and methodological guides is pointed out. Pre-evangelization and educational activities, resignation from the mere transfer of religious knowledge, and the development of preconceived skills and attitudes are considered important. The author emphasizes the value of providing opportunities for the construction of knowledge and for the student's own engagement during religious education lessons. In this context, much attention is paid to the role of the religious education teacher, who is to be first and foremost a companion on a journey, an educator and a witness of faith, open to new challenges, able to communicate effectively with students, creative, and tolerant. The right personality traits of the religious education teacher and their multiple competencies (including communicative and interpersonal ones) play a key role in religious education. They guarantee the effectiveness of communication within a group of religious lesson participants. They foster authentic interpersonal relationships and community-building, thus meeting the natural needs of young people. In practice, they require a paradigm shift in the formation of religious education teachers.

Keywords: religious education, children, youth, secularization, religious education teacher, pre-evangelization, revision of religious education, accompanying

In the situation of the galloping secularization of the young generation of Poles, the question arises about the sense of the typically denominational character of religious education in Polish schools that is oriented toward deepening one's faith. The vast majority of participants in religious lessons – as sociological studies show – despite having been baptized in the Roman Catholic Church or having received the sacraments (e.g., Eucharist, Confirmation), do not identify themselves with the community of the Church and do not follow religious practices (Adamczyk 2020, 49–61; Boguszewski 2022, 134–48; Mariański 2022, 1–34; Zellma et al. 2022, 1142). Their level of religious knowledge is very low, and their interest in the topics of religious lessons is very weak (Buchta, Cichosz, and Zellma 2021, 650; Kiełb, Pierzchała, and Gazda 2023, 7).

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16713 255

The general and specific catechetical goals, knowledge, skills, and attitudes assumed in the core curriculum and in the programs for teaching religion in school go beyond the current religious and moral condition of students in elementary school and in secondary school: high school, technical school, and vocational school (KEP 2018; KWK KEP 2018). They assume students' faith, their interest in the topics of religious lessons, and their involvement in the development of faith. They contain overly broad issues of theological science that are typical of didactic materialism (encyclopedism). They present students with a very large amount of information in the form of unquestioned truths, rules, and norms. Students' attitudes and views, according to the program's assumptions, are to be shaped through instruction, persuasion, and showing unquestionable role models. The current religious education programs in Polish schools do not take into account the galloping secularization of Polish society. They are not adapted to the mentality of students, their religiousness, religious attitudes, and practices, or their attitude toward the Church (Adamczyk 2020, 49–66; Baniak 2022; Boguszewski and Bożewicz 2019, 31–51; Kurzydło 2022, 129–44). Therefore, the curricular assumptions for teaching religion at school discourage students and weaken their own activity. Consequently, they also contribute to a lack of personal involvement in the search for Truth, critical and creative thinking, reflection, and faith development. All this often leads to the abandonment of students' participation in systematic religious education at school and the complete abandonment of religious practice (Gwiazda 2022, 149–57; Kurzydło 2022, 33–36; Wajs 2020, 111–25; Zakrzewski 2021, 43–55; Zubrzycka-Maciąg 2021, 71–86).

Thus, the issues identified in the title of this study are cognitively and socially legitimate. The analyses undertaken are aimed at seeking answers to the following questions: what can be done to adapt the model of religious education provided at school to the galloping secularization of the younger generation? What steps should be taken to modify the model of religious education programming at school, and create new student textbooks and methodological guides? What adjustments should be made in the activities of religious teachers, their communication with students, and the fostering of interpersonal relations within the group? Where to draw creative inspiration for planning and implementing religious education adapted to the mentality of secularized students?

Qualitative research methodology was used to realize the stated research objective. The applied method involved the analysis, synthesis, and comparison of catechetical documents of the Church and the literature on the subject. The study also analyzed the available data, materials, information, and opinions on religious education at school. On this basis, key aspects were identified regarding the search for a new model of religious education for children and adolescents, which are part of the broader context of the secularization of Polish society.

1. Reorganization of the Religious Education Model in Schools

Responding to the "signs of the times," it seems crucial to abandon the current concept of religious education, which aims, among other things, at the transfer of religious knowledge from the religious teacher to the student or the development of preconceived skills and attitudes. The context outlined in the introduction gives rise to the need to provide religious education teachers with the opportunity to choose between the models of pre-evangelization, evangelization, new evangelization, and existentially oriented religious education. In the pre-evangelization model, the didactic and educational activities of the teacher revolve around accompanying students in discovering their spiritual desires and needs, sensitizing them to religious values, and demonstrating the credibility of Christianity and the Catholic Church (Mąkosa 2022, 566–68). In practice, this often serves as a preliminary stage preceding evangelization or new evangelization. What distinguishes evangelization from new evangelization in religious education is its audience. Evangelization is addressed to unbaptized and unbelieving students. It centers around proclaiming the Good News to them, encouraging them to accept the love of God, and acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Gradually, the religious education teacher can also accompany non-believing students in the development of their faith and introduce them to the Christian life and the community of the Church (Kongregacja ds. Duchowieństwa 1998, nos. 47–48; PRKNE 2020, nos. 28–30; cf. Puchalski 2022, 141–43). Rapidly progressing processes of secularization in Poland result in religious education lessons being attended by baptized students who do not live according to the requirements of baptism, have lost their living and sincere faith, are distancing themselves from the Church, and have lost the ability to listen to and understand the Gospel (cf. Kongregacja ds. Duchowieństwa 1998, no. 58; PRKNE 2020, nos. 38–41). This situation calls for courageously and creatively accompanying baptized disciples in their renewed encounter with Christ, rediscovering God's love, and responding to that love. It is no less important to accompany the disciples in their return to religious practice in the community of the Church (PRKNE 2020, no. 41; cf. Kopiczko 2022, 475–77; Tomasik 2014, 103–29). Each of the evangelization activities described above raises the need for a witness to the faith, the use of new forms and methods, new language, and zeal and creativity in the proclamation of the Gospel. On the other hand, existentially oriented religious education emphasizes contemporary human problems and the search for answers to them in the light of the Gospel (Zellma 2011, 333–46). Religious education teachers can also decide to creatively combine these models in practice (cf. Czupryński 2014, 147–61; Mąkosa 2022, 566–68; Michalski 2013, 199–210; Milerski and Zieliński 2023, 288–300; Puchalski 2022, 141–43; Zellma, Czupryński, and Tryk 2018, 39–57; Zellma 2011, 333–46; Zwierżdżyński 2016, 203–14). This choice should be dictated by the needs and experiences of a particular group of students and their existential and religious situation (PRKNE 2020,

nos. 90–109, 197–200). Particular attention deserves to be given to accompanying students in the formation of attitudes of dialogue, positive tolerance, the ability to engage in reflection, and seeking and finding one's place in different social groups – in both virtual and actual reality. It requires organizing religious education lessons in such a way that students have the opportunity to test their own ideas, develop positive thinking skills, engage in self-presentation, experience positive emotions, and learn to cope with emotions in times of crisis. Additionally, students should be equipped with skills to deal constructively with conflicts, including peer conflicts, conflicts with parents or siblings, religious conflicts, and inner conflicts. These activities are part of the educational dimension of religious education lessons at school. They are an opportunity to create a positive image of such lessons or their importance in a secularized society (Zellma 2020, 195–210).

In religious education at school, the emphasis should be on accompanying children and young people in the process of asking difficult questions, searching for the meaning of life, and discovering and constructing knowledge (Zellma 2022, 5–22). This necessitates a departure from didactic teaching in religious education that involves the transmission of religious knowledge through texts from the student's textbook or the completion of pre-made, structured worksheets. This is because such a strategy for implementing religious education at school may discourage children and young people, possibly due to its excessively formal or rigid nature. It has a demotivating effect, and does not contribute to the student's personal encounter with Christ, the transformation of their heart, and the development of their faith, nor to their interest in the subject matter of the religious education lessons. It also does not serve the understanding of the content of the faith and the internalization of values. Consequently, those responsible for the programming of religious education at school, including the teacher, face the task of searching for ways to organize lessons in such a way that the student actively participates in the process of posing problems to be solved and solving them independently, negotiating meanings and constructing new knowledge rooted in the existing knowledge (Gogolik 2016, 43–49; Zellma 2008, 16–26).

