Verbum Vitae

42/2

2024

Biblical-Theological Quarterly
Kwartalnik biblijno-teologiczny

April–June 2024
kwiecień–czerwiec 2024

Institute of Biblical Studies / Instytut Nauk Biblijnych KUL
The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin

KATOLICKI UNIWERSYTET LUBELSKI JANA PAWŁA II

Verbum Vitae

Submissions and contact with the editorial team via e-mail/Zgłaszanie tekstów i kontakt z redakcją przez e-mail: **verbum.vitae@kul.pl** and website/oraz stronę internetową: **http://czasopisma.kul.pl/vv/**

Verbum Vitae

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The quarterly is available on-line at http://czasopisma.kul.pl/vv/
The journal is peer reviewed by an advisory board of scholars. List of their names is published each year on the website

Verbum Vitae is indexed by the following databases/
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eISNN: 2451-280X

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Received: Jul 1, 2023 | Accepted: Nov 7, 2023 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

The Role of the Ministry of Lector and Acolyte in the Context of the Instruction for Parishes in the Service of Evangelisation (June 29, 2020) and the Letter *Spiritus Domini* (January 10, 2021)

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Abstract: The principal weight of the Church's responsibility for evangelization rests on the parish. However, the pastoral practice shows that there is no sufficient principle to organize the missionary life of the parish as a community of communities. This frequently leads to confusion in a multitude of activities, which contributes to the failure of the parish to fulfill its principal evangelizing mission. Firstly, the article shows how the introduction of ministries of lector and acolyte into the life of the parish may help revitalize the basic functions of the parish, which are: *martyrdom*, *liturgy*, and *diakonia*. Men and women who discovered their specific vocation to the ministry of lector and acolyte may become pillars of concrete parish groups and apostolic work realized in the parish. It is closely related to a proper understanding of the ecclesial dimension of each of these ministries. In view of the above, the article presents pastoral inspirations of the Instruction of the Congregation for the Clergy *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church*, and the indications of Pope Francis' Apostolic Letter *Spiritus Domini*. Secondly, the text presents the liturgical ministries in the light of the hierarchical, charismatic, and spousal dimension of the mystery of the Church. The final part of the article describes the pastoral dimension of these ministries in realizing the evangelizing mission of the Church.

Keywords: parish community of communities, lector and acolyte ministries, evangelization, liturgy

Instruction of the Congregation for the Clergy *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church* (June 29, 2020) calls on parishes to implement more of the community dimension through "a harmonious synthesis of charisms and vocations at the service of the proclamation of the Gospel, which better corresponds to the demands of evangelisation today." (Congregation for the Clergy 2020, para. 1). The Apostolic Letter in the form of "motu proprio" *Spiritus Domini* on the amendment of canon 230 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law regarding access of women to the ministries of lector and acolyte, dated January 10, 2021, is part of this call (Francis 2021).[1] In his letter, Pope Francis explains

1 Pope Francis has determined that the ministries of lector and acolyte will henceforth be open to women as well in an established and institutionalized form with a special mandate. The fact that women read the word of God during liturgical celebrations and minister at the altar as altar servers or extraordinary

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16428

in detail that he wanted to adopt the recommendations that came out of the various synodal assemblies and says that "doctrinal development has taken place in recent years which has highlighted how certain ministries instituted by the Church are based on the common condition of being baptized and the royal priesthood received in the Sacrament of Baptism." Therefore, the Pope invites everyone to recognize that these are ministries intended for the laity, as "they are essentially distinct from the ordained ministry received in the Sacrament of Orders." For the purpose of this article, it is important to note Francis' statement that the revision of the regulations regarding the reception of "lay ministries" emphasizes "the need to deepen the subject doctrinally, so that it may respond to the nature of the aforementioned charisms and the needs of the times, offering appropriate support to the role of evangelization that is incumbent upon the ecclesial community" (Francis 2021). Since the author wishes to respond to some extent to the Pope's postulate, the article will first present the pastoral inspiration of the instruction *Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church.* Then, within the context of the aforementioned document, the role of the liturgical ministries will be shown in light of the mystery of the Church and their importance in carrying out the parish's evangelizing mission.

1. Pastoral Inspiration for the Instruction

The instruction *The Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church* was published by the Congregation for the Clergy in Rome on July 20, 2020. The document responds to requests from bishops from all over the world who addressed the Congregation on the issue of parish community reform projects already being implemented or planned and on the restructuring of dioceses (see: Wielebski 2021, 223). Andrea Ripa, undersecretary of the Congregation for the Clergy, presenting the document on July 21, 2020, stressed that the instruction seeks to propose some ways to help the "outreach" dynamic, which, according to the Pope's wish, should characterize all parishes. Thus, a pastoral conversion is necessary, which should encompass all the baptized because each of them should participate in the evangelizing mission of the Church. This is why,

ministers of Holy Communion is nothing particularly new – it has become a practice authorized by bishops in many communities around the world. So far, however, everything has been done without a concrete and proper institutional mandate, in derogation of what was established by Paul VI, who in 1972, in a letter *Ministeria Quaedam*, decided that access to these ministries would be reserved for men only. Based on the letter *Spiritus Domini* issued "motu proprio," which amends the first paragraph of canon 230 of the *Code of Canon Law*, the Pope decides that women have access to these ministries and that they are administered in a liturgical act.

in order to respond to the significant social and cultural changes that are taking place in the world, it is necessary to move from a conservative and closed pastoral approach to a missionary and outgoing one (Ripa 2020, 35). Thus, the intended purpose of the instruction is to stimulate all members of the parish (pastors, consecrated persons, and laity) to reflect on their understanding of the parish, the relation of their own parishes to the conciliar ideal of the parish, their potential and future perspectives, potential and necessary changes that should take place, indispensable changes, and directions of parish ministries. The reflection is supposed to take place from the perspective and experience of communities from other particular Churches gained in the ever-evolving context of socio-religious life (see: Żądło 2022, 232).

The instruction *Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church* consists of eleven chapters divided into paragraphs, of which there are 124 in total. The introduction to the instruction reads that it represents "a valuable opportunity for pastoral conversion that is essentially missionary. Parish communities will find herein a call to go out of themselves, offering instruments for reform, even structural, in a spirit of communion and collaboration, of encounter and closeness, of mercy and solicitude for the proclamation of the Gospel" (2020, para. 2). Point 3 once again quotes Pope Francis' words: "If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning, and a goal in life" (see Francis 2013, no. 49). Following the pope's desires, the instruction encourages Christian communities, in a spirit of pastoral conversion, to make a decisive missionary choice (Congregation for the Clergy 2020, para. 5) to be open to "creativity," to "seek new ways" (2020, para. 1) to cultivate the "culture of encounter" (2020, para. 25). In this way, Christian communities can be ever more conducive to an encounter with Christ (2020, para. 3). To achieve this goal, a renewed dynamism is needed to rediscover the vocation of every baptized person as a disciple of Jesus and a missionary of the Gospel. It is necessary to identify perspectives that allow for the renewal of "traditional" parish structures in terms of mission (2020, para. 20) because today, the parish territory is no longer just a geographical space but also the context in which people express their lives in terms of relationships, reciprocal service, and ancient traditions (2020, para. 16). The parish must teach how to read and meditate on the Word of God using a variety of ways to proclaim it (2020, para. 22), adopting clear and comprehensible means of communication that announce the Lord Jesus according to the ever-new witness of the kerygma (2020, para. 21), and allowing the parish to rediscover Christian initiation, which gives birth to new life. For this reason, it would be useful to establish a mystagogical itinerary that genuinely affects existence (2020, para. 23). It is important to rethink not only a new experience of the parish but also the ministry and mission of priests, who, together with the lay faithful, have the task of being "salt and light of the world" (cf. Matt 5:13–14), and a "lamp on a lamp-stand" (cf. Mark 4:21), representing an evangelizing community capable of reading the signs of the times and of giving witness to coherent evangelical living (2020, para. 13).

All these elements of the pastoral conversion are presented in the first four chapters (26 paragraphs in total): "Pastoral Conversion," "The Parish in a Contemporary Context," "The Value of the Parish Today," and "Mission: the Guiding Principle for Renewal." The fifth chapter devoted to the parish as "a community of communities" consists of seven paragraphs (Congregation for the Clergy 2020, paras. 27–33). The chapter emphasizes the fact that the parish is a specific community of the faithful realized in communion and unity by various members of the Body of Christ (2020, para. 27). It includes a reminder that, according to the *Code of Canon Law*, a parish is a defined community of the faithful (1983, can. 515, 518, 519). Moreover, the words of Francis from the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* are quoted emphasizing that the parish is a community of communities (Congregation for the Clergy 2020, para. 28). The sixth chapter, "From the conversion of people to that of structures," points to the fact that the transformation of the structures that a parish sets for itself requires a prior change of mentality and internal renewal, especially of those who are responsible for pastoral care. They are the ones who should see the need for reforming pastoral care of a missionary nature in the first place (2020, para. 35). In view of the above, the need to overcome a self-referential conception of the Parish or the 'clericalization of pastoral activity' becomes apparent. This calls for the promotion of practices and models through which baptized persons, thanks to the charisms they have received, "become active participants of evangelisation, in the style and modality of an organic community, together with other Parish communities or at the diocesan level." (2020, para. 38). The pastoral conversion of the Parish community, in terms of mission, takes shape and finds expression in a gradual process of a renewal of structures (2020, para. 42). Therefore, the next six chapters of the instruction – a total of 91 paragraphs – deal with the transformation of structures, the reorganization of parishes, the role of pastors and laity in shaping parishes, etc. In the ninth chapter, "Appointments and Pastoral Ministry," one of the paragraphs (2020, para. 97) has it that "Lay men, by the norms of law, may be instituted Lectors or Acolytes on a stable basis, by means of the relevant rite, according to canon 230." In this context, it is all the more worthwhile and necessary to bring out the importance of liturgical ministries in order to, as Francis urges in *Spiritus Domini*, "offering appropriate support to the role of evangelization that is incumbent upon the ecclesial community" (Francis 2021; cf. John Paul II 1988a, no. 23).

2. Liturgical Ministries in the Light of the Mystery of the Church

The vision of the parish community outlined in the instruction *Pastoral Conversion of the Parish Community in the Service of the Evangelising Mission of the Church* (Congregation for the Clergy 2020, paras. 27–29) is merely a point of reference and indicates a very general direction of pastoral action. These activities are taking place with varying intensity as part of various parish renewal projects (see: Żądło 1999, 93–99; Biela 2014, 119–53; Biela and Celary 2019, 57–94). Therefore, various initiatives and institutional forms are undertaken that are a response to the needs and signs of the times (see: Polak 2007, 59–84; Wolański 2011, 245–67; Półtorak 2011, 181–218). However, one can see that there is no sufficient organizing principle for the life of the Church, especially at the parish level. Sometimes, this leads to a sort of confusion in the multiplicity of courses of action up to the point of various dangers (cf. John Paul II 1988a, no. 30). As for the organizing principle of pastoral care in the parish is concerned, it is critically important that as the "community of communities," the parish is a community of non-accidental ministries and associations (cf. John Paul II 1988a, no. 29). So, on the one hand, it is a matter of ensuring that the various "needs" of parishioners are met, and on the other, that the parish corresponds to the demands arising from the teachings of Vatican II, that is, the ecclesiology of communion (see: Extraordinary Synod 1985, II.C.1–8). Therefore, theological criteria derived from the mystery of the Church are of particular importance in providing a more accurate definition of particular communities and ministries. The source of these criteria can be found in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. In the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, the council says that the Holy Spirit

> guides in way of all truth and which He unified in communion and in works of ministry, He both equips and directs with hierarchical and charismatic gifts and adorns with His fruits. By the power of the Gospel He makes the Church keep the freshness of youth. Uninterruptedly He renews it and leads it to perfect union with its Spouse. The Spirit and the Bride both say to Jesus, the Lord, "Come!" (Second Vatican Council 1964, no. 4).

What is at stake here are hierarchic and charismatic gifts, with which the Church is endowed and that show the proper purpose both types of gifts serve. They lead to "perfect union with the Bridegroom." The image used by the Council depicts the Church as a charismatic, hierarchical, and bridal community. This image of the Church should therefore shape specific ministries in the liturgy and in parish life revealing the Church in her charisms, hierarchical structure, and spousal union with Christ.

The community of God's people receives from Him an extraordinary multitude of charisms. Each of her members receives his or her own gift appropriate for building the *communio*. Among the said gifts are the ones distinguished by the Church, those that by their very nature reveal some essential truth about the Church. Certainly, among such gifts is the ministry of "ordination" defined by the *Code of Canon Law* as "sacred ministry" (1983, can. 233 § 1) exercised by bishops and presbyters by virtue of their mission and authority to act *in* the person of Christ the Head, that is, *in Persona Christi Capitis*, or by deacons who "serve the people of God through the diakonia of liturgy, word and charity" (Benedict XVI 2009). Nor are the lay faithful (*christifideles laici*) – men and women – who have become "in their own way made sharers in the priestly, prophetical, and kingly functions of Christ; and they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world" (Second Vatican Council 1964, no. 31) deprived of such ministries. In particular, the ministry of lector and acolyte has been highlighted in the Church's teaching. In 1972, Pope Paul VI issued the "motu proprio" *Ministeria Quaedam*, in which he indicated what is a function and what is a ministry in the liturgical celebration. The previous minor orders were called "ministries." Henceforth, ministries can be conferred on the lay faithful so that they are not reserved only for candidates for the sacrament of Holy Orders. There are two such ministries: lector and acolyte. The Pope also pointed to the relationship of ministry to function (*ministerium* to *munus*). The document has it that the ministry (*ministerium*) is conferred to perform specific functions (*munus*), some of which are defined as functions proper for specific ministries (*munus, quo est ei proprium*) (see: Paul VI 1972). Such a distinction is found in the *Code of Canon Law* 1983, can. 230 reads:

> § 1. Lay persons who possess the age and qualifications established by decree of the conference of bishops can be admitted on a stable basis through the prescribed liturgical rite to the ministries of lector and acolyte *(ad ministeria lectoris et acolythi)*. Nevertheless, the conferral of these ministries does not grant them the right to obtain support or remuneration from the Church.
>
> §2. Lay persons can fulfill the function of lector in liturgical actions *(liturgicis munus lectoris)* by temporary designation. All lay persons can also perform the functions of commentator or cantor, or other functions, according to the norm of law.
>
> §3. When the need of the Church warrants it and ministers are lacking, lay persons, even if they are not lectors or acolytes, can also supply certain of their duties, namely, to exercise the ministry of the word, to preside over liturgical prayers, to confer baptism, and to distribute Holy Communion, according to the prescripts of the law.