Attempts to influence students' reasoning through guided conversation, talk, lecture, explanation, and persuasion have only superficial effects (Klus-Stańska 2018, 131–66). Moreover, it demotivates the participants of religious education lessons and inhibits the processes of curiosity and creative thinking. However, it should be more important to arouse cognitive conflict and to invite each student to ask questions, to present their perspective, and to speak freely. In doing so, it is worth paying attention to students' individual developmental needs and capabilities and to the development of soft skills, especially creativity (Zellma 2007, 21–30; cf. Milerski 2023, 187–210). It is also desirable to create situations in which participants in religious education lessons can demonstrate a sense of responsibility for what and how they learn and for the skills and attitudes they develop. This, in turn, requires individualizing

the religious education process at the level of each group of students in a school. In practice, the planning of lessons in this subject at school should consist of designing teaching and learning situations in which the starting point is the questions posed by the student, their personal experience and needs, and their multifaceted and multidirectional activity (Kurzydło 2023, 4–17). The student's adopted views, beliefs, opinions, ways of understanding reality, points of view, and accumulated experiences – according to research by proponents of constructivist education – are conducive to arousing interest and motivation to engage in education and to working through new knowledge on the basis of personal knowledge (Filipiak 2015, 15–39; Kara 2019, 19–26). The religious education teacher's explanations should therefore be preceded by discussion and negotiation of meanings and spontaneous exploration in small groups. Even if the students' proposals differ from the religious education curriculum (including the assumed goals of the religious education lessons, the truths of faith, the catechism, and the teaching of the Church), there is a greater likelihood of stimulating students to reflect, exchange ideas and share their own understanding of the world, their relationship with God and the community of the Church. Students' independent attempts to act in situations of solving intriguing problems, even if they give rise to anthropological and theological contradictions and errors, are more fruitful for religious education. They provide opportunities to express one's own understanding of social and religious reality. They provide an excellent opportunity for students to ask questions, reconstruct their own opinions, views, and beliefs, and to associate the content presented by the religious education teacher with personal experience. Students' independent activities in the course of lessons also allow them to appreciate multiple perspectives in perceiving and solving certain existential problems. They stimulate children and young people to reflect on their own lifestyle, system of values, and attitude to God and the Church. Importantly, they engage students emotionally and provide opportunities to form attitudes toward the Truth and different ways of seeking it. It is only in this context that the religious education teacher should present certain religious contents showing their existential significance. Hence, planning the structure of a constructivist religion lesson does not require the precise definition of partial stages of students' work and measurable, testable outcomes (Klus-Stańska 2018, 131–66; Klus-Stańska and Kruk 2009, 457–504). It creates greater methodological and decision-making freedom for religious education teachers, including in arousing students' intrinsic motivation to ask questions and solve problems. It also provides a varied, positive experience in the course of lessons in this subject. In implementing this approach, it is worthwhile to use many forms of presentation of specific religious content or different strategies for developing skills and shaping attitudes (Filipiak 2008). Noteworthy are forms, methods, and techniques that activate students in many dimensions, based on cooperation in small teams, stimulating reflection and dialogue, and drawing conclusions from one's own findings (Simiński 2023, 41–56). They should be enriched by creating an appropriate

learning environment that is based on short films, multimedia presentations, advertising spots, TikTok videos, social media information, memes, and computer games that are interesting for students. In doing so, it is desirable to involve students in sharing their own understanding of information that has been presented through new ICT (Information and Communications Technology).

2. Reconstruction of the Model of the Curriculum for Teaching Religion in School

The model of school religion curriculum adopted in Poland is neither obvious nor undisputed.[1] As noted above, it is dominated by extensive material understood as a set of theological knowledge to be imparted to all students, regardless of their level of religious knowledge, faith development, and religiousness. The objectives described in terms of students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes and the tasks of the religious education teacher are derived from the content of curriculum entries. This approach, in view of the diverse life and religious situations of students, including the multiple influences of secularization to which students are exposed, needs to be changed. Also erroneous is the assumption of the authors of the school religious education curriculum that every issue included in this document has objective and identical relevance for all students, regardless of their life situation, religiousness, and level of faith development (Horowski 2022, 238–45). Nowadays, due to the religious diversity of the addressees of religious education lessons, as well as the environment in which they live (e.g. family, school, social media), it is necessary not only to reduce the scope of theological issues addressed, abandoning, for example, the history of the Church, a detailed discussion of the content of dogmas, analysis of biblical texts of the Old and New Testaments, discussion of the liturgical year, but also to leave more flexibility to the teacher in the process of planning and implementation of religious education. It is about not sticking uncritically to the goals and content planned in the religious education curriculum. Knowledge of the group of students, their families, and their religious and social situation gives the religious education teacher a chance to plan the objectives properly and to distribute the content accents appropriately in the annual plan for religious education in the school (Krysztofik

---

[1] It is worth mentioning that the curriculum documents for religious education at schools in Poland (core curriculum and religious education curricula) have been developed according to the assumptions of the analytical model, according to which didactic and educational activities are focused around the acquisition of knowledge. There is no room here for co-creation or critical modification of knowledge by the student. Knowledge is to be assimilated in a fixed quantity and sequence. Preference is given to encyclopedic facts, downplaying the importance of skills and abilities. For more on this type of programs, see, e.g.: Bereźnicki 2007, 131.

and Walulik 2016, 35–50). Moreover, it can contribute to the adequate choice of content to accompany the students in their holistic development. It requires respect for the principle of fidelity to God and man, while at the same time organizing religious education lessons in which students pose questions and seek answers, refer to personal knowledge, construct new knowledge, negotiate meanings, discover values and their meaning, learn through experience and teamwork, experience positive emotions, and at the same time engage in skill development and attitude formation.

The adopted content layout of the current school religious education program also needs to be changed. It has a spiral character. It is oriented towards imparting to students the totality of religious knowledge typical of the theological sciences. To this end, in the curriculum for religious education, certain content (e.g. truths of faith, moral issues, prayers) is first presented in a narrow range (e.g. in the initial classes of elementary school, religious content that is – according to the authors of the curriculum – the most easily understood and most essential, is presented). In the subsequent stages of religious education (e.g. in grades five to eight of elementary school and in secondary school), the program content is broadened and deepened with new, more complex, and complicated issues, characteristic of a compendium of theological knowledge. The plethora of typically theological issues gives rise to the need for extensive religious education textbooks, which in a secularized environment have a demotivating effect on both students and parents. They are inadequate to the needs, interests, and level of religious involvement of students and their parents. A change of approach to religious education programming therefore seems necessary. This entails moving away from didactic materialism in the approach to teaching religious content. Instead, it is beneficial to emphasize, for instance, the kerygma, presenting the diverse elements of faith in a communicative manner that resonates with the experiences of the students, all while considering their existential and religious situations (PRKNE 2020, nos. 144–47). Additional adjustments to the content, specifically tailored to the needs of a particular group of students, are also recommended. There should be an increased focus on aspects such as Christian identity, the real-life challenges faced by participants in religious lessons, religious pluralism, fostering positive tolerance, promoting dialogue, exploring selected social and moral issues, delving into ecumenism, and examining the intricate relationship between faith and culture, as well as science and religion (PRKNE 2020, 313–18; cf. Milerski 2023, 187–210; Przybylska and Wajsprych 2020, 202–13; Zellma, Buchta, and Cichosz 2022, 223–37). In view of the accelerated development of students in the biological sphere and the lowering of the age of sexual initiation, some content on the ethics of sexual, marital, and family life should be moved from the final grades of secondary school to the fifth, sixth, seventh and eighth grades of elementary school. In this shift, it is recommended that there is a sound correlation with the content of family life education classes which take Christian anthropology as their starting point.

The decision to abandon a detailed program for religious education is justified by the autonomy that religious instruction maintains in substantive matters compared to the school ("Załącznik do obwieszczenia Ministra Edukacji Narodowej" 2020, item 983; KEP 2001, no. 82). Religious curricula and textbooks are not subject to approval by the school principal; they are simply made known to them (KEP 2001, no. 82). The Church holds substantive supervision over the teaching of religion, approving religious instruction programs and textbooks, and determining the goals and objectives of the school that should be implemented in religious instruction lessons ("Załącznik do obwieszczenia Ministra Edukacji Narodowej" 2020, item 983; KEP 2001, no. 82). Given the diverse needs, interests, expectations, and religiousness of student groups, it is valuable to develop a framework curriculum and programs for teaching religion. Meanwhile, teachers of religion should be encouraged to be more independent and creative in selecting curricular content tailored to the specific needs of their student groups.

3. The Shape of Students' Books and Methodological Guides

The approach to student textbooks and methodological guides for the religious education teacher also needs to change. It is worth emphasizing once again that the autonomy of religious education in the selection of textbooks and teaching materials allows for a departure from a highly formalized approach to this issue (KEP 2001, no. 82). It is desirable for the teachers of this subject to utilize a diverse array of print and digital sources in religious education. Traditional textbooks only serve a template-based, linear, "step-by-step" implementation of the religious education curriculum. As a consequence, they cause weariness and discouragement and demotivate students from active participation in the lesson. They require a change in both the form and the volume of their content. Hence, traditional student textbooks should be replaced with modest free e-books, e-notebooks, or e-calendars developed to meet the needs of contemporary students, using, for example, an iPad in religious education lessons (Bilicka and Gurzyński 2019). In the higher grades of elementary and secondary school, it is worth replacing textbooks with free apps that students can download to their phones. A portfolio or e-portfolio that each student keeps as part of religious education is also worthy of consideration. It should be up to the religious education teacher to choose the appropriate teaching aid for the student. There is therefore a need for greater freedom for the teacher in the selection of such educational materials. Moreover, it would be worthwhile for publishers of religious education textbooks to create free, continuously updated educational resources and platforms for teachers of this subject to exchange teaching experiences online. The proposed changes require more work from teachers – e.g. time to prepare

materials for a specific group of students. Creativity in thinking and acting, as well as appropriate, high-level content and methodological competencies, are also desirable. This, in turn, raises new challenges for the training and professional development of religious education teachers. However, only such a methodological approach seems to meet the intellectual, emotional, and religious needs of children and adolescents and the challenges of an ever-changing educational reality.