A similar distinction is drawn by *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, which often uses the term *munus* in addition to the term *ministerium*, together with its modifying and more precise term *munus liturgicum*.[2] Summing up, it can be

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2 One can read about the ministry of appointed acolytes and lectors in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal from the third edition of the Roman Missal* (2003, nos. 98–99). The functions to which the acolyte

concluded that the term ministry (*ministerium*) – in its most proper sense pertains to "participation in the one priesthood of Christ," and therefore "only by virtue of the sacrament of Holy Orders, the term acquires its full and only meaning ascribed to it by the tradition." (Giovanni Paolo II 1994, 187). It is then understood as an "ordained ministry" and refers to the clergy. "If in some cases the meaning of the term 'ministry' (*ministerium*) has been extended to *munera* that is specific to the lay faithful, it is because it shares, in its own way, in the one priesthood of Christ" (Giovanni Paolo II 1994, 187). In such a case, "by virtue of the priesthood of all the baptized," the laity can also take up the "ministry," which then takes on a strictly defined meaning: it is conferred to the lay faithful (these are not Holy Orders), by a special rite of institution (*institutio*), approved by the Holy See and celebrated by a bishop; it has the character of a permanent assignment to perform the tasks associated with it; in principle, the tasks in question are related to the liturgy, but they go beyond the liturgy and have the character of participation in the pastoral ministry of the ordained.

By contrast, the term function (*munus*) – is a specific activity or set of activities understood as a task. It applies to both liturgy and daily life. Depending on the way of participation in this mission (through baptism or through the sacrament of Holy Orders), it takes on a different scope and dimension. Functions resulting from ordination are performed by bishops, presbyters, and deacons. Assigned functions, resulting from institution, are performed by lectors and acolytes, while functions performed under authorization (designation) may be entrusted to other lay faithful who are able to take them up after a suitable preparation. They may then serve as lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, commentators, cantors, schola members, organists, sacristans, altar servers, commentators, ceremonialists, persons responsible for order during processions, or persons designated *ad hoc* to distribute Holy Communion (cf. Second Vatican Council 1963, no. 29). However, these tasks are temporal and carried out during the liturgy (cf. Górzyński 2009, 83–84; Araszczuk 2010, 229–30)[3]. Thus, the term "ministry," in its most proper and general

is entitled are listed in numbers 187–193, while those to which the lector is entitled are listed in numbers 194–198. The same *Introduction* was issued in 2006 and supplemented with the Indications of the Episcopate of Poland adopted at the 331st National Plenary Meeting of the Polish Bishops' Conference (KEP), March 9, 2005. In pt. 125–126 it was noted that functions that are direct service to the priest at the altar and at the place of presiding are reserved for the male liturgical service (altar servers). Girls (altar girls) may be admitted by the diocesan bishop after consultation with the KEP.

3 In Poland, the ministry of permanent acolyte and lector was introduced by the Second Plenary Synod, held from 1991 to 1999 (Skworc 2016, 84). October 2, 2007, the Polish Episcopate adopted the *Instruction on Granting of the Ministry of Lectors and Acolytes to Lay Men*, which is executive in nature to the provisions of the Second Plenary Synod. *The Instruction* has it that a detailed program for the formation of the lector and acolyte *Ratio fundamentalis* will be developed by the Episcopal Commission for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (KEP 2008a, no. 44). A separate *Ratio* has not been developed, while guidelines for the formation of lectors and acolytes were included in the document (cf. KEP 2008b, nos. 35–44). On December 12, 2021, the general decree of the Polish Bishops' Conference on the age and qualities of male and female candidates for the permanent lectorate and acolyte came into effect. According to

sense, refers to the tasks (*munera*) resulting from Holy Orders (*ministerium ordinatum*). As such, they are non-transitory and permanent in nature. In a narrower sense, and more specifically, the term “ministry” applies to the tasks of the laity, lector, and acolyte, conferred by a special rite of institution (*ministerium instituitum*), which thus took on permanent features, too. Therefore, these ministries belong to the ecclesiastical office, because according to the legislator’s statement, “An ecclesiastical office is any function constituted in a stable manner by divine or ecclesiastical ordinance to be exercised for a spiritual purpose” (*Code of Canon Law* 1983, can. 145 §1).

The ministries of lector and acolyte date back to ancient times (Righetti 1959, 382; Nadolski 2006, 63). This is a consequence of understanding the Eucharist as a mystery of two tables: the table of the Word and the table of the Bread. God feeds man with His Word and His Body. The Church provides us with the Gospel and Eucharist. The visible signs of this mystery are the pulpit and the altar. The mystery is referred to by the Book and the Cross too. In a special way, the “embodiment” of such an understanding of the Eucharist and the Church are the distinguished persons of lector and acolyte.[4] The former ministers at the table of the Word, the latter at the table of the Bread. As far as the ministry of lector is concerned, the charisms associated with teaching are highlighted, while in the ministry of acolyte, all the charisms associated with the work of the hands are expressed.

The aforementioned ministries highlight an important dimension of the Church, which is hierarchy. It is based on participation in the mystery of the priesthood of Christ, in which all the baptized participate. Therefore, ministries conferred to the laity should also be thought of in terms of the hierarchical structure of the Church. The question arises: Do all the laity participate equally in the mystery of Christ’s priesthood, or do some of them participate in this mystery in a “special” way, namely, at the level of ministries? Certainly, a positive answer to these questions would change the picture of parish communities, as today’s situation can be better described by the sentence “there is a hierarchy in the Church” rather than “the Church is hierarchical.” This is because hierarchy only applies to a very small percentage of Church members. On the other hand, among the vast majority of her members, there is no

the decree, in Poland, bishops will be able to grant the ministries of permanent lectorate and acolyte to candidates who have reached the age of 25. Male and female candidates are required to lead exemplary moral life, be characterised by apostolic devotion, selflessness, sincere piety and zealous sacramental life, special love of the Holy Scriptures and the Eucharist, and a spirit of obedience to the Church. Moreover, they must have adequate intellectual qualities, sufficient knowledge of this ministry in the Church, stand out for their reliability in work and ability to cooperate with others. They should enjoy a good reputation and be accepted by the faithful of the community to which they belong and in which they will carry out the tasks entrusted to them. They should be prepared for their tasks by proper formation. See: https://episkopat.pl/wchodzi-w-zycie-dekret-ogolny-konferencji-episkopatu-polski-dotyczacy-stalego-lektoratu-i-akolitatu-udzielanego-takze-kobietom/ [Accessed October 13, 2023].

4 *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2003, no. 98) lists the acolyte in the first place. Moreover, the importance of this ministry has been outlined in the Roman Pontifical *Rites of Institution for the Ministry of Acolyte*.

structure at all that might be characterized by the phrase: hierarchical participation in the priesthood of Christ.

Much light is shed on this issue by the history of the formation of ministries and the formation of communities in the Church. When a man received the mission of the Church, he would always gather a community around him, and if the community was born inside the people of God, it needed someone appointed by the ecclesiastical authority. Over the centuries, communities of the Church have been born and continue to be born in this way. The foundation and head of each community is the bishop. He is the first priest of the Church gathered in a specific place and time. His Church – a specific diocese – is a community of communities. These smaller communities are parishes. Each of them is headed by a priest whom the bishop has ordained and sent to preside over it on his behalf. This is the way the Church has grown and should grow. Today, in the era of promoting the participation of lay persons in the life of the Church, this path cannot and should not be reversed. Since offices and ministries of various kinds are ways of participating in the priesthood of Jesus Christ, they can take shape in only one way: by "emerging" from within the mystery of the Church. It seems that this issue is critical to the realization of the parish as a community of communities, for authentic ecclesial communities will not be formed in the parish if there is no one to lead them. Moreover, it is impossible to shape ministries that have a fully ecclesiastical character if there is no responsibility for a particular community attached to this ministry. Therefore, it is impossible to imagine a community parish without the participation of the laity, whose ministry should have, on the one hand, the character of direct work with a small group with a specific profile of involvement, and on the other hand, the ministry should have the character of coordinating and unifying the ministry of animators. In this hierarchical structure of the parish, it is only its first shepherd – the parish priest – who is able to become its true father. It is due to direct contact and flow of life to the "group of the Twelve," which he, in turn, can have for mothers in the parish communities.

Such a vision for building a parish community is found in the *Directory for the Pastoral Care of the Liturgical Service*, prepared by the Subcommittee on Liturgical Service under the Commission for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments of the Episcopate of Poland published on November 27, 2008 (KEP 2008a).[5] The *Directory* is based on an integral and dynamic vision of the realization of the Church in the parish and assumes that a variety of evangelization, formation, prayer, charity, missionary, and other types of works are undertaken in the community of believers. Each of the said works, however, should be based on individuals

5 The *Directory* offers, inter alia, detailed indications for the preparation for the ministry of the permanent acolyte and lector, as well as the distinguished function of the cantor related to music and singing in the parish, specific tasks of the acolyte, lector and cantor during the celebration of the liturgy, and the tasks of the acolyte, lector and cantor in supporting presbyters and deacons in building up the Church in the daily life of the parish community (KEP 2008a, nos. 35–51).

whom God has chosen and empowered with special grace to perform their tasks well on His behalf and on behalf of the Church. To establish someone for service in the community is to make him a pillar on which a concrete apostolic work carried out in the parish can be built upon. A specific apostolic work reaches its peak and expresses itself most fully in the liturgy, and from there it expands to all areas of life of the parish community (cf. KEP 2008a, no. 50; Brzeziński 2010, 51–59).

> Among the ministers appointed to celebrate the Eucharist, the Church singles out the ministries of the lector and acolyte and invites them not only to perform *functions*, but confers them to *minister* to the community of believers. The Church gives them a gift from God and entrusts them with tasks that they are to fulfill "permanently." This "permanence" should be understood as a response to the calling that God gives to man. No other rationale and invitation is sufficient enough to justify a lifetime ministry. The aforementioned ministries (ministeria) are missions that the bishop entrusts to lay men in the community of the Church. It begins in the liturgy and finds its culmination in it, but it also encompasses the tasks of the acolyte and lector in the daily life of the community (KEP 2008a, no. 32).[6]

The charismatic and hierarchical dimension of the mystery of the Church is completed and clearly displayed in the spousal dimension. Everything in the Church is focused on unity and serves this goal. The Church herself is "sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race" (Second Vatican Council 1964, no. 1). Unity is the purpose of every charism. The hierarchical structure is auxiliary when it comes to unity, and yet its inner beauty and power lie in the mystery of the bridal relationship (cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 2004, nos. 8–12). The bridal dimension of the Church has it that the mystery experienced by the faithful is an encounter between Christ the Bridegroom and the Church the Bride, expressed figuratively by the nuptials. The bridegroom married the community. He gave his life for it. He cleansed it of its sins and adorned it with virtues. He made a perpetual and indissoluble covenant with it. He did this in the Paschal mystery by embracing the entire Church and all her members with His love. The bridal mystery is lived out in the Church in a variety of ways. One can speak of a spousal union between a priest and a community, a consecrated person and Christ, or a husband and his wife. All these ways are participation in the spousal union of Christ and the Church. Each way makes this mystery present and reveals it in a different way. Moreover, each should be visible and lived in the Eucharist. So far, only the priestly (priest community) way is emphasized in our Eucharistic celebrations. The way of marriage and the way of consecrated life

6 Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 1992, no. 1672. It should be noted that the *Directory for the Pastoral Care of the Liturgical Service* bestows a special function in the Church's liturgy and in the life of the community to the cantor and others responsible for music and singing (KEP 2008a, nos. 33–34, 45–49).

remain underestimated. On the spiritual level, every conscious Christian experiences in some way the mystery of the spousal union of Christ and the Church. However, in the liturgical sign, only one dimension of it is manifested. The place of the priest in relation to the community is evident. What remains unclear, however, is the place of husband and wife, who, after all, have much to say about the mystery of the bridal relationship. While marriage is recognized as the basis of social life and the foundation of family life, the way the Eucharist is celebrated seems to contradict this conviction. In the Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem,* John Paul II writes: "As the Redeemer of the world, Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church. The Eucharist is the Sacrament of our Redemption. It is the Sacrament of the Bridegroom and of the Bride." (John Paul II 1988b, no. 26)

The mystery of bridal and marital unity during the Eucharist may be of a different nature. When spouses attend Mass and receive Holy Communion together, it is undoubtedly the most primordial and fundamental sign of the union of their nuptial covenant with the mystery of Christ. When spouses offer one another the sign of peace during the Eucharistic celebration, the beauty of this gesture undoubtedly expresses the truth of the unity of God and man. Masses said for spouses are also a special experience for them. Their participation in the Eucharist on this day as spouses renews their unity. They give themselves anew to Christ in His Church (cf. Szczepaniec 1992b, 347–50). Today, the truth of the spousal relationship between Christ and the Church in the liturgical sign can be expressed in a special way, by the possibility offered to men and women invited to serve together as lectors and acolytes. A fuller involvement of men and women, especially spouses, in the liturgical celebration will help them to better understand how the sacrament of marriage is a method of participation "in the mystery of Christ and the Church." Moreover, all of the faithful gathered can rediscover that they are participating in the mystery of the "nuptials of the Lamb" (cf. Rev 19:7) and should seek to identify themselves with the role of the bride. This would be an opportunity both for married life and for the formation of the parish community in its spousal dimension.

3. The Importance of Ministries in the Formation of the Parish Community

In the ecclesiology of the community, the liturgy as "the source and the summit" remains at the center of the community. This is because it is the epiphany of the Church understood as the community, and its expressive and effective symbol (Blachnicki 2013, 390–95). In implementing the small-group strategy, Catholic parishes therefore possess a unique tool that can be used as a principle of concentration in building parishes as a community of communities. If the liturgy is to represent the principle of concentration of the Church's activities, then first and foremost the source of the Church's ministries must be its inner mystery. Specific ministries are designed to make this mystery "visible" to the eye. They are to form a clear sign of the Church. Moreover, it can be concluded that the sign of the Church is most clearly revealed in the Eucharistic gathering, in which the mystery of the Triune God and the threefold mission of Christ appear in three forms: in the prophetic word, the priestly sacrifice, and the royal banquet. It follows naturally that from within the divine-human mystery emerges the visible form of a threefold ministry: the ministry of the word (lector), the ministry of "action" (acolyte), and the ministry of "celebration" or unification (cantor). This distribution of ministries is thus an embodiment and "revelation" of the threefold mission of the Church (KEP 2008b; Szczepaniec 1992b, 348). It is directly related to the renewal of the liturgical ministries. They are decisive, to a large extent, in creating the image of the Church manifested in the liturgy, as well as the distribution of offices, ministries, and functions in the local community of the Church.[7]

Every baptized person can be invited to perform liturgical functions, whereas ministries (*ministeria*) are offered only to chosen individuals (cf. *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 2003, paras. 65–66). This distinction touches upon the relationship between the function performed in the liturgy, and ministry understood as a person's life vocation in the community of the Church. Ministries grow out of the common baptismal vocation of all Christians and mature as a special vocation for chosen men and women in the community of the Church. The ministry (*ministerium*), however, can only be obtained in one way – through the blessing of the Church. It is not a matter of choice made by the community. The community may nominate a male or female candidate. However, an individual must be admitted to the ministries "through the prescribed liturgical rite" (*Code of Canon Law* 1983, can. 230 § 1). Such a ministry is instituted "for building up the unity of the Church," and not only "for the performance of certain acts." Therefore, acceptance of

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7 The *Directory for the Pastoral Care of the Liturgical Service* states that the tasks of the acolyte during the liturgy include: assisting the priest and deacon during the celebration, distributing, if necessary, the Holy Communion of which he is an extraordinary minister, exposing the Blessed Sacrament for adoration, leading the vigil at the side of the deceased and leading prayers at the funeral at home of the deceased and in the cemetery. Exemplary areas of acolyte's involvement in the life of the parish community are as follows: care for Eucharistic worship in the parish, preparation of liturgical celebrations in the parish (proper preparation of liturgical service teams), ministry to the sick, helping the needy, organizing volunteer work. The lector, in turn, assists presbyters and deacons in proclaiming the word of God except for the Gospel, sings the psalm, recites the intentions of the universal prayer, leads the prayer at the deceased and leads the stations at the home of the deceased, and at the cemetery. In addition to the liturgy, a lector assists pastors in carrying out the ministry of evangelization by: preparing the faithful to receive the sacraments with dignity, assisting in preparing and conducting adult catechesis, engaging in other forms of ministry of the Word in the parish, revitalizing the missionary tasks of the parish, animating the prayer life of the parish, supporting families before and after funerals (KEP 2008a, nos. 35–44).

a specific ministry entails responsibility for a particular community of the faithful (Szczepaniec 1992a, 18–19).