4. Reorganization of the Professional Role of the Religious Education Teacher in the School Environment

The current secularization of Polish society also implies changes concerning the role of the religious education teacher. Their task is no longer to be focused on providing students with religious knowledge, deepening their faith, guiding their thinking, and shaping their religious attitudes. They are to be, above all, a credible, inwardly free, dedicated, a selfless "witness of faith and keeper of the memory of God …, a witness of new life and a sign for others … and an accompanier and educator" (PRKNE 2020, no. 113). Their priority is to build, in the course of religious instruction, a community of learners, developing their social skills and competencies. Hence, in the basic and ongoing formation of religious education teachers, educational competencies, including psychological knowledge and skills, should be valued. These include, among others, the ability to respect the freedom of the student, unconditional acceptance, selflessness, the ability to listen actively, empathy, patience with students in their daily experiences, readiness to accept difficult questions and face different life situations (PRKNE 2020, no. 135; cf. Zellma 2022, 5–22). The methodological competencies of the religious education teacher should also be considered essential. These include, among other things, "the ability to present the story of salvation in a vital way so that the interlocutors feel part of it; … the readiness to build mature relationships with others and the ability to lead the group in such a way as to stimulate both individual and communal learning processes" (PRKNE 2020, no. 149). The ability to develop a realistic plan for the implementation of religious education in school, corresponding to the socio-cultural circumstances, seems to be crucial in this respect. It requires creativity in thought and action and the ability to use contemporary, typical ways of communicating with students using digital techniques and tools (PRKNE 2020, no. 149).

5. Seeking Ways to Communicate Effectively with Students

In view of the secularization processes among students and their parents, it is also worth rethinking the issues of interpersonal communication in religious education. Particular attention should be paid to the language used by the religious education teacher or by the authors of student textbooks. In typical educational activities, it is necessary to know both the dynamics of non-violent communication and the ability to use the so-called "giraffe language." It helps to carry out evangelistic and educational tasks in the school environment. The linguistic convention for preaching the salvation story, explaining the truths of faith and moral norms also needs to change. Desirable here is the language of narrative understood as the means by which the students comprehend and express themselves and the reality around them and give meaning to what they experience (PRKNE 2020, no. 207). The language of narrative engages the entire person, that is, the cognitive, emotional, and volitional dimensions, stimulating holistic development (PRKNE 2020, no. 208). The teacher of religion should use this kind of language, especially when telling, based on Scripture, the story of salvation. Such language, in a special way, "lends itself to conveying the message of faith in a culture increasingly poor in deep and effective models of communication" (PRKNE 2020, no. 208). The need to use the language of art, including paintings and musical pieces, especially those of interest to students, should also be recognized. The language of art can help to pre-evangelize students. Used appropriately in religious education, it generates positive feelings and desires. It can help to experience an encounter with God through contemplation of the beauty of images. Moreover, the language of art provides an opportunity to directly explore different aspects of the truths of faith and to better know and understand the events of salvation history. It also generates positive feelings, which is important in the internalization of the presented faith content. Also, musical pieces and theatrical productions with the active participation of students can reinforce evangelizing and educational activities in religious education. They arouse positive emotions and desires, engage internally and externally, and at the same time are a particularly attractive vehicle for faith content for young people (PRKNE 2020, nos. 209–12).

The secularization of Polish society also gives rise to the need to value digital language and tools in the religious education of children and young people. Indeed, students are rooted in the virtual world (PCPNE 2020, no. 216). They learn about news and acquire information or form and express opinions, views, and beliefs based on the Internet, especially social media. In the digital space, they spend most of their free time, having discussions, asking questions, and seeking answers (PCPNE 2020, no. 214). It is therefore important that, as far as possible, the religious education teacher should be present in this reality, interacting with students in it, and bearing witness to Gospel values (PCPNE 2020, nos. 215–17). What happens in the virtual community can provide a starting point for discussions during religious education

lessons. It also plays an important role in the direct interactions of students with each other and with the teacher. Indeed, the digital space has a strong influence on the way young people perceive themselves, others, and the Church. It gives rise to certain emotions, which it is useful to refer to in direct communication (e.g. in the class) in order to support students in dealing with them appropriately. Hence, while valuing information and communication technologies, social media, and digital tools in knowledge sharing, cooperation, collaboration, and exchange of experiences, the religious education teacher must not forget to establish, maintain, and develop direct interpersonal contacts.

6. Valuing Interpersonal Relationships and Building a Community

Current social, cultural, and religious changes often create a sense of loneliness among children and young people (Kozak, Bielecki, and Rzeczkowski 2023). They lead to the non-fulfillment of basic needs for connection with others and building authentic bonds, especially the need for belonging, community, closeness, direct contact, being seen, understood, and taken into account, group strength, and cooperation. They often lead to various types of addictions, depression, self-harm, eating disorders (anorexia, bulimia, orthorexia), and suicide attempts (Araucz-Boruc 2023, 5–22; Kozak, Bielecki, and Rzeczkowski 2023). The religious education teacher's concern for building authentic relationships within the group of participants in religious education lessons, based on trust, openness, empathy, sincerity, and love, has not only educational but also evangelistic significance. It reinforces the process of accompanying students in the experience of a community that satisfies basic psychological needs and is a space for holistic personal development. It can lead to the discovery of the meaning of belonging to the Church. It also helps students to open up to God's grace and grow in faith (PRKNE 2020, nos. 218–20). Hence, changes are needed that would increase the involvement of religious education teachers in building community within the group of participants in religious education at school. Moreover, knowing the group dynamics, it is useful to use these changes to create a space for students to experience authentic relationships with their peers, and to foster a sense of identification with and belonging to the group. This experience is the starting point in accompanying students to discover the community of the Church, which is the appropriate place to discover the salvific message, share it with others, interiorize the content of the faith, and participate in the celebration of the sacraments (PRKNE 2020, no. 220). Hence, in revising religious education programs in schools, everything that would serve community-building should be valued, both at the level of the goals and the content and means of implementation. Noteworthy issues here are, for example, establishing and building positive relationships with peers, recognizing

one's own needs and learning the skills to express and meet them, building self-esteem, active listening, constructive conflict resolution, cooperation in a group, resilience to stress, the ability to learn actively, personal culture. At the same time, leading students to an encounter with Christ must not be forgotten.

What is needed here is a reliable correlation of religious education at school with parish catechesis, provided not only in connection with preparation for the sacraments of Christian initiation. It is the parish that is the appropriate place for faith education, for formation inspired by the catechumenate, for the revival and deepening of faith, or for formation in ecclesial movements, groups, and communities.

Conclusions

The analyses undertaken are only a voice in a broader discussion. They show the directions of necessary changes in the programming and implementation of religious education of children and youth in secularized Polish society. They require in-depth theoretical and empirical research. There is no doubt that modification of the existing curricular assumptions and the style and manner of teaching religious education lessons is necessary. It is difficult to imagine the further development of religious education for children and young people in Poland without new solutions that will take into account the secularization of contemporary Polish society. Moreover, the processes of secularization in Poland can motivate the renewal of religious education of children and youth. They imply the need to open up to a new quality of life for students and their new ways of value attribution. They require transcending previous models of teaching religion and changing the style of thinking and acting of religious education teachers in the school environment. For this to occur, a space needs to be created for a constructive debate among all those responsible for and involved in the religious education of the young in Poland. This, in turn, raises the need for the involvement of bishops, priests, and catechists in overcoming difficulties and resistance to the new model of programming and implementation of religious education in Polish schools. It is also worth remembering that the implementation of the proposed solutions is possible only with professionally prepared religious education teachers continuously formed by the Church. It requires a change of perspective on the ministry of religious education teachers in the school environment. This, in turn, raises the need for a renewal of the initial and ongoing formation of teachers of this subject. Concrete efforts should be undertaken to educate and improve the pedagogical and catechetical training of teachers so that those responsible for such activities do not so much transmit knowledge as co-create a space for its discovery, and sharing experience. It is crucial to support teachers of religion in becoming increasingly self-aware, in discovering the essence of their vocation to be teachers,

educators, and witnesses of faith, and in strengthening their vocation to be prophets in today's secular society.

Bibliography

Adamczyk, Tomasz. 2020. *Autentyczność i duchowość: Księża w opinii polskiej młodzieży: Analiza socjologiczna*. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL.