Regarding the relationship between liturgical ministries and the functions performed in the community of the Church, the lector combines and coordinates the function of the *martyria* in the parish. In the liturgical ministry, he is responsible for the liturgy of the word and in the parish community for the extensive liturgical and apostolic formation of evangelization animators. The acolyte coordinates the function of *diakonia* in the parish. He would thus be responsible for the ministry in the liturgy of sacrifice and for the liturgical and diaconal formation of animators of mercy in parish communities. In turn, a person responsible for "celebration" in the liturgy is in charge of animators responsible for "celebration" in the parish, coordinating all kinds of ministries of singing, order, decoration, and others. Lectors and acolytes, performing the highest liturgical ministries in the secular hierarchy, constitute the first small community of life and ministry for the shepherd of the parish. Together with other elected representatives of the parish, they are the "Twelve" of the community that embraces all the basic dimensions of community life. Christ's words, "I know My sheep, and My sheep know Me" (John 10:14), apply to them in the fullest sense (Szczepaniec 1990, 16–18).

By applying the liturgical principle of concentration in building the parish community, all ministries appear first in the liturgy. It is there that the proper tasks of parish members related to word, deed, and celebration are manifested. This liturgical ministry is extended to the *pia exercitia* and finds particular concretization in the community of animators who, being heads of their groups, take responsibility for a concrete dimension of parish life. These groups gradually reach out to all members of the parish, bringing them the richness of Christ's mystery derived from the liturgy and assimilated in *pia exercitia*. Hence, through animators and their groups, the ministry of the priest, and "moderators," the daily life of the entire parish community is distributed. Thanks to this approach, not only will the Eucharist form individual members of the parish community, strengthening them for ministry, but also organize the life of the local Church structurally.

> The three major gifts of God spring from the Eucharist as if from a font: Truth (the liturgy of the word), Life (the liturgy of the sacrifice), and Unity (the liturgy of the banquet). As they enter into everyday life, they are growing gradually and reaching all areas of human life. Furthermore, it is there from where they begin their way back, which is the way to the top. The closer one gets to the summit, the more the various forms of ministry unite to take the most perfect form in the Eucharist itself: a simple and clear sign of the threefold mission representing the mystery of the Triune God. The "embodiment" of this unity between the liturgy and daily life and its 'personal sign' seem to be those who, within the community, take up the principal ministries intended for lay Catholics (Biela 1993, 239).

This approach, which synchronizes the ministries in the liturgy with life, calls for a revision of today's age-related associations with persons involved in liturgical ministries. They should be performed only by adult men and women. The task of children would be to assist the adults and become a sign of representation of all God's people at the altar.

Conclusion

The realization of the Church in the parish resulting from the ecclesiology of communion should reveal the Church in its hierarchical structure, charisms, and in the spousal union with Christ. Hierarchicality demands, among other things, the consistent formation of authentic hierarchicality within the structure of God's people. It should include both the hierarchy and the laity, among whom there should be various degrees of offices, ministries, and functions. However, in the first instance, this is not due to some specific need, but rather the necessity to make the community of the Church present in all its complementarity of gifts. This problem becomes particularly relevant when the ministry of the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion becomes increasingly popular.[8] One cannot escape the impression that the implementation of this ministry has been dominated by practical rationale, while its theological meaning has been diminished. This applies as well to the general attitude towards the diaconate, understood basically as a transitional phase to the priesthood. A deacon's mission is, in this perspective, limited solely to liturgical activities. Therefore, non-liturgical functions that should be the domain of deacons in a diocese and a parish are delegated to bishops and priests (cf. Nolywajka 2011, 265–91). A similar situation is encountered in the relationship between priests and laity. It might be that more than 50% of the tasks performed by priests are "substitute activities." This is the mode of thinking that shapes the entire style of pastoral ministry in parishes. The current stage of the Church's history could be considered as "waking up a sleeping giant." Therefore, it is all the more necessary to carry out Vatican II's postulate that everyone "should do all of, but only, those parts which pertain to his office" (Second Vatican Council 1963, no. 28). Implementation of this principle, however, requires a clear-cut answer to the question of what is a "proper ministry" and what is a "substitute ministry" for bishops, presbyters, deacons, acolytes, lectors, and many others in the Church community. Or, to phrase this question another way, can a parish be a mature missionary community of communities if it does not employ different types of ministries, functions, and charisms?

8 See: KEP 1994; KEP 2006; KEP 2007.

In this context, it is worth asking – How many extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are there in Poland (and beyond), and how many lectors and acolytes have been instituted?[9] And are the latter indispensable for pastoral ministry in our parishes? Much has been written about the importance of the role of the lector and acolyte in the context of the implementation of the *Pastoral Program for the Church in Poland* for 2010–2013, the motto of which was: "The Church as the home and school of communion." It was suggested that Polish dioceses proceed with the establishment of appropriate formation centers for these two groups of ministers. One cannot overestimate, in this context, the role of various types of movements or other religious associations in building the Church as a community. However, they are unable, with few exceptions, to form a team of adults: men and women capable of liturgical-diaconal animation of parish life. The creation of various types of "educational communities" and formation schools was strongly encouraged by Pope John Paul II; so much so that he dedicated the entire fifth chapter of his exhortation *Christifideles Laici* to the issue of formation of lay Catholics. The fact that the pope called the discovery of a "personal vocation and mission" and preparation to take on tasks in accordance with one's charism in the Church "the focal point of the whole work of formation," is a clear sign of the pastoral activity of the Church (cf. John Paul II 1988a, nos. 58, 62, 63).[10] This is why the Church faces an important task of putting the new regulations and rites concerning permanent lectors and acolytes into practice (cf. Dyduch 2016, 11). In this context, Makowski asks a provocative question: "Since for 60 years not every diocese in Poland has trained men for such a ministry, is there a need for women?" (Makowski 2021). It is worth recalling John Paul II in this context, who in the *Christifideles Laici*, stated that "above all, the acknowledgment in theory of the active and responsible presence of woman in the Church must be realized in practice" (John Paul II 1988a, no. 51; Kowalczyk 2021, 155–66).

Summing up, it can be said that the introduction of the established ministries of lector and acolyte into the life of the Church can contribute to the revitalization of various sections of parish life. The aim will be reached when the ecclesial dimension of each of these ministries is properly understood. A variety of evangelization, formation, prayer, charity, and other works is undertaken in the community of believers. Each of them should be based on individuals chosen by God, enriched with appropriate charisms, and strengthened with special grace to perform the assigned task well in His name and in the name of the Church. Establishing lay men and women for

9 So far, several dioceses in Poland have taken on this task. For example, on April 7, 2019, Bishop Józef Szamocki granted the ministry of permanent acolyte to 26 men from 14 parishes in the Diocese of Toruń. A year earlier, they became permanent lectors through the ministry of the Bishop of Toruń Wiesław Śmigiel. (See: Kowalczyk 2021, 16).

10 The Second Synod of the Archdiocese of Katowice points this out emphatically, recommending the establishment of an Archdiocesan Center for Pastoral Formation. (See: Skworc 2016, nos. 8, 11, 20, 45, 47, 51, 54, 276, 301, 307, 370, 393, 394, 408, 409, 410, 412, 414).

the permanent ministries of lector and acolyte should be a new step in putting this truth into practice in the life of parish communities. To establish someone for service in the community is to make him or her a pillar on which the concrete apostolic work realized in the parish rests. The apostolic work reaches its peak and expresses itself most fully in the liturgy and, from there, it expands to all areas of community life. Accordingly, the permanent establishment of lay men and women for the ministry of lector and acolyte should be based on the discernment of a God-given vocation and adequate preparation that includes not only liturgical matters but also the ability to undertake a specific mission in the parish community (KEP 2008a, nos. 50–51).

Translated by Michał Nolywajka

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VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 303–323
Received: Oct 2, 2023 | Accepted: Feb 16, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

References to Scripture in the Old Polish *History of the Three Kings*. Quotations, Allusions, Echoes

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Abstract: The article analyzes the references to Scripture in *Historyja trzech kroli* (History of the Three Kings), an Old Polish apocryphal work preserved in a copy from 1544. The references to the Bible are divided into quotations, allusions and echoes. Quotations were introduced either by reference to a particular location or author of the biblical text, or to an unspecified "prophet" or "evangelist." Sometimes they were not signaled in any way. Then the quotation could only be identified by recognizing the passage to which it refers. Allusions to the Old and New Testaments mostly consisted of references to characters, places, and events, without quoting the text of Scripture itself. The featured echoes most often consisted of narrative parallelisms between the story of the Wise Men from the East and the first Church. References to Scripture in the apocryphal work served to emphasize typology and create parallelisms between biblical history and the story of the three kings. The text emphasizes the role of the Gentiles in salvation history while belittling the role of Israelites.

Keywords: Old Polish apocrypha, *History of the Three Kings*, three kings, biblical references, typology, quotations, allusions, echoes

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose and Method of Research

The purpose of this article is to describe the references to the Old and New Testaments in *Historyja trzech kroli* (History of the Three Kings). The analysis is part of the trend of research on how Old Polish authors worked with sources. I will organize the material by referencing the rhetorical hierarchy of intertextual references presented by John Hollander (2018, 64), and methodologically developed by Christopher A. Beetham (2008, 15–36). So far, it has not been used in the analysis of medieval Polish-language texts. I will distinguish between quotations, allusions and echoes.[1] The unmistakable type of reference is quotation. It is an intentional, explicit, literal or near-literal citation of the content of another text. It can be signaled

1 Biblical studies organized possible forms of intertextual references in various ways. Some scholars did not distinguish between allusions and echoes (Hays 1989), while others distinguished as many as five categories (Porter 2006). I consider the adopted division into quotations, allusions and echoes to be the most suitable for the apocryphal material I am working with and, at the same time, the most clearly methodologically outlined. My understanding of these terms is taken from Beetham (2008, 15–24).

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16684

by formal elements of the quotation: indicating the authorship, referring to the text from which the words are taken, or to the author of these words (Rojszczak-Robińska 2021). However, sometimes the quotation has no formal distinguishing features and is recognized only through familiarity with the quoted source. Another type of reference is allusion. I will understand it as a literary device used intentionally by the author, referring the recipient to a specific, identifiable source from which a certain element must be transferred to a new context to fully understand the correct message (Beetham 2008, 20). This device is less explicit than quotation. Echo is the last mode of reference, the most subtle of those discussed. It represents a reference, whether conscious or not, to a particular other text, the reading of which is not necessary to understand the message, but sheds new light on it. The line between allusion and echo can be difficult to grasp – I consider the importance of recognizing the reference for the understanding of the text to be its most important determinant. The correct reading of the text depends on catching the allusion, while noticing the echo enriches the interpretation, but does not determine it.

1.2. Subject of Research: *History of the Three Kings*

History of the Three Kings is a translation of John of Hildesheim's 1364 Latin work, *Historia Trium Regum*, which was popular in the Middle Ages and has been copied and translated many times (Kaliszuk 1999, 449), also in Poland (Piacentini 1997, 21). John of Hildesheim's work is said to be a synthesis of all the legends concerning the three kings (Kaliszuk 1999, 447). The text stands out from other biblical-apocryphal narratives. It mostly has the character of a hagiographic story with elements of exotic descriptions of distant lands. The work recounts the origin of the three kings and the gifts they brought to the infant Jesus, as well as the life and journey of the Wise Men, the mission of St. Thomas among the Gentiles, and the activities of St. Helena in the Holy Land and her contribution to finding various relics. The work ends with a description of the translation of the remains of the three kings to Cologne and praise of the city.

Apocryphal motifs appear in the text primarily in connection with the depiction of the Nativity of Jesus Christ and the bowing of the Wise Men. Traces of quasi-canonicity are also present in the descriptions of the Gentiles' wait for the fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the star in the East – the text contains extensive references to rulers and events known from the Old Testament.

The Polish work can be found in the 1544 *Kodeks Wawrzyńca z Łaska* (Codex of Laurentius de Lasco), stored in the National Library of Poland under reference no. 3040 III. In addition to this work, two other Old Polish apocrypha are inscribed in the codex – the *Ewangelia Nikodema* (Gospel of Nicodemus), in two versions, and the *Sprawa chędoga o męce Pana Chrystusowej* (Comely Discours about the Passion of Lord Christ). The text under examination occupies leaves 153 *recto* to 260 *recto* and is a copy of an earlier work. The work of the translator and copyist in the Middle Ages involved the creative processing and compilation of the texts he knew, the addition or removal of selected passages (Rojszczak-Robińska 2016, 19). Having access to the only surviving copy, and probably a copy from a copy, lest I get lost in terminology, and at the same time to emphasize the creative nature of the work, I will write about the author of *History of the Three Kings* without discerning what comes from the copyist and what comes from the translator, and how much of their work was reproductive and how much creative.