Araucz-Boruc, Agnieszka. 2023. "Społeczeństwo młodych zagrożone suicydogennie." *Polityka i Społeczeństwo* 21 (1): 5–22. https://doi.org/10.15584/polispol.2023.1.1.

Baniak, Józef. 2022. *Religijność i moralność młodzieży polskiej w latach 1956–2018 na tle przemian cywilizacyjnych i społecznych: Studium socjologiczne*. Poznań: Wydawnictwo Nauk Społecznych i Humanistycznych UAM.

Bereźnicki, Franciszek. 2007. *Dydaktyka kształcenia ogólnego*. 2nd ed. Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls."

Bilicka, Beata, and Michał Gurzyński. 2019. *iPad na szkolnych lekcjach religii*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

Boguszewski, Rafał. 2022. "Religijność młodzieży." In *Młodzież 2021*, edited by Mirosława Grabowska and Magdalena Gwiazda, 134–48. Opinie i Diagnozy – Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej 49. Warszawa: Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

Boguszewski, Rafał, and Marta Bożewicz. 2019. "Religijność i moralność polskiej młodzieży – zależność czy autonomia?" *Zeszyty Naukowe Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego Jana Pawła II* 62 (4): 31–52. https://doi.org/10.31743/zn.2019.62.4.02.

Buchta, Roman, Wojciech Cichosz, and Anna Zellma. 2021. "Religious Education in Poland during the COVID-19 Pandemic from the Perspective of Religion Teachers of the Silesian Voivodeship." *Religions* 12 (8): article no. 650. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12080650.

Czupryński, Wojsław. 2014. "Od akcji duszpasterskich do stałej formacji uczniów Jezusa." *Studia Katechetyczne* 10: 147–61.

Filipiak, Ewa, ed. 2008. *Rozwijanie zdolności uczenia się: Wybrane konteksty i problemy*. Bydgoszcz: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Kazimierza Wielkiego.

Filipiak, Ewa. 2015. "Budowanie rusztowania dla myślenia i uczenia się dzieci w perspektywie społeczno-kulturowej teorii Lwa S. Wygotskiego." In *Nauczanie rozwijające we wczesnej edukacji według Lwa S. Wygotskiego. Od teorii do zmiany w praktyce*, edited by Ewa Filipiak, 15–36. Bydgoszcz: ArtStudio.

Gogolik, Mirosław. 2016. "Neurodydaktyka w edukacji religijnej." *Język. Religia. Tożsamość*, no. 2: 37–50.

Gwiazda, Magdalena. 2022. "Religia w szkole – uczestnictwo i ocena." In *Młodzież 2021*, edited by Mirosława Grabowska and Magdalena Gwiazda, 149–57. Opinie i Diagnozy – Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej 49. Warszawa: Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

Horowski, Jarosław. 2022. "Religion Lesson in Schools in Poland – the Subject of Dispute and the Unused Potential." *British Journal of Religious Education* 44 (3): 238–45. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2021.2024341.

Kara, Merve. 2019. "A Systematic Literature Review: Constructivism in Multidisciplinary Learning Environments." *International Journal of Academic Research in Education* 4 (1–2): 19–26. https://doi.org/10.17985/ijare.520666.

KEP (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski [Polish Bishops' Conference]). 2001. *Dyrektorium kate-chetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM.

KEP (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski [Polish Bishops' Conference]). 2018. *Podstawa programowa katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*. Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła.

Kiełb, Dominik, Michał Pierzchała, and Marcin Gazda. 2023. "Youth Attitudes towards Religious Education in Poland." *Religions* 14 (1): article no. 7. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010007.

Klus-Stańska, Dorota. 2018. *Paradygmaty dydaktyki: Myśleć teorią o praktyce*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN.

Klus-Stańska, Dorota, and Jolanta Kruk. 2009. "Tworzenie warunków dla rozwojowej zmiany poznawczej i konstruowania wiedzy przez dziecko." In *Pedagogika wczesnoszkolna: dyskursy, problemy, rozwiązania*, edited by Dorota Klus-Stańska and Maria Szczepska-Pustkowska, 457–504. Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne.

Kongregacja ds. Duchowieństwa. 1998. *Dyrektorium ogólne o katechizacji*. Poznań: Pallottinum.

Kopiczko, Tomasz. 2022. "Nowa ewangelizacja." In *Leksykon katechetyczny*, edited by Jan Kochel and Jerzy Kostorz, 475–77. Kielce: Jedność.

Kozak, Agnieszka, Robert Bielecki, and Marcin Rzeczkowski. 2023. *Nastolatek potrzebuje wsparcia: Zrozum swoje dziecko i bądź po jego stronie*. Gliwice: Sensus.

Krysztofik, Janusz, and Anna Walulik. 2016. "Edukacja religijna i jej miejsce w ponowoczesności." *Studia Katechetyczne* 12: 35–50.

Kurzydło, Dariusz. 2022. "Nowi adresaci katechezy." *Studia Katechetyczne* 17: 129–44. https://doi.org/10.21697/sk.2021.17.8.

Kurzydło, Dariusz. 2023. "Po co (nam) lekcja religii? Stosunek młodzieży do nauczania religii w szkole." *Edukacja* 164 (1): 4–17.

KWK KEP (Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski [Committee on Catholic Education of the Polish Bishops' Conference]). 2018. *Program nauczania religii rzymskokatolickiej w przedszkolach i szkołach*. Częstochowa: Święty Paweł.

Mariański, Janusz. 2022. "Religijność młodzieży szkół średnich w procesie przemian (2015–2022) – analiza socjologiczna." *Chowanna* 59: 1–34.

Mąkosa, Paweł. 2022. "Preewangelizacja." In *Leksykon katechetyczny*, edited by Jan Kochel and Jerzy Kostorz, 566–68. Kielce: Jedność.

Michalski, Jarosław. 2013. "W kierunku nowego modelu współczesnej edukacji religijnej." *Paedagogia Christiana* 31 (1): 199–210. https://doi.org/10.12775/pch.2013.012.

Milerski, Bogusław. 2023. "Religious Education in a Public School between Religious Particularism and General Education. Comparative Analysis." *Studia z Teorii Wychowania* 14 (3): 187–210. https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0053.9204.

Milerski, Bogusław, and Tadeusz J. Zieliński. 2023. "Religion in a World-View Neutral School. Challenges on the Example of Poland." *British Journal of Religious Education* 45 (3): 288–300. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2022.2049208.

PCPNE (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization). 2020. *Directory for Catechesis*. London: Catholic Truth Society.

PRKNE (Papieska Rada ds. Krzewienia Nowej Ewangelizacji [Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization]). 2020. *Dyrektorium o katechizacji*. Kielce: Jedność.

Przybylska, Ewa, and Danuta Wajsprych. 2020. "Social Worlds and Religious Education in Poland: Towards the Elimination of Disharmony." *British Journal of Religious Education* 42 (2): 202–13. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2018.1556601.

Puchalski, Grzegorz. 2022. "Ewangelizacja a katecheza." In *Leksykon katechetyczny*, edited by Jan Kochel and Jerzy Kostorz, 141–44. Kielce: Jedność.

Simiński, Łukasz. 2023. "Formy organizacyjne nauczania religii na podstawie badań własnych." *Edukacja* 164 (1): 41–56.

Tomasik, Piotr. 2014. "Ewangelizacyjne formy katechezy w kontekście wezwania do nawrócenia." *Studia Theologica Varsaviensia* 52 (2): 103–29.

Wajs, Piotr. 2020. "Rezygnacja z katechezy szkolnej jako przejaw laicyzacji społeczeństwa." *Społeczeństwo* 30 (4): 89–99.

Zakrzewski, Grzegorz. 2021. "Nauczanie religii w szkołach ponadpodstawowych szansą na dotarcie do młodych z orędziem Jezusa?" *Studia Katechetyczne* 15: 43–55.

"Załącznik do obwieszczenia Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 28 maja 2020 r. (poz. 983) [Appendix to the Announcement of the Minister of National Education of May 28, 2020, item 983], Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 14 kwietnia 1992 r. w sprawie warunków i sposobu organizowania nauki religii w publicznych przedszkolach i szkołach." 2020. *Dziennik Ustaw*, June, poz. 983.

Zellma, Anna. 2007. "Kreatywność w myśleniu i działaniu uczestników szkolnych lekcji religii – moda czy konieczność edukacyjna?" *Katecheta* 51 (7–8): 21–30.

Zellma, Anna. 2008. "Konstruktywizm w szkolnym nauczaniu religii – moda, wymóg edukacyjny czy zagrożenie?" *Katecheta* 52 (3): 16–26.

Zellma, Anna. 2011. "Egzystencjalny wymiar nauczania religii w świetle nowych dokumentów programowych." *Łódzkie Studia Teologiczne* 20 (1): 333–46.

Zellma, Anna. 2020. "Kreowanie wizerunku zawodowego nauczyciela religii w wybranej prasie internetowej." *Studia Warmińskie* 57: 195–210. https://doi.org/10.31648/sw.4777.