1.3. State of Research

Antoni Kalina was the first to write about the *Codex of Laurentius de Lasco*, focusing on the Polish language of the relic (Kalina 1879). *History of the Three Kings* was mentioned several times by Aleksander Brückner, each time criticizing the text – the language, the translation, and the way the copy was made: "The unknown translator transferred mechanically, word for word, the Latin text into Polish, with so little regard for the requirements and spirit of his own language that without comparing it with the Latin text it would be difficult to find sense and order in his Polish" (Brückner 1904b, 56). The researcher described the translation as "slavish, tarnished by numerous errors, sometimes caused by a misreading of the Latin manuscript and multiplied by a careless Polish copyist" (Brückner 1904a, 17). He also predicted that "the whole [...] will probably never be announced in print – whether due to the Polish language or due to the mistakes of the translator" (Brückner 1904a, 17). These words of Brückner remained valid for a long time. *History of the Three Kings* was published a couple of times in fragments (Vrtel-Wierczyński 1959, 322–34; 1995, 111–14, Wydra and Rzepka 1996, 213–32; 2004, 148–53). Between 1952 and 1955, Stefan Vrtel-Wierczyński worked on a full edition, but never completed the work (Wydra 2019, VIII). A photocopy of the *Codex of Laurentius de Lasco* was published in 2019 (Wydra 2019). That same year, the Staropolskie Apokryfy Nowego Testamentu website (Old Polish New Testament Apocrypha) published a full transcription and transliteration of History of the Three Kings.[2] Access to the modern edition, as well as the increase in interest in Old Polish apocryphal literature observed since the turn of the century, have increased the researchers' interest in the apocrypha – however, it was usually analyzed together with other texts of the Codex of Laurentius de Lasco (Osiewicz 2020, Masłej 2021, Nowak-Pasterska et al. 2021) or

2 Project financed by the National Science Centre (Narodowe Centrum Nauki – NCN) entitled: "Początki języka polskiego i kultury religijnej w świetle średniowiecznych apokryfów Nowego Testamentu. Uniwersalne narzędzie do badań polskich tekstów apokryficznych" [The Origins of Polish Language and Religious Culture in the Light of the Medieval Apocrypha of the New Testament. Universal Tool for Research on Polish Apocryphal Texts] (no. 2017/26/E/HS2/00083), under the leadership of prof. UAM, dr hab. Dorota Rojszczak-Robińska, apocrypha.amu.edu.pl.

when conducting broader research on legends concerning the Three Kings (Kowalewicz 1960) or Old Polish New Testament apocrypha.[3] There are several studies devoted to the text itself (Kowalewicz 1973, Sjöberg 1978, Adamczyk 1994, Piacentini 1997, Bryłka-Baranowska 2023), but it remains largely under-researched. The Polish translation of *Historia Trium Regum* is imperfect – in many places it appears that the author copies the syntactic structures used in the source without understanding (Brückner 1904b, Kowalewicz 1973, Piacentini 1997). On the other hand, contrary to claims of a slavish approach to the Latin text, the translator did not always remain faithful to the source: he deviated from the source material – often in parts of the text that are theologically marked (Bryłka-Baranowska 2023). In the study of Old Polish apocrypha, much attention is now paid to the sources of these texts (Rojszczak-Robińska, Deskur, and Stelmach 2021).

2. Analysis of Biblical References

2.1. Quotations

History of the Three Kings features direct quotes from the Gospels woven into the narrative. In this way, the author introduced the story of Nativity itself (165r/13–166r/7), the visit of the Magi to Herod (183v/3–184r/7), the bowing of the Wise Men (184r/7–16; 186v/16–187r/2; 193v/7–8), the presentation of Jesus at the temple (199r/7–19) and the flight to Egypt (199v/6–12; 207v/2–16). Each time a longer quotation from the Gospels is signaled with direct formulas: “Jakoż mowi ewanjelista” [As the Evangelist says], “Bo jako mowi ewanjelista” [For as the Evangelist says], “Potem jako mowi ewanjelista” [Then as the Evangelist says], “jako Ewanjelija powiada” [as the Evangelist speaks]. In one case, St. Luke is indicated directly as the source of a quotation – “jako tu święty Łukasz mowi” [as St. Luke says here]. The author quotes larger sections of the biblical text, occasionally interrupting the narrative to add information, clarify, or elaborate. Often the transition from quoting an inspired text to more casual storytelling is not clearly signaled. Sometimes the author continues his story, formulating possible questions from the reader and answering them through references to other sources:

> **O tem, czegodla** ci trzej krolewie pierwej do Jerusalem niżli do Betlejem przyszli, **wiele ksiąg rozmajicie wypowiadają**, o ktorych wiele rzeczy a przyczyn są pisany. Ale między inszymi rzeczami a przyczynami była jedna przyczyna, iże […] (184r/16–21) [Many books tell in various ways about the reasons why the three kings came first to Jerusalem and not to Bethlehem, of which many things and causes are described. But among other things

[3] A full bibliography on Old Polish apocrypha is collected at https://apocrypha.amu.edu.pl/elabo?id=4.

and causes there was one cause, that (...)], **A jako albo ktorym obyczajem** błogosławiona dziewica panna Maryja z młodzieńcem synem swoim do Ejiptu przyszła była i jako sie stąd tam zasie wrociła, **w księgach o młodości Jesusowej** tamo szerzej a dostatecznie najdzie. (184r/16–21) [And how or by what means the blessed virgin maiden Mary with her young son came to Egypt, and how she returned from there, can be found more extensively and sufficiently in the books about the youth of Jesus].

The additions introduced into the biblical text seemingly look like asides with metatextual reference:

A zategoż stała się jest z anjołem wielkość rycerstwa niebieskiego chwalącego Boga a mowiącego: "Chwała na wysokości Bogu, a na ziemi pokoj ludziom dobrej wolej." **A mamy wiedzieć**, iże Betlejem nie było ani jest wielkiej ważności, tako iże tamo są wiele komor a jaskinie, a leży od Jeruzalem we dwu milu onego kraju, a ninie miasteczko nie jest wielkie, a rzecz<ono> jest miasto Dawidowo, a to dlatego, iże Dawid jest się był z niego narodził. (166r/3–14) [And at once the angel was accompanied a great group of heavenly knights who praised God and said: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased." And we are to know that Bethlehem was not, nor is it now, of great importance, and that there are many stables and caves there, and it lies from Jerusalem two miles of the country, and now the village is not big, and it is called the city of David, because David was born in it.]

In fact, the narrative is full of such "asides" that sometimes interrupt the actual story for several pages. The phenomenon of describing everything and treating every piece of information related to sacred history on an equal level in *History of the Three Kings* was discussed by Maria Adamczyk:

The whole work, similar to a painstaking chronicler's account, not omitting (almost) any detail, shrouded in digressions treated as equally cognitively important components of the "summa," brings to mind the metaliterary statement of Master Wincenty Kadłubek, also justifying the need for such divagation: "for who would pass utterly indifferently the grapes or figs hanging on either side of the path, when they almost fall into his mouth by themselves? Thus, it is seemly to cheer oneself up with such delicacies" (Adamczyk 1994, 146)

There are two times when the formula "as the Evangelist says" introduces short quotations:

Potem jako mowi ewanjelista: "A odpowiedź wziąwszy we śniech, tedy gwiazda, ktora im uprzedzała albo przed nimi szła, więcej się im nie ukazowała, ale już do ziem, do krolestw swych, człowieczym obyczajem gospod we dnie i w nocy, <po> drodze idąc, szukali a żądali" (193v/7–13; cf. Matt 2:12) [Then as the Evangelist says: "And as they received the answer in a dream, the star which guided them, or went ahead of them, appeared to them no more; but when returning to their lands, their kingdoms, while walking on the road, they sought and demanded inns at day and night as is custom for man"], I część mirry z winem zmieszawszy a potym ustom Jesusewym na krzyżu pić dali, jako mowi ewanjelista: "A dali są jemu z mirrą wino," a drugą część mirry Nikodem, książę żydowskie, pospołu z aloes i z inszymi maściami przydał a włoż<ył> w grob Boży" (204v/6–12, cf. Matt 27:34) [And having mingled one part of myrrh with wine, they held it to the lips of Jesus on the cross to drink, as the Evangelist says: "And they gave unto him wine with myrrh," and the other part of myrrh was gifted by Nicodemus, the prince of the Jews, together with aloes and other ointments and placed in the sepulchre of God].

The work also features unsignaled evangelical quotations, for example, speaking of Christ, the author recalls:

Bog, ktory tedy z dziewice panny Maryje przez obłapienia ręku, ale mocą bostwa swego raczył sie narodzić na ten świat, **ktory złożył mocarze z stolca, a powyszył pokorne**, to jabłko, ktore wszystek świat znamionowało, swą pokornością a mocy wielkością we mgnieniu oka starł a wniwecz obrocił (193r/1–8, cf. Luke 1:52) [The God who at that time deigned to be born into this world from the virgin maiden Mary, without bodily contact but by the power of His divinity, who brought down the rulers from their thrones and exalted the humble; this apple, which signified the whole world, by His humility and great power, in the twinkling of an eye, He obliterated and turned it into nothing].

History of the Three Kings quotes almost the entire second chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew (excluding verses 14–18) and partially the second chapter of the Gospel according to St. Luke (excluding verses 15–21, 23, 25–27, 31–37, 39–52). Thus, from the entire chapter of Matthew's Gospel, the apocryphal work omits only the description of the slaughter of the innocents and the prophecy from the Book of Hosea (2:15) concerning the calling of the Son of God out of Egypt, even though the text describes the Holy Family's escape from persecution. The author therefore abandoned the type lining, hinted at by the cited biblical passage itself. This seems to contradict the generally observed tendency to emphasize the relationship between the Old and New Testament and the narrative *horror vacui*. But in fact, it was the attempt to describe everything that influenced the omission of Hosea's prophecy. In Matt 2:15, the entire stay of the Holy Family in Egypt is shortened to the phrase "and remained there until the death of Herod,"[4] while the author of *History of the Three Kings* described the events of the stay in Egypt in more detail, so he omitted this verse in the translation.

4 All English-language Scripture citations per Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (RSVCE, n.d.), accessed online at https://www.biblegateway.com/ [February 1, 2024].

H*istory of the Three Kings* quotes messianic prophecies. The most frequent quote in the text is the prophecy of Balaam from the Book of Numbers: "a star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel" (24:17). This quotation is a recurring motif upon which the entire first part of the apocrypha is built, depicting the historical story of waiting for the Messiah. In the text, the prophecy is cited five times, each time in a slightly altered form:

1. "Wyniknie gwiazda z Jakoba a powstanie człowiek z Isr<ae>l, to jest z żydowstwa, a będzie panował wszytkiemu ludu" (154r/4–7) [A star shall arise from Jacob, and a man shall arise from Isr<ae>l, that is from the Jews, and he shall reign over all the people]
2. „Wyniknie gwiazda z plemienia Jakob, a powstanie człowiek z pokolenia żydowskiego, a będzie panował wszytkiemu ludu" (156r/7–10) [A star shall arise from the tribe of Jacob, and a man shall arise from the tribe of the Jews, and he shall reign over all the people]
3. „A wszakoż on nie był człowiek, ktory miał powstać z Żydowstwa a ktory miał panować wszystkiemu ludu" (161r/6–8) [And yet he was not the man who was to rise from the Jews and who was to reign over all the people]
4. „Wzejdzie a wyniknie gwiazda z plemienia Jakob, a powstanie człowiek z Israel, to jest z pokolenia żydowskiego, a będzie panował wszytkiemu ludu" (162v/7–11) [A star shall rise and emerge from the tribe of Jacob, and a man shall arise from Israel, that is from the tribe of the Jews, and he shall reign over all the people]
5. „Wyniknie gwiazda z plemienia Jakob, et cetera" (163r/6–7) [A star will arise from the tribe of Jacob, et cetera].

There was a change in the context of the use of these quotes in the apocrypha. The prophet Balaam (the text also testifies to a variant spelling of the name, Balaan) is presented as an unambiguously positive figure, with no references to bribery, persuading the Israelites to worship Baal, God's wrath or death in the war against the Midianites – so the text departs from the Judaic and New Testament traditions, in which Balaam is a figure of a perverse counselor and evil teacher (cf. Num 31:8, 16; 2 Pet 2:15; Jude 1:11; Rev 2:14). In *History of the Three Kings*, Balaam is a Gentile who was the first to whom the coming and reign of Christ was revealed. According to the text, he also prophesied about the arrival of the three kings, and his vision is preached not to Balak, but to Cyrus. Meanwhile, Cyrus himself is portrayed as the ruler not only of the Persians, but also of the Chaldeans. The apocryphal description therefore combines figures that were actually separated by several centuries to present an idea consistent with the author's intention: the Gentiles (treated as an essentially homogeneous group, despite the later separate description of the kingdoms of the Wise Men from the East) had been expecting a miracle and the Messiah since the time of Balaam, and to this end they developed the field of astrology (in the text, astrology is presented as the science of celestial things and the course of the planets).

The apocrypha also invokes the prophecy of the virgin birth from Isaiah (7:14). This passage is also shown in an altered context: the warning given to Ahaz in the work is addressed to his son, Hezekiah. This technique facilitated the author's narrative transition to the description of the astronomical sign for extending the years of Hezekiah's life. The apocryphal author sees in this miracle a type for the star in the East. The passage reads:

> Tedy czasow Esechijasza, krola Juda, prorokował Isajasz o dziewiczym rodzaju mowiąc chwalebnie: "Oto owa dziewica pocznie a porodzi syna, a będzie wezwano jimię jego Emanuel – Bog." A tego Izajasza proroka czasow ten isty krol Juda, Esechijasz, niemogł aż na śmierć, ktoremu gdyż ten isty Isajasz jimieniem Bożym powiadał jemu, iż mu sie śmierć przybliżała, tedy ten isty Ezechijasz krol płakał, a to nie dla bojaźni śmierci, ale iże syna nie miał, ktorego by po sobie dziedzicem ostawił, a iż <t>y obiaty Abramowy a Dawidowy i proroctwa <Balaam i> Izajaszowy w nim miełyby stać a zaginąć. Tedy sie nad nim zmiłował a zlutował, więc piętnaście lat zdrowia żywotu jego przydał, na ktorych to on Esechijasz znamienia prosił, iżby słuńce wspak sie wracało naprzeciwko swemu wschodu. A tak sie stało, iże sie zasie wracało, a tedy Kaldei, ktorzy tych czasow w astrologii (w tej nauce o rzeczach niebieskich), pazdrocząc, barzo sobie lubowali, ujrzawszy tako niewidane a niezwykłe znamię w niebie i na słońcu, nad zwyczaj barzo się zdziwili. A usłyszaws<zy> sławę, iże dla Ezechijasza, krola Juda, to znamię sie stało, tedy jemu barzo wielkie dary posłali, a onego ch<wali>ć u<myś>lili. Ale iże Ezechijasz z wielkiej swego serca prostości w pychę wielką serca swego podniosł sie jest, tedy Bog wszechmogący nijako naprzeciwko jemu jest sie poruszył a rozniewał, tedy wszytkie rzeczy, ktore Kaldeum, onej to ziemie ludziam i posłom, ukazał, do Babilonijej dlatego pobrany być temu istemu Ezechijaszewi krolewi przezeń, Izajaszewi zupełniej ukazał. Bo aczkoli Ezechijasz, krol Juda, był sie narodził i w słońcu dla jego tako niesłyc<ha>ne a niezwykłe znamię było sie stało, a wszakoż on nie był człowiek, ktory miał powstać z Żydowstwa a ktory miał panować wszytkiemu ludu, jako Balaam prorokował. (159v/19–161r/9, cf. 2 Kgs 20:1–21) [Then in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, Isaiah prophesied about the virgin birth, saying praisingly: "Behold, this virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be Emmanuel – God." And in the days of this Isaiah the prophet, this king of Judah, Hezekiah, fell sick to death, and when this Isaiah, in the name of God, told him that death was approaching then this king Hezekiah wept, and this not because of fear of death, but because he had no son to leave as an heir, and that these promises of Abram and David, and the prophecies of Balaam and Isaiah would cease and perish with him. Then he had mercy on him and took pity on him, so that fifteen years of health were added to his life, as proof of which Hezekiah asked for a sign to make the sun go back towards its East. And so it came to pass that it did go backwards, and then the Chaldeans, who at that time were very fond of studying astrology (the science of heavenly bodies), having seen such an unprecedented and unusual phenomenon in the sky and the sun, were very astonished. And having heard the tidings that this phenomenon had occured for Hezekiah, king of Judah, they then sent him very great gifts, and resolved to praise him alone. But because Hezekiah, out of the great simplicity of his

heart, yielded to a great pride of heart, therefore God almighty was offended and wrathful towards him, and therefore all the things that he (Hezekiah) showed to Chaldea, that land, to the people and to the messengers, for this reason He (God) fully ordered Isaiah to take them to Babylonia from that said Hezekiah king. For although Hezekiah, king of Judah, was born, and such an unheard of and remarkable phenomenon happened for him in the sun, he was not the man who was to rise from the Jews, and who was to reign over all the people, as Balaam prophesied.]