Zellma, Anna. 2022. "Accompanying the Catechised in Their Holistic Development." *Roczniki Teologiczne* 69, no. 11: 5–22. https://doi.org/10.18290/rt226911.1.

Zellma, Anna, Roman Buchta, and Wojciech Cichosz. 2022. Zellma, Anna, Wojsław Czupryński, and Hubert Tryk. 2018. *Rekolekcje szkolne jako forma ewangelizacji dzieci, młodzieży i dorosłych*. Olsztyn: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego.

Zellma, Anna, Andrzej Michał Kielian, Wojsław Wojciech Czupryński, and Monique van Dijk-Groeneboer. 2022. "Religiousness of Young People in Poland as a Challenge to Catholic Education: Analyses Based on a Survey." *Religions* 13 (12): article no. 1142. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13121142.

Zubrzycka-Maciąg, Teresa. 2021. "Oczekiwania młodzieży względem lekcji religii w szkole średniej – raport z badań." *Roczniki Teologiczne* 68 (11): 71–86. https://doi.org/10.18290/rt216811–5.

Zwierżdżyński, Marcin K. 2016. "Modele edukacji religijnej w szkole." In *Globalny i lokalny wymiar religii: Polska w kontekście europejskim*, edited by Irena Borowik, Andrzej Górny, and Wojciech Świątkiewicz, 203–14. Kraków: Nomos.

Optimising Religious Education in Poland in the Age of Secularisation

PAWEŁ MĄKOSA (iD)
The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, pawel.makosa@kul.pl

Abstract: The dynamic secularisation of Polish young people and the fact that many of them are opting out of religious classes prompts a critical analysis of the current model of Religious Education and the development of proposals that respond to contemporary socio-cultural challenges. In others words this article will seek to outline potential directions for modifying the current Religious Education model intended for secondary school students in Poland. This paper attempts to provide a synthetic answer to the following questions: Why is Religious Education in secondary schools today not leading to the expected results? What elements of it are inadequate for contemporary conditions? What should the model of Religious Education for young people look like in the context of a decline in religiousness? Where and how should catechesis be provided? This paper contributes to the discussion on the shape of Religious Education for young people in a changing society.
Keywords: Religious Education, catechesis, youth, secularisation, Catholic Church

The dynamic secularisation of Polish youth is confirmed by numerous studies (Mariański 2018; CBOS 2021; Boguszewski 2022; Mariański 2022; Adamczyk 2023), which makes it an indisputable fact and the trend can no longer be ignored. In addition to the weakening of religiousness, one of its manifestations is the widespread resignation of young people from religious classes, especially in the largest cities (Zakrzewski 2021; Mąkosa, Zając, and Zakrzewski 2022). In addition to the multidimensional processes of secularisation, which are, as it were, a constitutive feature of postmodern societies (Gabriel 2002), the reasons for the withdrawal from religious lessons also include the concept behind such lessons which does not meet the expectations of students and their parents or the expectations of religious teachers and catechists, or even those of ecclesiastical authorities. Profound changes are therefore needed in the concept of Religious Education in Polish schools, especially as far as secondary education is concerned, since it is in these environments that the greatest crisis is noted (cf. Zellma, Buchta, and Cichosz 2021). Indeed, it could be argued that maintaining the *status quo* risks the complete breakdown of this form of education. It should be added that some research confirms that many students also support altering the concept and practice of Religious Education in schools (Milerski and Karwowski 2023, 94; Kiełb, Pierzchała, and Gazda 2023). This article will attempt to develop potential directions for changes to the current model of Religious Education aimed at secondary school students. First, however, an analysis of current

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16846 271

assumptions of Religious Education will be presented and an attempt will be made to answer the question of why they do not work in today's cultural context.

1. The Assumptions of the Current Model of Religious Education

The model of Religious Education currently implemented in Poland can be described not only as confessional (denominational) but also as catechetical (Mąkosa 2015, 60). Such an assumption stems primarily from historical factors, as emphasised by the authors of the 2001 *Directory for Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland,* stating that "In the Polish conditions, taking into account the historical factors and the catechetical tradition which has been consolidated over the last decades, school teaching of religion should be treated as part of catechesis, i.e. as a specific form of catechesis" (KEP 2001, 82). The aforementioned regulations mean that Religious Education is treated as one of the forms of catechesis. In theory, systematic catechesis of children and young people should also be held in the parish and the Church's documents take the view that the parish is "the most significant place for catechesis" (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, 257; cf. Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 298–303). Polish parishes most often deliver only sacramental catechesis, although even in this respect the parish often delegates responsibilities to the school. In practice, therefore, Religious Education in school is the most common form of catechesis and, in many settings, even the only one.

For the above reasons, the current model of Religious Education (RE) in Polish schools is regarded as catechesis, which in its essence is education "of children, young people and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted, generally speaking, in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life" (*CT* 18; *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1992, 5). Consequently, Religious Education understood in this way attempts to fulfil the aims and objectives of catechesis. It is worth recalling, therefore, that the definitive aim of catechesis is "to put people not only in touch but in communion, in intimacy, with Jesus Christ" (*CT* 5). The achievement of this aim presupposes, in turn, the realisation of all the tasks and functions of catechesis. The 2020 *Directory for Catechesis* identifies the following tasks of catechesis: to lead to knowledge of the faith (Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization 2020, 80), to initiate into the celebration of the Mystery (2020, 81–82), to form for life in Christ (2020, 83–85), to teach prayer (2020, 81–82) and to introduce to community life (2020, 81–82) (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, 85–86; Rayzacher-Majewska 2021). In other words, it is about the implementation of the main functions of catechesis, which include teaching, education and initiation (Congregation for the Clergy 1971, 31). The current model of Religious Education in Poland is

therefore primarily concerned with deepening personal faith, prayer, sacramental life and adherence to Catholic moral principles.

The above assumptions are reflected in the current curriculum documents, the *Core Curriculum for Catechesis* (KEP 2018) and in the Religious Education curricula, including the most widespread *Curriculum for Religious Education* of 2018 (KWK KEP 2018). As envisaged in these documents, each student should not only assimilate relevant content and acquire certain skills but also develop religious attitudes. For example, the *Core Curriculum for Catechesis*, in its objectives for secondary school, stipulates that the students "take care of the development of their own faith" (2018, 101), "develop in themselves an attitude of faith and trust in God" (2018, 101), "believe in the presence of the Guardian Angel and pray to him" (2018, 102), "develop devotion to Mary the Mother of God and a maternal relationship with Her" (2018, 103). Even though the attitudes described in the curriculum documents are not to be assessed, they show a conception of Religious Education in Poland that is very close to catechesis or even identified with it.

Since the very reintroduction of RE to schools in 1990, the Church on its part, and therefore in practice the Commission for Catholic Education of Polish Bishops' Conference and each diocesan bishop, has decided on the programmes and textbooks used for RE in schools. One of the main guidelines for the content of Catholic Religious Education is to analyse the entire deposit of faith in both primary and secondary school, obviously in a way that is adapted to the students' perceptive abilities. At the same time, RE teachers can only be employed in schools on condition that they receive a special referral from the bishop, the so-called canonical mission (MEN 1992). In addition to requiring Religious Education teachers to have a degree in Catholic theology. The Catholic Church also makes it a condition for them to lead a life in accordance with the doctrine and morals of the Church. Every RE teacher is obliged to be not only a teacher and educator but also a witness to the faith and to lead an active life in the Church (KEP 2001, 150).

In summary, according to the current assumptions, Religious Education in Polish schools is a form of catechesis and, like any catechesis, by its very nature, is intended for Catholics who wish to deepen their knowledge of Catholic teaching and the personal faith they wish to experience in the Catholic Church. Other Churches and religious communities also have analogous assumptions. Current surveys of religiousness, however, show that such participants in religion classes are increasingly difficult to find and that less and less percentage of young people meet these assumptions. Consequently, it is unrealistic to realise the aims, objectives and functions of catechesis in a strict sense. Therefore, there is a growing disappointment with the RE in Poland, as catechetical and even evangelising goals are achieved with little or no success.

2. Selected Features of the New Model of Religious Education

It can therefore be asserted with confidence that the current model of Religious Education in Poland does not work and needs to be changed. This is particularly true for secondary school students, who largely disapprove of the current curricular approach of this school subject, and express this by opting out of it. It is therefore becoming necessary to develop a new model for RE in Poland, especially aimed at young people. In line with the search for this new model, this article will propose its selected features synthetically.

2.1. Maintaining Confessional Character of Re

The main premise of the proposal presented here is to preserve the confessional character of Religious Education in Poland (Chrostowski 2020, 43). In the context of present-day hyperpluralism and also the increasingly sharp ideological dispute in Polish society, it should be left to the Churches and other religious communities to develop their own curricula and textbooks and to decide who can teach religion on their behalf. Indeed, it must not be forgotten that the basis of Religious Education in public schools is the principle of subsidiarity, according to which the state is obliged to assist parents in the upbringing of their children, including in its religious dimension. Giving the state the competence to determine the RE curriculum could lead to a breach of this fundamental principle and an attempt to impose a curriculum contrary to the views of parents. This danger is not merely theoretical, as it has already occurred in other countries.[1] The imposition of the educational monopoly of the state in this matter was explicitly called by John Paul II a form of totalitarianism (*EA* 71). Religious Education in Poland should therefore remain confessional, especially with regard to the content and qualifications of religion teachers.

2.2. Resigning from the Catechetical Initiatory Function

However, the proposal to preserve the denominational character of Religious Education in Poland does not mean that all the tasks and functions of catechesis should be fulfilled. This point applies especially to the initiatory function of catechesis. Indeed, it is clear that in a situation in which an increasing proportion of young people are not committed and practising Catholics, the implementation of this function does not make sense. It is therefore a matter of realising that in the present-day school, it is not possible, or even legitimate, to carry out catechesis and especially the catechetical initiatory function. In practice, this mainly means abandoning the joint recitation of

---

[1]   This refers e.g. to the so-called *Danish Sex Education Case,* when parents had to send their children to classes with which they disagreed. Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights of December 7, 1976.

prayers, the use of celebratory methods (in the form of worship services) and even the intensive encouragement of young people to participate in the liturgy and sacramental life (cf. Milerski 1998, 301). This is because it is clear that religious practices should be an expression of faith and it is difficult to suggest participation in such practices to secularised students who consider themselves non-believers.

While catechesis in school had already faced criticism, evangelisation or an evangelising catechesis was most often proposed in its place, in which evangelisation would precede and accompany catechesis (Offmański 1996; 2000; Szpet 2002). However, the present proposal implies the abandonment not only of catechesis but also of evangelisation in the strict sense. In fact, evangelisation is the proclamation of the Christian kerygma in a way that calls for conversion (Paciorek 2000, 1360–61) and therefore pursues not only strictly denominational objectives but also initiatory and catechumenal ones. Schools, especially state schools, do not seem an appropriate place for evangelisation (Misiaszek 2002). Such activities in state schools are also increasingly failing and can face accusations of proselytising (Francis 2016). In addition, many of today's young people do not want to be evangelised and doing so against their will would violate their freedom and would not have the expected effect.

2.3. Communicating Knowledge about One's Own Religion and Belief

The main feature of the proposed model of Religious Education is the focus on the provision of religious knowledge, but this should be done from the perspective of the Church or other religious organisation that is responsible for RE. Furthermore, in confessional terms, the content of Religious Education at school should be most concerned with knowledge of that particular religious community. With regard to Catholic religion classes, this is about providing information about the Christianity and Catholicism. However, the selection of the content for such religious classes is crucial. Current curriculum documents assume the integrity of the communication of catechetical content and that the entire deposit of the Catholic faith will be discussed three times during school education. In other words, it is assumed that all the content of, among other sources, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will be covered, including the following areas: the confession of faith; the celebration of the Christian mystery (liturgy); life in Christ (morality); and Christian prayer. In line with current assumptions, the deposit of faith should be discussed at different levels of detail and intellectual capacity, adapted to the perceptive abilities of the pupils. In other words, current curricular assumptions for Religious Education are dominated by extensive material that presents theological content to be taught to all students. However, due to the dynamic changes in the faith and religiousness of young people described above, it seems that the transmission of the entire deposit of faith is not feasible. Nor does it seem necessary at this stage of learning about Christianity and Catholicism. It is therefore necessary to select the content discussed in religion

classes and to impart only that which will enable students to learn (or recall) the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, the origins of Christianity and its pillars. Therefore, it is worthwhile not only to reduce the scope of the issues covered, abandoning, among other things, a detailed discussion of the history of dogmas, and a detailed analysis of the liturgical year, but also to leave more freedom for the religion teacher to choose the content so that it can be adapted to the students.

Among the specific issues that seem particularly relevant in today's cultural context, one can point to the historicity of the person of Jesus Christ and his resurrection. Showing the facts that confirm the existence of Jesus is the starting point for further analysis. In turn, the historicity of Jesus' resurrection gives credence to the Christian religion (Rusecki 2001, 45; Seweryniak 2001, 100). A confessional Religious Education would also need to discuss the specific nature and credibility of the Catholic Church (Canizares 2007, 741). It is also imperative to incorporate teachings about religious experiences. This is because religion is not merely a theoretical and abstract perspective but rather a tangible means of influencing and molding one's life (Schreiner 2019, 53). The aforementioned topics have a pre-evangelising dimension and can draw students towards Christianity and Catholicism, but this cannot be assumed, especially against their will. However, they undoubtedly represent an elementary body of knowledge that students should acquire.

2.4. Communicating Knowledge about Other Religions and Beliefs

Understandably, in the confessional conception of Religious Education, most of the content is devoted to the religion that decides about the curricular assumptions. However, the knowledge imparted to young people should also include other religions and faiths, especially those that are present in the young people's everyday environment (Barnes and Davis 2015; Hejwosz-Gromkowska 2020, 92–93). The idea is that the students should not only know their own religion but also have a basic knowledge of other Christian denominations, i.e. Orthodoxy, Protestantism, Pentecostal movements and the main non-Christian religions, i.e. Islam and Judaism or Hinduism and Buddhism. This knowledge, in addition to its intrinsic value, can and should overcome various stereotypes, build dialogue and attitudes of tolerance and cooperation (Rybicki, Mąkosa, and Mazur 2022; cf. Chrostowski and Kropač 2023, 165; Różańska 2015). Of course, in a confessional approach, the material on other religions need not be as detailed as that on one's own religion. However, as part of their Religious Education, students should learn about the fundamental truths of the faith, moral principles and forms of worship, including the festivals celebrated in other religions.

The communication of knowledge, both about one's own religion and about other denominations, is directly in line with the basic objectives of the public education system and its beneficiaries are all students, regardless of their religiousness.

However, it is important that religious knowledge is communicated with reference to the latest findings in biblical, theological, historical, biological, psychological, and social research, as well as research in other fields. In this context, it is worth remembering that religious knowledge should be conveyed in connection with other fields of knowledge and other school subjects (Tomasik 2004, 296–328; 2003, 128). In particular, it is about shaping an integral vision of the world that is free of the opposition between faith and reason, religion and science, Church and world, ect. (Lange 1991, 241; Misiaszek 2004, 300; Muskus 1999, 102). It is also a matter of ensuring that "religious instruction in schools [should] appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines. [...] It should not be an accessory alongside of these disciplines, but rather it should engage in a necessary inter-disciplinary dialogue" (Congregation for the Clergy 1997, 73).

2.5. Helping to Solve Existential Problems

Education, both in its individual and social dimensions, should also be an important function of religious instruction in postmodern society (Chałupniak 2003, 188–89). With regard to the individual dimension, religious education lessons should primarily help young people in their search for answers to fundamental existential questions, such as questions about their own identity, the meaning of life, love and suffering, ect. (Wadowski 1999, 138; Bagrowicz 2000, 178).

The help offered by Religious Education in answering existential questions seems particularly relevant today in the face of frequent low self-esteem, depression, self-harm, addiction and even suicide among young people. Indeed, it is clear that finding a sense of one's own existence "is a condition for proper development and becomes essential for normal functioning" (Mendyk 2014, 144–45). Religious Education at school can and should, in this respect, first and foremost show the undeniable and unique dignity and value of every human being that results from that dignity, and also help interpret negative experiences, such as lack of self-acceptance, loneliness, illness, suffering, death, etc. In this respect, it would be useful to refer not only to psychology or pedagogy but also to theology. Indeed, religious argumentation is extremely important for believers, and for non-believers it provides additional knowledge about the Christian approach to human problems and experiences and can prompt personal reflection on oneself and the world. As early as the 1960s, Pierre Babin argued that the main task of teaching religion is to help people discover their own identity, the meaning of life and the world (Babin 1965, 46). These words seem particularly relevant today.

It should not be forgotten that among the questions of the youth, there is also the question about God, about his existence, providence, omnipotence, mercy, justice etc. (Zarosa 2010, 325). After all, as Benedict XVI stated, "The question of God must not be absent from the other great questions of our time" (2011). Religious

instruction in school can and should help young people to find answers to these questions. Referring more often to philosophy than to theology if students have not had an experience of faith (Kowalczyk 2001, 178–79).

2.6. Building Social Attitudes

As part of the educational dimension of religious instruction, efforts to build desirable social attitudes are also worthwhile. To this end, it would be useful to discuss issues that are common to all individuals and societies, regardless of their religious background. Such issues are, for example, war, disease, famine, persecution, social injustice, devastation of nature, etc. (Tarnowski 1995, 33–36). In this context, Benedict XVI said: "Many people acknowledge that they are not part of any religion, yet they long for a new world, a world that is freer, more just and united, more peaceful and happy" (2011). The proposed approach to Religious Education would primarily involve the formation of attitudes such as justice and love in the broadest sense, which would then be expressed in specific attitudes, such as empathy, respect for others, diligence, honesty, truthfulness, concern for nature, patriotism, etc. (Nowak 2012, 58; Mąkosa 2014, 353; Zellma 2003, 189).