This, as can be seen, is the 2 Kgs 25, which is summarized and commented on through the prism of messianic predictions. Hezekiah's fear of death and the miracle itself are shown in this light. The passage highlights the interest of the Chaldeans – learned astrologers – in the phenomenon. They reacted to the miracle as the kings would later react to the sight of a star in the east: they brought gifts and came to glorify the born king. The Apocrypha also explicitly indicates that although a king of Judah was born and accompanied by an astronomical miracle, he was not yet the one referred to in Balaam's prophecy. Recalling this story was meant to show that the Gentiles had been preparing for the coming of Jesus since the time of Balaam.

In *History of the Three Kings*, a supposed prophecy from the Book of Daniel is also read in the context of the Gentiles: "Gdyż przydzie święty nad świętymi (rozumiej Bog wszechmogący), tedy przestanie niedowiarstwo wasze" (172r/16–18) [When the holy of holies (understand God Almighty) comes, then your unbelief shall cease]. The apocryphal text indicates that prophet Daniel's prediction of the "cessation of unbelief" was realized for the Gentiles in the coming of Christ. The problem is that similar words do not appear in the Book of Daniel, contrary to the information in the text: "aby sie napełniło proroctwo Danijela proroka rzekąc…" (172r/14–15) [so that the prophecy of Daniel the prophet may be fulfilled, which said...]. The Polish text follows the Latin source, which reads: "impleretur prophetia Danielis, qui inter alia sic ait: «Cum veniet sanctus sanctorum, cessabit unctio vestra»." The quotation in this wording is given by Pseudo-Augustine in his sermon *Contra Judaeos Paganos et Arianos sermo de Symbolo*, indicating Dan 9:24 as the location: "Cum venerit, inquit, Sanctus sanctorum, cessabit unctio (Id. IX, 24)."[5] The sermon was popular in the Middle Ages, and was used in liturgical dramas, often Christmas dramas (Sepet 1867, Kretzmann 1916, Young 1922, Reeve 2006, Symes 2012). A frequent motif was the procession of Old Testament prophets delivering their messianic prophecies – among them was Daniel uttering the words quoted in *History of the Three Kings*, but also other prophets referenced in the apocrypha, including Balaam and Isaiah. It could be, then, that liturgical dramas were one of John of Hildesheim's sources.

5 Pseudo-Augustinus, *Contra Judaeos, Paganos et Arianos sermo de Symbolo*, PL 42, 1123–24. Jacques-Paul Migne includes the sermon among the works of St. Augustine, but it is considered a pseudo-epigraph by contemporaries.

Even modern scholars cite the siglum "Dan 9:24" after Pseudo-Augustine when discussing the prophecy of the cessation of unbelief (Symes 2012, 40). Pseudo-Augustine in his sermon does not quote but repeatedly refers to the Old Testament books.[6] In the analyzed example, he introduces an element of rhetorical dialogue – he first asks Daniel to testify about Christ, and then gives Daniel's supposed words, which are a distant rendering of Dan 9:24. The actual prophecy in the Book of Daniel refers to the anointing ("ungatur") and the Holy of Holies ("Sanctus sanctorum"). During the stated period of seventy weeks, transgression and sin are to cease, and righteousness is to come. Pseudo-Augustine, in his sermon against the Jews, interprets this passage not only christologically (Christ is the Holy of Holies), but also as a prediction of the cessation of the special "anointing" of the Jews – with the fulfillment of the Old Testament and the advent of the New Covenant, the chosenness of Israel passed to all mankind. This interpretation was perpetuated, which was influenced by the use of the sermon in liturgical dramas, and found its way into *Historia Trium Regum* as well. However, the Polish author does not mention the anointing, but rather "unbelief," as that which was to cease with the coming of Christ. He does so most likely because, as elsewhere in the text, he interpreted the prophecy in the context of the Gentiles rather than Jews:

> A wszakoż wszytcy ludzie w onych wszystkich stronach wschodnich, w Indyjej i w Parsyjej, i w Kaldei, jawnie wiedzieli, iże Herod był cudzoziemiec, od cesarza i od Rzymianow krol Żydowstwa był ustawion, a nie był z plemienia ani z pokolenia krolewskiego rodzaju żydowskieg<o nar>odzon, jako było onych czasow, gdy Bog-człowiek narodził sie był, a to dlatego, aby sie napełniło proroctwo Danijela proroka rzekąc: "Gdyż przydzie święty nad świętymi (rozumiej Bog wszechmogący), tedy przestanie niedowiarstwo wasze." (172r/5–18) [And all the people in all the eastern parts, in India, and in Persia, and in Chaldea, knew openly that Herod was a foreigner, appointed by the emperor and by the Romans the king of the Jews, and he was not descended from the tribe or from the royal generation of the Jewish race, as it was in those days, when the God-Man was born; and this was so that the prophecy of Daniel the prophet may be fulfilled, which said: "When the holy of holies (understand God Almighty) comes, then your unbelief shall cease."]

This is another example of the author of *History of the Three Kings* introducing changes in translation (Bryłka-Baranowska 2023). However, this is a special case, as previous research indicates that Scripture (especially the Book of Psalms, but also the prophetic books), due to their use in medieval education and their prevalence in scholarly circles, were often translated independently, often in a faithful manner

6 For example, he does so at the beginning of the same chapter: "Veniat et ille Daniel sanctus, juvenis quidem aetate, senior vero scientia ac mansuetudine, convincat omnes falsos testes: sicut convicit seniores impudicos (Dan. XIII, 47), ita suo testimonio Christi conterat inimicos."

(Rojszczak-Robińska 2020; 2023b). The analyzed fragment of *History of the Three Kings* proves that, at least in this case, the author did not refer to his own knowledge of Scripture, but mediated the quotation from *Historia Trium Regum*, while introducing changes to it. Perhaps if he had been able to refer to a familiar passage from the Book of Daniel, he would have remained faithful to it. Augustine's authority (Rojszczak 2007) and the fact that the prophecy in this form was better suited to the content of the work may also have played a role in this. However, these are conjectures that cannot be conclusively resolved.

Accusing the Jews of unfaithfulness, the author cites a prophecy from the blessing of Jacob:

> A dlatego krześcijany jich zdradliwość z jich patryjarchy Jakoba sromocą a gańbią, ktory tako mowił: "Nie będzie oddalona cześć z Żydowstwa, a książę z pokolenia jego, aleź przydzie, ktory ma być posłan, a on będzie odkupienie ludu" (172v/7–12, cf. Gen 49:10) [And therefore the Christians their treachery from their patriarch Jacob humbled and disgraced, who said thus: "The glory shall not depart from the Jews, and the prince from his generation, until he shall come who shall be sent, and he shall be the redemption of the people.]

The prophetic quotation read typologically in *History of the Three Kings* in a literal way are the opening verses of the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah (60:1–3):

> A w onej to mgle i w ciemności gwiazdę są stracili, jako Izajasz prorok mowi: "Powstań, oświeć Jerusalem, iżeć przychodzi światłość twoja a chwała Boża na tobie weszdła <jest>. Iże owa ciemności przykryją ziemię, a mgła przykryje ludzie, nad tobą zaprawdę wejdzie Pan, a chwała jego w tobie będzie widziana. A będą chodzić ludzie w światłości twojej, a krolewie w jasności wschodu twego." (180r/9–18) [And in this fog and in the darkness they have lost [sight of] the star, as Isaiah the prophet says: "Arise, enlighten Jerusalem, for your light has come and the glory of God has risen over you. For that darkness shall cover the earth, and fog shall cover the people, but the Lord shall verily come upon you, and his glory shall be seen in you. And men shall walk in your light, and kings in the brightness of your rising."]

The author, to emphasize the fulfillment of the prophecy, described the entrance of the kings into Jerusalem and the subsequent fog and darkness, obscuring the star in the East. In the apocrypha, Isaiah's prediction is realized in a literal way, which in a way takes away the depth and spiritual meaning of the prophecy. In addition, the place where the kings stopped because of the darkness according to the apocrypha is the foot of Calvary. Thus, the author alluded to later New Testament events.

The later part of the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, traditionally associated with the bowing of the Wise Men, has also been referred literally to the moment the kings entered Jerusalem:

> A to ono miasto zewsząd oblegli i ogarnęli, jako mowi Izajasz prorok: "O Jerusalem, przydzie tobie mocność a wielkość ludu rozmajitego, obkwitość a wielkość wielbrądow ogarnie ciebie, dromedary Madian i Effa, ci wszytcy z S<aba> przydą, złoto a kadzidło nosząc, wszytki źwierzęta i wszytko bydło Cedar zgromadzi sie około ciebie" (183r/7–14). [And the city was besieged and overrun from all sides, as Isaiah the prophet says: "O Jerusalem, the might and greatness of various peoples shall come to you, the abundance and greatness of camels shall cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and of Ephah, all those of Sheba shall come, and gold and frankincense they shall carry, and all the beasts and all the cattle of Cedar shall gather around you."]

The Polish author deviates from *Historia Trium Regum* in several places, rendering the quotation in the wording familiar from the Vulgate: he changed the order of the toponyms mentioned and dropped the conjunction before "all those of Sheba." This would suggest that he relied on his knowledge of Scripture or that he used another copy of the work of John of Hildesheim. This is because *Historia Trium Regum* differs from the biblical text in such detail that it cannot be ruled out that another copy of it would have sounded different.

When the Wise Men are depicted with their gifts in *History of the Three Kings*, Caspar is shown as the black king of Tarsis. Shortly thereafter, the author compiled two quotations – from Ps 72:9 and the Isa 60:14, attributing them to a single, unidentified "prophet":

> […] jako prorok mowi: "Przed onym będ<ą> padać Murzynowie, a nieprzyjaciele jego ziemię będą lizać. Przydą do ciebie, ktorzy uwłaczali a urągali tobie, a będą chwalić ślady nog twoich" (188r/11–15) [(...) as the prophet says: "Before him shall the Negroes fall, and his enemies shall lick the ground. Those who have belittled and insulted you shall come to you, and they shall praise the marks of your feet"].

The compilation of these two Old Testament passages comes from the work of John of Hildesheim and was translated by the Polish author based on *Historia Trium Regum*.

In *History of the Three Kings*, most of the quotations are mediated – whether it is precisely through the translation of *Historia Trium Regum* or by citing Gospel passages that contain an Old Testament prophecy. This happens, for example, with the prophecy from the Book of Micah, which was introduced into the apocryphal text as part of the quotation of the Gospel according to St. Matthew:

> W Betlejem Jude. Bo zaprawdę pisano jest przez proroka mowiącego: "I ty, Betlejem, ziemio Juda, niekakie nie jesteś mniejsza w książętach Juda. Bo z ciebie zaprawdę wynidzie albo wyniknie książę, ktore będzie rządziło lud moj israelski" (183v/14–184r/1) [In Bethlehem of Judah. For verily it is written by the prophet who says: "And you, O Bethlehem,

> land of Judah, are by no means lesser among the princes of Judah. For from you[r land] shall verily come or arise a prince who shall rule over my people of Israel"].

The scribe quotes the prophecy as it appears in Matthew.

In other Old Polish apocrypha, it has been observed that biblical passages were translated by authors independently, directly from Scripture (Rojszczak-Robińska 2016; 2020). The same is evidenced by an analysis of the ways in which the prophecy of Balaam is cited in *History of the Three Kings* (Rojszczak-Robińska 2023a). The passage with the supposed prophecy from the Book of Daniel indicates a dependence on a non-canonical source, but this example proves nothing, as there is no biblical text to which the Polish author could refer in this case. In this context, the change in translation is puzzling, possibly indicating an awareness of the non-canonical nature of the quote. There is no known translation of Scripture that the Polish writer could have used, so the question of source selection in the case of mediated quotations is still unresolved – and is likely to remain so.

2.2. Allusions

The author of *History of the Three Kings* alludes to well-known biblical events, figures or places. Such was the case with the comparison of the journey of the kings from the East to the relocation of the prophet Habakkuk:

> Bowiem ten Bog, ktory w Starym Zakonie Abakuka proroka z żydowskiej ziemie aż do Babilonijej, do Danijela proroka, ktory był wsadzon między lwy, aby ji pożerły, posłał, a ten więcej niżli przez sto dni niżli sie wrocił a onogo za włosy wywiodł, teże ten Bog, gdyż sie począł Zakon Nowy, t<e>dy tych trzech krolow z Indyjej i z Kaldei, i ze s<łońca> wschodu we trzechnaście dni był mocen przewieść tamo do Żydowstwa, takie też przez żadnego nagabania ani przez szkodzenia (179v/5–16, cf. Dan 14:33–39) [For this God, who in the Old Law sent Habakkuk the prophet from the Jewish land as far as Babylonia, to Daniel the prophet, who was put among the lions to be devoured, and he returned for more than a hundred days, and led him away by the hair, this very God, when the New Covenant began, had the power to bring these three kings from India, from Chaldea, and from the East of the Sun in thirteen days there, to the Jews, in the same way, without any difficulty or harm.]

The apocryphal work features a story about the wondrous arrival of three kings from distant lands to the manger in thirteen days. The story is characterized by reference to the Book of Daniel as the antitype for Habakkuk's miraculous relocation. This confirms the tendency observed by Maria Adamczyk: "There is no doubt that the apocrypha are characterized by a pronounced tendency to accentuate and create prefigurative connections" (Adamczyk 1980, 61).

At the beginning of *History of the Three Kings*, the Jews are accused of not accepting Balaam's prophecy and calling him a sorcerer. The text then refers to Job, who was also a Gentile and about whom, for this reason, the Jews "mało abo nic mają" [have little or nothing], as the author declares. Although the entire work has no connection to either Job or Saint Paul, the apocryphal states that the former lived in Syria, in the village of Zabab, which is near Damascus, where "błogosławiony święty Paweł spadł był z konia i nawrocił się jest" [the blest Saint Paul fell from his horse and was converted]. This reference is completely out of context, a connection between the Old and New Testaments which does not add much to the content of the work, which albeit introduces the motif of conversion – relevant to the idea of universal conversion of the Gentiles presented in the text. The reference to Job is also intended to emphasize the role of the Gentiles in the Old Testament in opposition to the clearly diminished role of Jews, consistently portrayed in the apocrypha as infidels.

The author cited the names of rulers and the names of lands to describe the history of Gentile peoples in the context of Israel's biblical history, while alluding to subsequent Old Testament prophecies.

> A w tem jęcstwie prorok Danijel pod tajemnicą o dziewiczym rodzaju wiele chwalebnie prorokował o kamieniu wyciętym z gory przez rękę wycinających, to jest o synu Bożym (162r/6–10) [And in that captivity the prophet Daniel, under the mystery of the virgin conception, prophesied much gloriously about the stone cut out of the mountain by the hand of the cutters, that is, about the son of God].

The quoted passage is an allusion to chapter two of the Book of Daniel, which depicts Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a colossus on legs of clay. The author immediately shows the interpretation of the Old Testament passage in the Messianic context in the words: "of the virgin conception" or "that is, about the son of God." The use of this passage has additional meaning as well. In Nebuchadnezzar's court there were many Babylonian sages, Chaldeans and sorcerers. This is an important element linking the entire briefly quoted history of Israel with the history of the Gentiles' interest in the coming of Christ. On the one hand, references are made in *History of the Three Kings* to messianic prophecies, while, on the other hand, the presence of the Gentiles, people from the East, Chaldeans is emphasized in the same salvation story. This makes it possible to defend the thesis that the Gentiles had been looking out for the star in the East ever since they became aware of Balaam's prophecy. Therefore, the author states:

> A tedy Cyrus, krol Persarum i Kaldei, wszytkie księgi żydowskie i proroctwa Isajasza, Jeremijasza, Danijela, Mich<easza> i Balaam, i drugich, inszych prorokow z żydowskiego języka w kaldejski przepisać i wyłożyć kazał[i], między ktorymi wiele rzeczy naleźli, ktore przez Kaldeusze, Perses, podług ich proroctwa miany być napełnione, a zwłaszcza

proroctwo Balaam, proroka pogańskiego, ktory między jinszymi rzeczami tako mowił: "Wzejdzie a wyniknie gwiazda z plemienia Jakob, a powstanie człowiek z Israel, to jest z pokolenia Żydowskiego, a będzie panował wszytkiemu ludu." (162r/15–162v/11) [And then Cyrus, king of Persia and Chaldea, had all the books of the Jews and the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Micah and Balaam, and other prophets transcribed and translated from the Jewish language into Chaldean, among which they found many things which were to be fulfilled by the Chaldeans, Persians, according to their prophecy, and especially the prophecy of Balaam, the Gentile prophet, who among other things said this: "A star shall rise and emerge from the tribe of Jacob, and a man shall arise from Israel, that is from the tribe of the Jews, and he shall reign over all the people."]

In addition to the Gospel account of the birth of Christ, the author of *History of the Three Kings* also presented information about Bethlehem and detailed where exactly the Nativity took place. Here he alluded to the figure of David – according to the apocryphal account Jesus, as the antitype of the son of Jesse was born, not only in the same locality as David, but even in the same building:

A na tym tamo mieścu niejaki stał dom Isaj, ojca Dawidowego, w ktorym sie też był Dawid narodził a w krola israelskiego pomazan. A na tym tamo mieścu Bog z Maryjej dziewice jest sie narodził (166r/14–19) [And in that place there stood the house of Jesse, the father of David, in which David was born as well, and was anointed king of Israel. And in the same place God from Mary the Virgin was born].

The apocryphal author references the figure of David also later in the text, where the comparison is based on the motif of the good shepherd: "A na tem mieścu Dawid owce pasł, a miedźwiedziom i lwom je tam iste odejmował i z paszczek wyruwał" (170r/14–16) [And in that place David pastured the sheep, and he took them away from bears and lions there, and snatched them from their jaws].

Another important allusion is found in the story of the Wise Men's journey to Bethlehem. The voice coming from the star is identified with the voice coming from the pillar of fire leading the Israelites during the Exodus:

I mowią nawroceni Żydowie wschodu słońca, iże Żydowie między sobą wierzą, iże anjoł, ktory syny israelskie po wyściu albo wywiedzeniu z Ejipta w słupie ogniowym uprzedzał, iże też ten isty głos anjelski z gwiazdy był słyszan (185v/19–186r/5) [And the converted Jews of the sunrise say that the Jews believe among themselves that the angel who guided the children of Israel after the departure or the exodus from Egypt in the pillar of fire, that this was the same true angelic voice that was heard from the star].

This "type" from *History of the Three Kings* is intriguing, since the canonical texts do not attest to a voice coming from either the pillar of fire or the star of Bethlehem.

The association of fire from heaven with the voice of God brings to mind Philo of Alexandria in *On the Decalogue:*

> Then from the midst of the fire that streamed from heaven there sounded forth to their utter amazement a voice, for the flame became articulate speech in the language familiar to the audience, and so clearly and distinctly were the words formed by it that they seemed to see them rather than hear them (Philo, *Decalogue*, 46 [LCL 320, 28]).

The need to combine the message of the Old and New Testaments is also evident in the description of the story of the thirty gold coins offered to Jesus by Melchior. Of course, specifying their number had a purpose, because mentioning thirty coins immediately brings to mind thirty pieces of silver. And indeed, from Abraham, who took this money with him when leaving Ur, through Jacob, the kingdom of Sheba and Solomon, the money made its way to Melchior, and from his hands – to Jesus. Left behind during the flight into Egypt, it was found by a shepherd who offered it to the Temple, and from the Temple treasury it ended up in the hands of Judas. The fate of myrrh was depicted similarly; according to the apocrypha, part of it was given to Jesus on the cross to drink with the wine, and the rest was allegedly used by Nicodemus to prepare Christ's burial.

The Polish author's use of allusions emphasizing typological relationships worked in two directions – retrospectively and prospectively. Sometimes the presence of a theme (e.g. an object, such as coins or myrrh) in the Gospel message initiated a search in the Old Testament for any traces that could be used to provide an origin story or foreshadowing for that theme. On the other hand, the Old Testament (e.g. the story of Habakkuk's relocation) may have inspired the apocryphal author to describe certain events. It was for this reason that the apocryphal author mentioned the conversion of St. Paul, which was consistent with the theme of the work: conversion, and was to connect, through location, to the Old Testament story of the Gentile believer, Job.

2.3. Echoes

History of the Three Kings is dominated by quotations and allusions. Echoes often take the form of narrative parallelisms covering large portions of the text. The apocrypha describes the state of destruction of the house of Jesse, the house of David. The passage echoes words from the Book of Amos (9:11–12):

> On that day I will raise up the booth of David that is fallen, and repair its breaches, and raise up its ruins, and rebuild it as in the days of old; in order that they may possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations who are called by my name, says the Lord who does this,

repeated in Acts (Acts 15:14–17), where this prophecy applies directly to all Gentiles:

> Symeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written, "After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up, that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name […]."

The fate of the kings after meeting the newborn Jesus is likened to New Testament events. The relationship between the Wise Men is similar to the state in which the first Church lasted – they behave like the disciples after Pentecost:

> tako sie przywitowali a pospolicie sie zobłapiali, a z wielkim weselim są sie radowali. Aczkolwiek rozmajitych językow a mowy byli, a wszakoż sie kożdemu z nich widziało, jakoby wszytki języki umieli a jemi mowili. A gdyż juże sie poznali, a poznawszy, tedy jeden drugiemu swoję przyczynę drogi i rzeczy inszych powiadali są, a w onych wszytkich rzeczach są się zgodzili. A gdyż sobie ony rzeczy są powiedzieli, dlaczego ktory z nich jechał, tedy barzo sie są weselili a w miłość [g] jeden ku drugiemu są sie zapalili (182r/16–182v/9, cf. Acts 2:4–11) [so they greeted one another, and merrily rejoiced. Although they were of different tongues and speech, it appeared to each of them as if they knew all languages and spoke them. And once they came to know one another, and having known each other, they told one another the cause of their travel and other things, and in all these things they were united. And because they told one another these things, why each of them travelled, they rejoiced greatly, and were enkindled with love to one another].

The way the kings at the end of their lives prepare and come to meet Thomas the Apostle is analogous to their journey to Bethlehem:

> […] oni trzej krolowie, aczkolwiek byli barzo starzy, zgarbieni, a wszakoż lepak gotowali sie są z barzo z wielkimi dary ku Tomaszewi świętymu ze wszytkimi ich książęty i ze wszytkimi pany ślachetnymi, i ze wszytkim ludem pospolitym (211v/1–6) [(...) these three kings, although they were very old and bent, and yet prepared again to go with great gifts to Thomas the Saint with all their princes, with all their noble lords, and with all their common people].

After the death of the kings, the star appeared again. It stayed over the place where their bodies were kept, and with the translation of the relics to Cologne, it moved over that city.

Summary and Conclusions

Analysis of the references to the Scripture makes it possible to draw conclusions about the structure of the entire *History of the Three Kings*. It is divided into four parts: the first, Old Testament, shows the history of the Gentiles' wait for the coming of Christ. The second is related to the New Testament – it is a description of the Nativity and the journey of the Wise Men, as well as foreshadowing of Passover events. The third presents the fate of the three kings after meeting Christ, as well as the activities of St. Thomas. These passages are often presented using echoes and parallelisms. The last part of *History of the Three Kings* depicts St. Helena's search for the relics, the conversion of the Gentiles, but also the existence of many dissenting groups, who are nevertheless united by the three kings, and the arrival of the remains of the Wise Men in Cologne. Quotations and allusions mostly appear in the first two sections, which are related to the content of Scripture. The rest of the apocryphal is based on subtle references that emphasize the continuity of the story being told and tradition. The Old Testament foreshadows the New and is the strict cause of it, while the history of the Church, the three kings and all the Gentiles are, as it were, a repetition of earlier events.

References to Scripture are used in the text to emphasize Old Testament messianic figures and their fulfillment in Christ, and to present the story of the conversion of the Gentiles. The universalist message, suggesting that the three kings prepared the entire world to receive Christ, is combined in the text with a simultaneous belittling of the role of the Jews and an indication of their failure to fulfill the task assigned to them by God as the Chosen People. Some of the references have no justification in the content of the work other than to emphasize the continuity between the Testaments. Such passages also set particular events or characters in a "historical" and "geographical" context – albeit often false.

The apocryphal author often matched passages and motifs taken from the Old Testament to apocryphal themes to bring out or emphasize the typology. Sometimes, on the other hand, it was Old Testament motifs that inspired the creation of apocryphal themes. The author usually used quotations and allusions to emphasize the close connection between the Old and New Covenants. Eagerly referencing the authors of prophecies may have served to emphasize the authority and veracity of the text itself. When depicting later events, he used explicit forms of intertextual references less often, more frequently using echoes.

The analysis presented here has raised the important question of the basis of the translation of the biblical text in *History of the Three Kings*, although it has not resolved it. Some of the Scripture quotations show the Polish author's independent work with the text, while others reveal his dependence on the text of John of Hildesheim. However, it should be noted that the use of the text of *Historia Trium Regum* in the Bible translation has been proven only in those passages that are highly transformed inspired text – this refers to the so-called prophecy of Daniel and the compilation of the Book of Psalms (72:9) with the Book of Isaiah (60:14).

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VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 325–343
Received: Oct 4, 2023 | Accepted: May 14, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

The Figures of Adam and Eve in the Old Polish Apocrypha of the New Testament

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Abstract: This article seeks to analyse excerpts of Old Polish apocryphal texts of the New Testament that refer to the figures of Adam and Eve. Though it might seem that the first parents are marginal characters in the New Testament writings, comparative studies of Old Polish translations and their Latin source text show that they play a significant role in the context of soteriology and exegesis. In the article, selected excerpts from the Old Polish apocrypha have been juxtaposed with translation source texts, followed by an interpretation of decisions made by a given translator regarding the use of the figures of Adam and Eve in a given medieval Polish text. This has provided grounds for creating the Adam – Jesus and Eve – Mary typology and explaining the nature of the first parents' sin and its role in the work of salvation.

Keywords: Adam, Eve, Old Polish apocrypha, New Testament, sin of the first parents, soteriology

The figures of Adam and Eve have played an important role in the biblical story of man and the history of salvation. Their trespassing of God's commandment resulted in humankind's lost opportunity to live a happy life in Eden, marked by the burden of the original sin. The history of the first parents does not end with the Book of Genesis, though. It was continued in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ (see Dekert 2007; Szlaga 1975, 85–96; Filipowicz 2011, 61–73) described in the Gospels and earlier and later in apocryphal texts.

The story of Adam and Eve's sin and their contribution to the history of man's salvation has been crucial storyline elements and a theological context for authors/translators of Old Polish biblical-apocryphal narratives. In the material available on the website of the project Apocrypha,[1] Adam or Eve are mentioned over 20 times (in six of the nine texts, namely, *Ewangelia Nikodema* [*EN*],[2] *Historyja Trzech Kroli* [*HTK*],

This article was prepared as part of a grant from the National Science Centre (project no. 2017/26/E/HS2/00083): "The Origins of Polish Language and Religious Culture in the Light of the Medieval Apocrypha of the New Testament. Universal Tool for Research on Polish Apocryphal Texts."

1 Created as part of the grant from the National Science Centre; project no. 2017/26/E/HS2/00083: "The Origins of Polish Language and Religious Culture in the Light of the Medieval Apocrypha of the New Testament. Universal Tool for Research on Polish Apocryphal Texts," executed between 2018 and 2023 under the supervision of Prof. UAM Dorota Rojszczak-Robińska, PhD.

2 The text of *EN*, as in *HTK*, and *SCh*, is found in the handwritten code called *Code of Laurentius a Lasco* in the collection of the National Library in Warsaw, reference code 3040 III.

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16689

Rozmyślanie przemyskie [*RP*],[3] *Sprawa chędoga o męce Pana Chrystusowej* [*SCh*], *Żywot Pana Jezu Krysta* [*ŻPJK*],[4] and *Żywot świętej Anny* [*ŻSA*[5]).[6]

The Old Polish biblical-apocryphal narratives are an important element of the literary (and linguistic) landscape of the turn of the Renaissance. Their role in the shaping of the (Old) Polish culture, writing, and language has been repeatedly stressed by researchers. Maria Adamczyk wrote that in terms of their content, not only did the apocrypha correspond to the Bible or different previous non-canonical texts, but they also reflected a specific world view of their creators, as well as the objectives of the social systems that these authors lived in and created in (Adamczyk 1980, 6–7). The consequence was the rejection of apocryphal literature by Catholics following the Council of Trent, resulting in the previously popular texts being marginalised or even destroyed (Adamczyk 1980, 10; Celichowski 1890, 5–6).

Furthermore, the Old Polish apocrypha are related to other cultural trends (particularly the literature and art of the *Slavia Orthodoxa*[7] culture), as well as to other fields of art (such as visual arts or theatre) (Smoleń 1960, 123–43; Smoleń 1962, 211–343; Kopania 2004, 7–48; Bryłka 2021, 255–68). After all, one should bear in mind at least one more important role that non-canonical narratives have played in the history of Polish culture, namely, their impact on the development of the Polish religious language. The content that has been ignored by the Church is intertwined in the apocrypha with fragments of prayers (such as the *Lord's Prayer*) (Masłej 2016a; Masłej 2016b, 133–41), the Book of Psalms (or parts thereof) (Rojszczak-Robińska 2023, 126–47), or the Gospels (Leńczuk 2016, 123–31; Masłej 2020, 91–103; Stelmach 2020b, 145–66; Rojszczak-Robińska 2020, 271 – 291; Stelmach 2023, 75–90).