In fostering attitudes, it is worth paying attention not only to the transfer of objective information but also to the need for "the teacher to give subjective expression to his or her own beliefs, which plays a significant role in the achievement of educational goals" (Milerski 1998, 301). Indeed, the role of RE classes should not only be to impart knowledge about values but also, and perhaps above all, to provide motivation to live by these values. "Indeed, it is well known that mere knowledge, however thorough, of ethical and moral values is not enough to foster the right attitudes. This is because, in addition to the intellect, it is necessary to involve the emotions and the will. Motivation is therefore needed to internalise values and absolutise them, i.e. to place them at the top of the hierarchy of values" (Mąkosa 2014, 354). In this respect, it seems important to show their meaning in a religious context, which undoubtedly increases the motivation to live by these values in believers (Szymołon 2002, 189). In other words, it is about forming a mature, righteous conscience (Marek 2014, 129).

3. The Parish as the Primary Environment for Catechesis and Evangelisation

The model for Religious Education in Polish secondary schools outlined above does not provide for strictly catechetical or evangelising activities. However, these efforts are absolutely necessary, as the personal faith of young people and their belonging to

the Church largely depend on them. Of course, it is the family that should be the primary environment for catechesis and, for this reason, too, it should be given special care by the Church (Stala and Osewska 2005, 16). At the same time, it is the parish that should be responsible for systematic catechesis as well as evangelisation of young people. It is what is referred to as the primary environment for catechesis in the strict sense (Stala and Osewska 2005, 16) and thus for the transmission of the entire deposit of the Catholic faith. At the same time, in addition to imparting knowledge, the parish should help young people to come to a personal experience of God and the community of the Church. The idea, therefore, is that catechesis in parishes should not focus only on the transmission of knowledge, "but on such forms (services, celebrations, Bible courses, schools of prayer) that will touch people deeply and make them reflect on what has already taken place in them during initiation. A special role is played in this regard by the individual experience of those who receive catechesis, which forms the basis for the exploration of the Christian mysteries, especially the mystery of inclusion in the community of believers in Christ" (KWK KEP 2001, 139–40).

While appreciating the catechetical potential of the parish, one must be aware, however, that participation in parish catechesis at the secondary school stage will probably involve only a small percentage of young people. Preparation for the sacrament of Confirmation provides strong motivation to participate in parish catechesis, but this is most often given at the end of primary school. In dioceses that have moved the sacrament of Confirmation to secondary school, attendance is much higher, which may inspire other dioceses to change their own practice. Except for sacramental catechesis, it is difficult to motivate young people to participate in parish catechesis. On the other hand, Catholic movements and associations, in which there is a small percentage of young people, have great potential in this respect. It would be worthwhile to promote this type of formation and embrace all other opportunities.

Conclusions

The proposal presented in this article contributes to the discussion on the shape of Religious Education in Polish schools. However, it goes slightly further than previous proposals, as it does not suggest replacing catechesis with evangelisation, but instead focusing on the transmission of knowledge and abandoning the initiatory function of catechesis. The vision presented, however, does not undermine the confessional concept of RE but, instead of a catechetical and evangelising approach, it proposes an informational and educational one. The categorization of objectives within Religious Education into three ideal-typical areas comprised: 'learning in religion,' 'learning from religion' and 'learning about religion' (Grimmitt 2000; cf. Dinham and

Shaw 2017). With regard to this differentiation, it can be expressed that the essence of the proposal outlined in this article is to integrate these three theories tailored to the context of Poland, while placing a focus on the tangible acquisition of knowledge about one's own and other religions. Additionally, it emphasizes the concurrent contemplation of one's worldview and religious convictions (Mąkosa 2019, 372). According to this approach, religious instruction should enable students to "relate themselves to fundamental questions about their belonging, their search for values and the meaning of life" (Osewska 2008, 93; cf. Michalski 2012). From this perspective, Religious Education is "denominational at the level of material content, but respects the secularity of the school at the level of aims and method" (Misiaszek 1999, 166). Such an approach would have the potential to develop students' own religious identity while taking into account their diverse beliefs (Ruggiero 2022).[2]

Bibliography

Adamczyk, Tomasz. 2023. "Młodzież." In *Kościół w Polsce 2023: Raport*, edited by Joanna Woleńska-Operacz, 31–44. Warszawa: Instytut Dziedzictwa Myśli Narodowej im. Romana Dmowskiego i Ignacego J. Paderewskiego.

Babin, Pierre. 1965. *Options pour une éducation de la foi des jeunes*. Lyon: Éditions du Chalet.

Bagrowicz, Jerzy. 2000. *Edukacja religijna współczesnej młodzieży: Źródła i cele*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika.

Barnes, Philip, and Andrew Davis. 2015. *Religious Education: Educating for Diversity*. Edited by J. Mark Halstead. London: Bloomsbury Academic.

Benedict XVI. 2011. *Video Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the „Courts of the Gentiles"*. Paris. https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/pont-messages/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20110325_parvis-gentils.html.

Boguszewski, Rafał. 2022. "Religijność młodzieży." In *Młodzież 2021. Raport z badań ilościowych zrealizowanych przez Fundację CBOS*, 126–40. Warszawa: CBOS.

Canizares, Antonio. 2007. "Preewangelizacja." In *Słownik katechetyczny*, edited by Joseph Gevaert and Kazimierz Misiaszek, 740–42. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie.

Catechism of the Catholic Church. 1992. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

CBOS (Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej). 2021. Edited by Mirosława Grabowska. *Religijność młodych na tle ogółu społeczeństwa*. Komunikat z Badań CBOS 144/2021. Warszawa: Fundacja Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej.

Chałupniak, Radosław. 2003. *Wychowanie religijne w szkołach europejskich*. Edited by Józef Stala. *Wybrane zagadnienia z katechetyki*. Tarnów: Biblos.

Chrostowski, Mariusz, and Urlich Kropač. 2023. "Between 'Religious Denomination' and 'Social Diversity': On the Future of Religious Education in Poland." *Paedagogia Christiana* 51 (1): 157–82. https://doi.org/10.12775/pch.2023.007.

---

2   A similar approach to Religious Education can be found in, among others, Portugal and Italy (Ruggiero 2022).

Chrostowski, Mariusz. 2020. "Edukacja religijna w Polsce: Czas na zmianę?" *Łódzkie Studia Teologiczne* 29 (3): 39–52.

Congregation for the Clergy. 1971. *General Catechetical Directory*. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Congregation for the Clergy. 1997. *General Catechetical Directory*. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Dinham, Adam, and Martha Shaw. 2017. "Religious Literacy through Religious Education: The Future of Teaching and Learning about Religion and Belief." *Religions* 8 (7): 1–13. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel8070119.

Francis. 2016. "L'unità dei cristiani essenziale alla fede, ma non è uniformità." *Avvenire*, November. https://www.avvenire.it/papa/pagine/l-unita-dei-cristiani-essenziale-alla-fede-proselitismo-un-veleno.

Gabriel, Karl. 2002. "Gesellschaft und Religion." In *Neues Handbuch religionspädagogischer Grundbegriffe*, edited by Gottfried Bitter, Rudolf Englert, Gabriele Miller, and Karl Ernst Nipkow, 139–43. München: Kösel.

Grimmitt, Michael. 2000. "Constructivist Pedagogies of Religious Education Project: Re-Thinking Knowledge, Teaching and Learning in Religious Education." In *Pedagogies of Religious Education: Case Studies in the Research and Development of Good Pedagogic Practice in RE*, edited by Michael Grimmitt, 189–207. Great Wakering: McCrimmons.

Hejwosz-Gromkowska, Daria. 2020. "Religious Education in Poland: Between Absence and Presence." *Wychowanie w Rodzinie* 12 (1): 81–96. https://doi.org/10.34616/WWR.2020.1.081.096.

John Paul II. 1979. Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae* (= *CT*).

John Paul II. 1999. Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in America* (= *EA*)

KEP (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski). 2001. *Dyrektorium katechetyczne Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* [Polish Bishops' Conference. *Directory for Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland*]. Warszawa: WAM.

KEP (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski). 2018. *Podstawa programowa katechezy Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce* [Polish Bishops' Conference, *Core Curriculum for Catechesis of the Catholic Church in Poland*]. Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła.

Kiełb, Dominik, Michał Pierzchała, and Marcin Gazda. 2023. "Youth Attitudes towards Religious Education in Poland." *Religions* 14 (1): 1–13. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010007.

Kowalczyk, Stanisław. 2001. *Filozofia Boga*. 5th ed. Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL.

KWK KEP (Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski). 2001. *Program nauczania religii rzymskokatolickiej w przedszkolach i szkołach* [Commission for Catholic Education of Polish Bishops' Conference. *Curriculum for Roman Catholic Religious Education in Preschools and Schools*]. Kraków: WAM.

KWK KEP (Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski. 2018. *Program nauczania religii rzymskokatolickiej w przedszkolach i szkołach* [Commission for Catholic Education of Polish Bishops' Conference. *Curriculum for Roman Catholic Religious Education in Preschools and Schools*]. Częstochowa: Edycja Świętego Pawła.

Lange, Günter. 1991. "Konfesyjna nauka religii w publicznej szkole zsekularyzowanego społeczeństwa." *Analecta Cracoviensia* 23: 239–51.

Marek, Zbigniew. 2014. *Religia: Pomoc czy zagrożenie dla edukacji?* Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM.

Mariański, Janusz. 2018. *Kondycja religijna i moralna młodzieży szkół średnich w latach 1988-1998-2005-2017 (raport z ogólnopolskich badań socjologicznych)*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

Mariański, Janusz. 2022. "Religijność młodzieży szkół średnich w procesie przemian (2015–2022) – Analiza socjologiczna." *Chowanna* 59: 1–34.

Mąkosa, Paweł. 2014. "Szkolna lekcja religii istotnym elementem wychowania w szkole." In *Wychowanie w szkole: Od bezradności ku możliwościom*, edited by Radosław Chałupniak, Tomasz Michalewski, and Ewa Smak, 351–61. Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.

Mąkosa, Paweł. 2015. "Confessional and Catechetical Nature of Religious Education in Poland." *The Person and the Challenges* 5 (2): 53–66. https://doi.org/10.15633/pch.1521.

Mąkosa, Paweł. 2019. *Edukacja religijna polskich emigrantów w Wielkiej Brytanii. Stan aktualny i perspektywy rozwoju*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL.

Mąkosa, Paweł, Marian Zając, and Grzegorz Zakrzewski. 2022. "Opting out of Religious Education and the Religiosity of Youth in Poland: A Qualitative Analysis." *Religions* 13: 1–9. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13100906.

MEN (Ministerstwo Edukacji Narodowej). 1992. "Rozporządzenie Ministra Edukacji Narodowej z dnia 14 kwietnia 1992 r. w sprawie warunków i sposobu organizowania nauki religii w szkołach publicznych." *Dziennik Ustaw*, no. 36: 155.

Mendyk, Marek. 2014. "Edukacja religijna integralną częścią wychowania." In *Wychowanie w szkole: Od bezradności ku możliwościom*, edited by Radosław Chałupniak, Tomasz Michalewski, and Ewa Smak, 141–46. Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.

Michalski, Jarosław. 2012. "Religijność osoby a kształtowanie poczucia sensu życia." In *Edukacyjny potencjał religii*, edited by Jerzy Bagrowicz and Jarosław Horowski, 79–104. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

Milerski, Bogusław, and Maciej Karwowski. 2023. "Educational Rationality and Religious Education in Polish Public Schools." *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 44 (1): 81–98. https://doi.org/10.1080/13617672.2021.2018214.

Milerski, Bogusław. 1998. *Religia a szkoła: Status edukacji religijnej w szkole w ujęciu ewangelickim*. Warszawa: Chrześcijańska Akademia Teologiczna.

Misiaszek, Kazimierz. 1999. *Koncepcja nauczania religii katolickiej w publicznej szkole włoskiej po Konkordacie z 1984 roku*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie.

Misiaszek, Kazimierz. 2002. "Potrzeby i możliwości wprowadzenia elementów ewangelizacji do nauczania religii w szkole." In *Katecheza ewangelizacyjna w rodzinie, parafii, szkole*, edited by Stanisław Krzysztof Dziekoński, 173–84. Warszawa: Verbinum.

Misiaszek, Kazimierz. 2004. "Nauczanie religii w szkole." In *Wokół katechezy posoborowej*, edited by Radosław Chałupniak, Jan Kochel, Jerzy Kostorz, and Waldemar Spyra, 299–302. Opole: Redakcja Wydawnictw Wydziału Teologicznego Uniwersytetu Opolskiego.

Muskus, Damian Andrzej. 1999. *Szkoła środowiskiem katechetycznym: Katechetyczne studium interdyscyplinarne*. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska: Calvarianum.

Nowak, Marian. 2012. "Edukacyjny potencjał pedagogiki religii – bogactwo doświadczenia ludzkiego do przekazania." In *Edukacyjny potencjał religii*, edited by Jerzy Bagrowicz and Jarosław Horowski, 53–78. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika.

Offmański, Andrzej. 1996. "Katecheza jako ewangelizacja. Ewangelizacyjna funkcja katechezy." *Horyzonty Wiary* 7 (3): 9–20.

Offmański, Andrzej. 2000. *W kierunku katechezy ewangelizacyjnej: Polska katecheza młodzieżowa w latach 1945–2000*. Szczecin: Ottonianum.

Osewska, Elżbieta. 2008. *Edukacja religijna w szkole katolickiej w Anglii i Walii w świetle „Living and Sharing Our Faith a National Project of Catechesis and Religious Education*". Tarnów: Biblos.

Paciorek, Antoni. 2000. "Kerygmat. 1. W Biblii." In *Encyklopedia katolicka*, edited by Bigusław Migut, 8:1360–61. Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL.

Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization. 2020. *Directory for Catechesis*. London: Catholic Truth Society.

Rayzacher-Majewska, Aneta. 2021. "Zadania katechezy w Dyrektoriach z lat 1971–2020." *Studia Katechetyczne* 17: 59–80. https://doi.org/10.21697/sk.2021.17.4.

Różańska, Aniela. 2015. *Edukacja religijna młodzieży w warunkach pluralizmu religijnego*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek.

Ruggiero, Giancarlo. 2022. "L'insegnamento della religione cattolica in Italia: Profili storico giuridici." *Cammino Diritto*, no. 6: 1–18.

Rusecki, Marian. 2001. *Fenomen chrześcijaństwa: Wkład w kulturę*. Lublin: Gaudium.

Rybicki, Adam, Paweł Mąkosa, and Radosław Mazur. 2022. "Religious Education and the Concept of Universal Fraternity in the Light of the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* of Pope Francis." *Teaching Theology & Religion* 25 (4): 85–98. https://doi.org/10.1111/teth.12627.

Schreiner, Peter. 2019. "Religionsunterricht in Europa: Ein Blick auf unterschiedliche Modelle in religionspädagogischer Perspektive." In *Der Religionsunterricht der Zukunft: Modelle auf dem Prüfstand mit Blick auf Sachsen-Anhalt*, edited by Michael Domsgen and Harald Schwillus, 41–58. Berlin: Logos.

Seweryniak, Henryk. 2001. *Tajemnica Jezusa*. Warszawa: Więź.

Stala, Józef, and Elżbieta Osewska. 2005. "Zarys całościowego ujęcia katechezy rodzinnej." In *Dzisiejsze aspiracje katechezy rodzinnej: Problemy i wyzwania*, edited by Józef Stala, 13–31. Kielce: Jedność.

Szpet, Jan. 2002. "Ewangelizacyjny wymiar szkolnych lekcji religii." In *Katecheza ewangelizacyjna w rodzinie, parafii, szkole*, edited by Stanisław Krzysztof Dziekoński, 185–204. Warszawa: Verbinum.

Szymołon, Jerzy. 2002. "Postawy prospołeczne a religijność." *Roczniki Psychologiczne* 5: 181–93.

Tarnowski, Karol. 1995. *Człowiek i transcendencja*. Akademia. Kraków: Znak.

Tomasik, Piotr. 2003. "Korelacja nauczania religii z edukacją szkolną." *Katecheta*, no. 7–8: 9–15.

Tomasik, Piotr. 2004. *Religia w dialogu z edukacją*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie.

Wadowski, Jan. 1999. *Dramat pytań egzystencjalnych: Ks. Józefa Tischnera filozofia dramatu jako próba odpowiedzi na pytania egzystencjalne*. Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Papieskiego Wydziału Teologicznego.

Zakrzewski, Grzegorz Jerzy. 2021. "Motywy rezygnacji młodzieży z lekcji religii oraz szanse zatrzymania tego procesu na podstawie badań w diecezji płockiej." In *Nowa epoka polskiej katechezy*, edited by Dominik Kiełb, 69–87. Rzeszów: Bonus Liber.

Zarosa, Ewelina. 2010. "Preparatio evangelica. Preewangelizacja poprzez sztukę – na przykładzie kontemplacji obrazu Vermeera *Dziewczyna z wagą*." In *Katecheza ewangelizacyjna: Poszukiwania koncepcji*, edited by Paweł Mąkosa, 319–25. Lublin: Polihymnia.

Zellma, Anna. 2003. "Wychowanie patriotyczne współczesnej młodzieży polskiej w szkolnym nauczaniu religii." *Studia Warmińskie* 40: 183–97.

Zellma, Anna, Roman Buchta, and Wojciech Cichosz. 2021. "The (Non)Transgressive Character of Religious Education for Children and Young People in Polish Schools." *British Journal of Religious Education* 44 (3): 223–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2021.1887082.