Apocryphal stories are valuable material for linguistic analyses[8] because due to their multilayeredness (Mika 2013, 131–45; Mika 2015, 87–104), they allow linguists to conduct research on Old Polish grammar and stylistics (Krążyńska 1995, 45–52; Kozaryn 2001; Mika 2000, 229–40; Rojszczak-Robińska 2014, 123–44; Kołodziej

3 It is the biggest Slavic Apocryphon (the work has 844 pages – three pages of the introduction and several pages of the ending are missing). The code, which includes *RP*, is stored at the National Library in Warsaw, reference code 8024 III.

4 Old print from the first half of the 16th century. Published in 1522, twice by two publishing houses in Kraków – one run by Hieronim Wietor and Jan Haller. By the end of the mid-16th century, two more editions of this work had been published. For more information on this subject, see https://apocrypha.amu.edu.pl/elabo#zpjk.

5 Edition from c. 1532, published by the publishing house of Hieronim Wietor. *ŻSA* is found in the code under ref. code Cim.0.147, presently kept at the Jagiellonian Library.

6 They are not mentioned in *List Lentulusa* (Letter of Lentulus), *Karta Rogawskiego* (Rogawski Folio) and *Rozmyślania dominikańskie* (Dominican Meditations).

7 See, for instance, Naumow 1994, 133–39; Adamczyk 2005, 165–74; Bartmiński 2016, 43–75; Ȉvaškìv 2016, 35–42.

8 A complete bibliography of works devoted to the Old Polish apocrypha can be found on the website: https://apocrypha.amu.edu.pl/elabo?id=4. Due to its length, I give the titles of selected studies in the following footnotes.

2016, 143–55). Their complex structure also offers the possibility to determine how an author of a target text worked with the source text (Dobrzeniecki 1969, 196–521; Rojszczak-Robińska 2012; Rojszczak-Robińska 2016; Rojszczak-Robińska 2018, 81–92; Siwińska 2015, 113–32; Rojszczak-Robińska, Deskur and Stelmach 2021).

In scientific studies, much room has been dedicated to only some characters of the biblical-apocryphal narratives. These are predominantly figures known from the New Testament, namely, Jesus, Mary, Judas, and Mary Magdalene (for instance, see Mika 2002; Krawiecka 2006; Woźniak 2007; Parzych-Blakiewicz and Wojtkowski 2012). This article seeks to analyse and interpret selected fragments of the above-mentioned apocrypha that refer to Adam or Eve. Since the context (be it textual, source, or theological) is significant for understanding the excerpts in question, in this paper, I address narrative threads de facto related to other characters and events where Adam and Eve are mentioned.[9] This is because aside from *EN* and *ŻPJK*, in the New Testament Apocrypha, none of the first parents participates in the described events. They are referred to as figures, specific types intended for particular extra-literary purposes and not for building the plot.

1. Eve

The apocrypha excerpts that mention the first mother, Eve, are over three times fewer than those referring to Adam. However, the role of the first woman is diminished in these texts. Her character is used, among others, as an example of a female because of whom humanity has lost everything it had from the moment of its creation. And so, for instance, in *ŻPJK,* in chapter titled "Panny Maryjej, dziewice błogosławionej, lekkie, krom ktorej boleści uśpienie" [Virgin Mary, Blessed Virgin without any pain falling asleep], we read, among others, about 12 stars that Mary's crown was adorned with:

> Wtorą gwiazdę pirwszy rodzicy w jej koronę włożyli, gdy rzekli: „Wszechmogący Boże, błogosławionyś ty i matka twoja. Zaprawdęć ona dostojna jest, aby z duszą i z ciałem była uwielbiona, bo onę chwalemy, iż jest wyjęta od przeklęcia Jewinego dla grzechu pirworodnego, bo i my, bysmy cie byli nie rozgniewali, z duszą i z ciałem w raju bylibysmy ostawieni."
>
> [The second star was put in her crown by the first parents, saying, 'Almighty God, blessed are you and your mother. Indeed, she is worthy of being worshipped, soul and body, because we praise her, as she was not affected by Eve's curse caused by the original sin;

9 For the purpose of the Apocrypha project, the following definition of threads was adopted: they are "narrative events centred around one character or several characters distinguished from the total number of characters" (as cited in Wójcicka 2018, 295–99).

> likewise, had we not enraged you, God, we would have been left in the paradise, soul and body.'] (*ŻPJK* 122r/19–24)[10]

The first people after angels to have the honour of decorating Mary's crown are Adam and Eve. This is followed by figures or groups of characters in the sequence in which they appear on the pages of the Holy Scripture and in the tradition of the Church (e.g. the Church Fathers, the saints, the blessed). The three final stars are fixed to the crown by the persons of the Holy Trinity – the Holy Spirit, the Son of God, and God the Father.[11] In the above-cited excerpt, two matters are important: Adam and Eve jointly putting the crown on and the address to Jesus.

The joint nature of cherishing Mary proves that they both have been saved, which is mentioned exclusively in Old Polish texts in the above fragment. In the words addressed to Christ, Adam and Eve emphasise Mary's uniqueness. She gained the right to be taken to heaven, soul and body due to being "wyjęta od przeklęcia Jewinego dla grzechu pierworodnego" [excluded from Eve's curse of the original sin]. Adam's and Eve's personal disobedience to God has brought the hereditary 'curse' of the original sin on humanity. The consequence of the first parents' sin was, among others, their exile from paradise and deprivation of immortality (Żurek 2016, 139–53; Pietras 1999, 33). Nonetheless, the most important repercussion was the emergence of the original sin, which means "a deprivation of original holiness and justice." (*CCC* 405) The words that the excerpt ends in prove that the first people became aware that the loss of eternal life was a consequence of their actions and not the ill will of the Creator. To some extent, their address brings to mind words of children who, having been punished by their parents for disobedience, notice the rightness of the previously formulated prohibition. Like children, Adam and Eve realise after the fact that everything God did for them stemmed from fatherly love.

In the Old Polish apocrypha, Eve is juxtaposed with Mary several times. This is done, for instance, by the author of *HTK* in the passage that describes the liturgical celebrations of Christmas:

> A gdy juże będzie teże po onej mszy, gdy odśpiewają, tedy wszytcy ludzie obojego rodzaju, tako mężczyzna jako żeńczyzna, ktoregokolwiek języka albo wiary są, ci wszytcy w onej cyrekwi śpiewają onę antyfonę po łacinie, co sie tak rozumie po polsku: Tenci jest dzień, ktory udziałał Pan. Dzisia Pan na skaranie ludu swego wejrzał, a odkupienie posłał. Dzisia

10 The citations from the Old Polish apocrypha are provided according to a scheme adopted at www.apocrypha.amu.edu.pl, that is, first an abbreviated title, e.g. *ŻPJK*, followed by the page number (122r), and the numbers of the lines after a slash.

11 For a detailed description of the worshipping of Mary, see chapter "Panny Maryjej, dziewice błogosławionej, lekkie, krom ktorej boleści uśpienie" [Virgin Mary, Blessed Virgin without any pain falling asleep] (https://apocrypha.amu.edu.pl/texts/item?code=%C5%BBPJK&startCardNumber=120v&startVerseNo=26&endCardNumber=123v&endVerseNo=15&mode=transcription&grammar=false).

> śmierć, ktorą niewiasta sprawiła, rozumiej Ewa, żeńczyzna, rozumiej dziewica Maryja, oddaliła. Dzisia Bog człowiekiem sie stał jest. Ten, czym był, został, a czym nie był, to wziął.
>
> [And when the mass will be over, when they will have sung, then all people of both sexes, men and women alike, regardless of the tongue they speak or their beliefs, everyone in that church will sing the antiphon in Latin, which in Polish goes, 'This is the day made by the Lord. Today, Lord saw the ill fate of his people and sent them redemption. Today, the death caused by the woman, that is, Eve, is driven away by another woman, that is, Virgin Mary. Today, God has become human. He remained what he has been and received what he has not been']. (*HTK* 229r/13–229v/8)

The cited excerpt is based on the antiphon for the day of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, which in Latin reads as follows.

> Haec est dies quam fecit dominus hodie dominus afflictionem populi sui respexit et redemptionem misit hodie mortem quam femina intulit femina fugavit hodie deus homo factus id quod fuit permansit et quod non erat assumpsit ergo exordium nostrae redemptionis devote recolamus et exsultemus dicentes gloria tibi domine. ("Cantus 002997," n.d.)

Attention should be paid to the way the lines about the beginning and the end of sin were translated. While in the Latin version of the antiphon, we read, "death caused by a woman was driven away by a woman," in the Polish version, we notice the names of the women added by the translator. The Old Polish author complements the translation in a manner that leaves no doubt that Mary, who through the Creator's deed will give birth to the Son of God, drove death brought by Eve away from humankind. The author of the antiphon stresses the dissonance between the disobedience of Eve and the humility and open heart of Mary, who faithfully accepted God's plan. The antiphon emphasises that what every human who lived after Eve and inherited from her is death. In the Church, this thought has been present at least since the time of Saint Augustine. As Antoni Żurek notices in his article, "Ewa – pierwsza kobieta w świetle pism św. Augustyna," sin "has affected not only the first parents but, like an inheritance from parents, their entire offspring, too" (Żurek 2016, 149–50). An element of this inheritance was the loss of the body's immortality – only the soul remains immortal. It was only Mary's obedience that allowed for the existence of the three things listed in the antiphon, namely, the salvation of humankind by God, the alleviation of the burden of death from people, and the adoption of human nature by God. These three conditions have been fulfilled in one person – Jesus Christ.

A similar comparison is used by the author of *RP*. In chapter titled "Dokonał sie prolog a poczyna sie żywot błogosławionej dziewicy Maryjej, a napirwej jako <z> swej rady posłał anioła Gabryjela k niej z niebios" [The prologue was accomplished and the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary begins, and first as according to God's decree he sent to her the angel Gabriel from heaven], which starts Part II of the apocryphon, we read:

> Dziwkę nawi<e>dzę a czynię ją matką, dawaję jej imię porodzicielka, wszakoż ostanie w całości dziewicze. A takoż będzie matka, jemuż ja – synu Bożemu – ociec, bo tem skutkiem chcę wszemu światu pomoc. Juże Jewa nie będzie zwana [ale] matka wszech na świecie będących, ale tej dziewicy będzie dawna chwała. Z tej cokoli będzie dobrego, będą i na niebie, i na ziemi dzieci. Tegodla, anjel*e*, to poselstwo od Świętej Trojce przyjąw, nieś ku niebieskie dziewicy.
>
> [I shall come to a young woman and make her a mother, naming her a parent though she will remain a virgin. Hence, she will be a mother to him, the Son of God, and I shall be the father, for in this way I want to help the entire world. Eve shall not be called anymore the mother of everyone who lives in the world; instead, glory shall be given to this virgin. If anything good comes of her, it will be children in heaven and on earth. For this reason, angel, having received this message from the Holy Trinity, carry it to the holy virgin.]. (*RP* 47/11–23)

The passage cited above contains the words addressed by God to Archangel Gabriel. He tells his messenger what choosing Mary as the mother of God would entail. She would be referred to as the mother (Pol. *porodzicielka*), while her offspring would be exceptionally numerous. This is because she would not only be the mother of Jesus but also of all the people in the world, thus taking this title away from Eve. Therefore, this would be the beginning of a New Order, a New Law, a New Covenant. That what used to be in the Old Order would be replaced by the Good News. Eve's deathly legacy would give way to eternal life that humans have received owing to Mary's obedience. What is more, although Mary would give birth, she would be the only mother in history to keep her virginity.

In the examples above, Eve's attitude, her legacy, and the tradition of explaining the nature of the first parents' sin and the original sin that have grown over centuries in the preaching and the writings of the Church Fathers constitute a background for emphasising Mary's contribution to humankind and her exceptional place in the divine plan of salvation.

In another and final excerpt from the text on Eve, her character serves as the "anti-model" of a woman, and so do some other women from the pages of the Old Testament:

> Woła tu Remigiusz rzekąc: O, kako szkodliwie jest dostojnemu człowieku <pospolstwo> złych ludzi, a nawięcej złych niewiast! Bo to pospólstwo przyprawiło, iże ten zaprzał Pana, ktory przedtym poznał Bożego Syna. Bo i ktorego nawiętszego męża od początka świata niewiasta ku kłop*o*tu nie przyprawiła? Od pirwego człowieka począwszy, Ada*m*a – Jew*a*, Dalida – Samsona, Be*t*sa*b*ee – Dawida, Mo[r]abit<k>a – Salomon<a> a dziewka

> wrotna – Piotra. Przetoż <o>*b*wykł dziwno dyjabeł święte męże zdradzi*ć* niewieścim przyprawienim, a nawięcej *t*y, ktorzy sie dzierżą ku dworam książęcym albo prełacskim. Otoć Piotr jedno dw<o>*r*u przyszedł, a tamo moc swego uma i swej siły stracił a Jesukrysta zaprzał.
>
> [Here, Remigius cries, ‘Oh, how harmful a company of evil people is for a dignified man, and the worst one is that of evil maidens! For being with them prompted Peter, who earlier had come to know the Son of God, to deny Him. For which of the holiest of men, since the beginning of the world, has not been led astray by a woman? Since the first man, Adam by Eve, Samson by Delilah, David by Bathsheba, Solomon by a Moabite woman, and Peter by the girl by the door. Therefore, somehow the devil has had the habit of deceiving holy men using a female’s inducement, and most zealously those who stay at courts or churches. Peter only arrived at the court (of the high priest – author’s note), and there, he lost his reason and power, and denied Jesus]. (*RP* 693/2–21)

In the description of the biblical scene of Peter denying Jesus, the author of *RP* recalls the words of Remigius that suggest that the greatest threat to a man is the company of evil women. The author of the apocryphon expands this thought with an excerpt from *Vita Columbani* by Jonas of Bobbio,[12] which contains examples of a woman’s harmful role in the life of a man:

> Bo i ktorego nawiętszego męża od początka świata niewiasta ku kłopotu nie przyprawiła? Od pirwego człowieka począwszy, Adama – Jewa, Dalida – Samsona, Betsabee – Dawida, Mo[r]abit<k>a – Salomon<a> a dziewka wrotna – Piotra.
>
> [For which of the holiest of men, since the beginning of the world, has not been led astray by a woman? Since the first man, Adam by Eve, Samson by Delilah, David by Bathsheba, Solomon by a Moabite woman, and Peter by the girl by the door].

Since this citation has been used to comment on the scene of Peter denying Jesus, the example of the girl at the gate and Saint Peter was added to it for context. In chronological order, it lists biblical pairings whose relationships end badly for the male. Firstly, the case of Eve is mentioned, which can be applied to every woman, according to Saint Augustine (Żurek 2016, 151). In this case, the examples from the Old Testament, including the figure of Eve, evidently serve as a historical-literary determinant of the righteousness of the opinion of the Church Fathers, claiming that women contribute to the fall of men. It is worth noting that as a factor that compromises men’s will and reason, the author of *RP* lists having power (David, Salomon) or, at least, being close to the court (Peter in the high priest’s court).

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12 The fragment was identified for the first time as the source of *RP* in the course of grant works.

2. Adam

As the character of Eve serves as a rhetorical figure, an antithesis of Mary, Adam is not only juxtaposed with Christ in exegetic or catechetic texts; he is also the protagonist of events described on the pages of one of the apocryphal texts, namely, *EN*.

As the first father of humans and one of the key representatives of the Old Covenant, Adam got to hell[13] expecting the coming of Christ. The events from Part II of *EN* provide an account of the story of Jesus descending to Sheol, from where he led towards the eternal light Adam, Eve, patriarchs, prophets, and the just people who did not have the opportunity to learn the Good News when alive. Adam, the prophets, and the patriarchs were the first ones to notice that the resurrected Christ was approaching the Abyss. Joyfully, they called, "Światłość ta rozmnożyciel wiekuistej światłości jest, ktory nam obiecał posłać wiekuistą światłość swoję" [This light is the multiplicator of eternal light who promised he would send his eternal light to us] (*EN* 137v/12–15). These words are not accidental, and it was not by chance that Adam's name was included there. It was by his doing that humanity descended to the darkness of sin, and it was he who bereft it of access to the heavenly light, condemned to live in darkness (Augustinus, *C. Jul. op. imp.* II 57 [CSEL 85/1, 205] and Augustinus, *C. Jul. op. imp.* II 194, [CSEL 85/1, 309–10] as cited in Żurek 2016, 147). God the Father sent his Son to remedy what Adam had destroyed so that people would be brought back to the eternal light. After all, Christ himself was referred to as "a light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32 KJV) by Simeon during an offering in the temple (Luke 2:29–32 KJV).

All the prophets, patriarchs, and saints in Sheol knew that Christ would come to earth and save people from sin. Among them, Adam was likely the only one who knew that Jesus would come for them, too, down to hell, to lead them to the heavenly glory. He reveals this knowledge after John the Baptist's confession that Jesus was baptised by him in the River Jordan:

> A gdyż to usłyszał pirwszy ociec Adam, ociec nasz, iż w Jordanie okrzczon był, rozumiej Jesus, zawołał do syna swego, Seta, mowiąc jemu: „Powiedz synom twym, patryjarchom i prorokom, wszystko, cośkole słyszał od Michała Archanjoła, gdym cie słał do uliczek rajskich, aby prosił Boga, iżciby posłał anjoła swego, eżbyć dał oleju z drzewa miłosierdzia ku pomazaniu ciała mego, gdym był niemocen."
>
> [And when the first father, Adam, heard that Jesus had been baptised in the River Jordan, he called to his son, Seth, 'Tell your sons, the patriarchs and the prophets everything you have heard from Archangel Michael when I sent you to the gates of paradise to ask God to send his angel to give you the oil from the tree of mercy to mark my body with when I was ill]. (*EN* 138v/17–139r/7)

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13 A reference to limbo, hell. See *CCC* 405.

In the above excerpt, there is a reference to the Old Testament apocryphon that tells about the life of Adam and Eve (*Vita Adae et Evae*[14]). In various editions, its pages render the story of the fall of the first humans, their life outside the paradise garden, and their efforts to survive without divine care. It also provides an account of the deaths of Adam and Eve. The description of Adam's illness and death is remarkably detailed. It contains, among others, the story about Seth and Eve travelling to the paradise gates for the sacred tree's oil. Instead of the oil, Archangel Michael offers Seth twigs from a cedar tree, a pine tree, and a cypress, with which he then makes a wreath for Adam's head. It is a symbolic reference to Adam regaining his dignity as the first man after the coming of Christ. Aside from the intertwined twigs, Seth received information from Michael on the coming of the Saviour who would heal Adam and all humankind from sin.[15] These very scenes from the Old Testament apocryphon are referred to in the narrative of *EN*. Adam, Eve, and Seth can be considered the first people who knew that Christ would come to earth to remove the stain of the original sin and baptise humanity with the Holy Spirit.

Overjoyed at the prospect of freedom, in his own name and also in the name of everyone liberated by Jesus from the depths of hell, Adam addressed God in these words,

> Bądź powyszon, Panie, iżeś mię przyjął, a nie dałeś nieprzyjaciołom moim nade mną lubości. Śpiewajcie Panu Bogu wszyscy święci jego a wyznawajcie pamiątkę świątowności jego. Iże gniew w rozgniewaniu jego, a żywot <w> dobrej wolej jego.
>
> [Be praised, Lord, for you have accepted me and you have not favoured my enemies. Sing for the Lord, all his saints, remember his sanctity. There is anger when he rages, and there is life when his will is good] (*EN* 146r/19–146v/5).

The cited passage is an excerpt from Psalm 30. The enemy Adam speaks of using the words of the Psalm is naturally Satan, who brought death to the first father and, hence, to all humans. As noted above, it was the consequence of people inheriting the original sin. Adam thanks Jesus for saving humankind from the threat of dying in Sheol through his death.

Further on, we read that the Lord blessed Adam and all saints with the sign of the cross and then, holding Adam by the hand, led everyone out of hell (see *EN* 146v/18–147r/5). This scene, which closely corresponds with biblical iconography, is

14 Which late-medieval issue titled *De creatione Adae et formatione Evae ex costa eius* served as the basis for the Old Polish Old Testament apocryphon *Historyja barzo cudna o stworzeniu nieba i ziemie* penned by Krzysztof Pussman. For more information on this subject see Dobrzycki 1911, 286–99; Adamczyk 2005, 165–74; Stelmach 2020a; Osiewicz and Wydra 2022.

15 Another source of Adam's knowledge of the coming of Christ could be the teachings of Logos in paradise, cf. Pietras 1999, 27.

very symbolic. God shows that everyone who repents sincerely and atones for sins will have eternal life in heaven. Salvation can involve Adam, too, the man with whom humanity's enslavement by sin began. In *EN,* it is stressed that Christ has fulfilled his Father's will through Adam by coming to earth, taking human form, and dying as a man.[16]

In other Old Polish apocrypha, the figure of Adam is employed mainly for exegesis, as in, for instance, the vast excerpt of *RP*, the analysis of which is included in Wojciech Stelmach's the article (2022, 144–55). He shows the similarity between how the nature of the first father's sin is explained and the sequence of deeds done by Satan to Christ fasting in the desert.

Moreover, in the Old Polish biblical-apocryphal narratives (*RP* and *ŻPJK*), one can find passages stating that Christ's blood is the offering for Adam's sin:

> Miły Jesus odpowiedział barzo łaskawie swej matce rzekąc: „Matko, pirwy człowiek rozgniewał mego Ojca, iże wyciągnął rękę ku jego jabłku, a przeto ja mam ninie mękę cirpieć i dać moje obie ręce targać na krzyżu Żydom, aż sie w nich każda żyła starga, abowim je mają rozciągnąć, aż będą z krzyżem rowne.
>
> [Dear Jesus replied very gracefully to his mother, saying, 'Mother, the first man enraged my Father by reaching for his apple, and for this reason, I am now to suffer passion and allow the Jews to tear both my arms apart on the cross until every vein is torn apart in them, for I am to spread my arms until they are wide open on the cross]. (*RP* 504/10–19)

In the cited excerpt from *RP,* in his conversation with his mother, the Son of God indicates that the source of his future suffering is the eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by Adam. Just like the first father's hand reached for the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Christ's arms would be spread as far apart as possible on the tree of the cross to amend the detrimental consequences of Adam's carelessness. The prefiguration of Adam in Christ is used once again (see Pietras 1999, 38).

In turn, in the 16th-century *ŻPJK,* Mary plays a vital role in the context of not only the birth of the Saviour but also his death. This is shown, for example, in the scene of a conversation held by Archangel Gabriel and God before the former is sent with the Good News:

> Tę tajemnicę napirwej wzjawił Gabryjelowi Archanjołowi, przez ktorego sie moc Boża rozumie. Przeto wezwawszy ji, rzekł jemu: „Idzi do miłosnej panny naszej, Maryjej, Jozefowi poślubionej, a objaw jej, iż Syn moj jedyny pożąda ślicznośći jej, matką ją sobie obiera.

16 As Marek Starowieyski writes, *EN* in the Middle Ages was considered a historical document on the one hand and used for religious purposes on the other hand. It was rewritten using sacred saints and used during the mass. Moreover, its content was employed to compose homilies, theological treaties, and passion drama (Starowieyski and Appel 2003, 635).

> A mow jej, by go wesoło w swoj żywot przyjęła, bo przez nię ludzkie plemię chcę zbawić i nieposłuszeństwa Adamowego zapamiętać. Już chce Syn moj jedyny z swego mocnego stolca na doł stąpić i zmiłować sie nad nimi przez swe naświętsze wcielenie."
>
> [He first revealed this secret to Archangel Gabriel, who is understood as the power of God. For this reason, having summoned him, he told him, 'Go to our beloved virgin, Mary, the one betrothed to Joseph, and reveal to her that my only Son desires her beauty and chooses her for his mother. And tell her that she should receive him with joy into her womb, for I want to save mankind through her and forgive Adam's disobedience. My only Son wants to already step from his mighty throne down to earth and show them mercy through his blessed incarnation']. (*ŻPJK* 5v/22–31)

Yet again, attention is drawn to juxtaposing Mary with Eve and Christ with Adam. Just like Eve, who succumbed to the serpent's suggestions and fulfilled its will, leading Adam to disobey God, Mary becomes a tool in the hands of God the Father but also in her Son's by faithfully and joyfully accepting the incarnate word in her life.[17] For this reason, she participates in Jesus's death in subsequent passages of this work. Furthermore, she makes decisions on the fate of humankind, too,[18] which is addressed by this excerpt of *ŻPJK*:

> A tak, przyszedwszy anjoł do niej, mowił jej: „O panno naświętsza, powiedz Bogu Ojcu, ktora jest twa wola. Co chcesz, wybierz: śmierć czy li żywot syna twego? Jestli żywot obierzesz, wiedz, panno, iżci zbawienie wszytkiego świata zaginie i wszytko ludzkie pokolenie wiecznie musi być potępione i zatracone. Wszak wiesz, miła panno, iżci Bog Ociec za grzech Adamow inszej ofiary nie żąda, jedno krwie i śmierci swego i twego jedynego syna. A jużci na to przyzwolił Ociec niebieski i twoj jedyny syn, i Duch Święty. Przyzwolili też na to wszytcy anjołowie, prorocy, pospołu patryjarchowie. A ty chcesz też na jego śmierć przyzwolić czy li nie?"
>
> [Having come to Mary, the angel said to her, 'Oh, blessed virgin, tell God the Father what you have decided. Choose what you wish: death or life of your son? If you choose life, you should know, maiden, that the salvation of the entire world would be lost and the entire mankind would be condemned and annihilated for ever and ever. You do know, dear maiden, that God the Father demands no other sacrifice for Adam's sin, but the blood and death of your and his only son. The Father in heaven and your only son, and the Holy Spirit have agreed to this. All the angels, prophets, and patriarchs, too, have agreed to this. Do you want to allow for his death or not?']. (*ŻPJK* 64v/32–65r/5)

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17 For instance, on Mary's role in the act of salvation, see Mastalska 1999, 58–76.

18 This is at odds with Mary's image in the New Eve presented in Mastalska's article (1999, 65–66). Hence, the different manner of presenting Mary's role in the work of salvation by authors of Old Polish apocrypha seems quite new compared to other religious texts.

The scene presented above stems from the revelations Saint Bridget of Sweden received. Seeing his Son's passion during the prayer in Gethsemane, God convened a council in heaven and asked angels to tell him what he should do with Jesus in this suffering. They replied that he should send him to death since, otherwise, their sin would not be remedied. Then, God asked the same question to the patriarchs, the prophets, and the just who were in limbo. They gave a similar answer to that of the angels, arguing that the Creator would show his endless mercy in this way. The third one to receive this question was Mary. She was asked to choose between her Son's life and the life of all humankind. This took place because she was the mother of the Son of God, and, as the mother, she was allowed to decide on Jesus's life. After several attempts to cede the responsibility for this decision to God the Father, she eventually decides as follows,

> Dam ja syna mego za występ i owoc żywota mego za grzech i winę, aby Bogu za krzywdę Adamowę dosyć udziałał. A dlatego weźmicież ji na śmierć, a ja z nim pospołu cierpieć będę za zbawienie ludzkie.
>
> [I shall give up my son for the disobedience and the fruit of my womb for the sin and fault, so that he remedies the hurt done by Adam to God. Take his life and I shall share his suffering for the salvation of mankind] (*ŻPJK* 65r/22–25).

Above is an excerpt of *ŻPJK*, which refers to Mary's crown being decorated with 12 stars. Adam and Eve were the ones who adorned the crown with the first star, which is a parallel for the destinies of the first and the second Eve, the first and the second Adam. Further in the apocryphon, the figure of Adam appears again, this time singing a hymn praising Mary:

> Dziesiąte przyjęli ją wszytcy święci Starego Zakonu, patryjarchowie i prorocy, ktorzy chwaląc ją śpiewali: „Tyś, Maryja, jednaczka człowieczego rodzaju, ktorąsmy my przefigorowali i przepowiedzieli." A wystąpiwszy, Adam wesele rzekł: „Ta jest kość z kości moich, przez tę wszytkim zbawienie jest naleziono. Ktorąm ja łaskę stracił, tę ta Maryja nalazła i przywrociła synom moim."
>
> [Tenthly, Mary was received by all the saints, patriarchs, and prophets of the Old Testament, who were singing praising her, 'You, Mary, are the mediator of the humankind whom we have proposed and foretold.' Having come forward, Adam said merrily, 'This is bone of my bone, through which salvation for all is found. The grace I have lost was found by Mary and returned to my sons.']. (*ŻPJK* 124v/35–125r/2)

The first one to speak of Mary is Adam. As we read, he speaks joyfully, "Ta jest kość z kości moich, przez tę wszystkim zbawienie jest naleziono, ktorąm ja łaskę stracił, tę ta Maryja nalazła i przywrociła synom moim" [This is bone of my bone, through which salvation for all is found. The grace I have lost was found by Mary and returned to my sons.]. The first part of his utterance is a citation from the Gen 2:23. In the Holy Scripture, these words refer to Eve, who is a type of Mary. In these words, Adam not only points to this relationship between Eve and Mary but also to the fact that the Mother of God comes from humankind; she is a human, just like Adam. These words also stress the existence of a particular time bracket – Adam, the perpetrator of the original sin with the participation of Eve, welcomes Mary in heaven, as owing to her, every person can become saved. This is evident from the further part of the first man's utterance – the Mother of God found the grace Adam had lost, and she returned it to his sons (Mastalska 1999, 64–65). Bringing man back to God not by Christ but by his mother is a fully justified rhetorical tool. With Adam's words, the author stresses the role of the Mother of God in the history of salvation.

In some parts of the apocrypha, Adam's character is used as a reference point for later events. This is the case in *ŻSA* and *SCh*.

In the former, we read:

> A przeto Anna święta, będąc wdową, tako była cnotliwego żywota, iż nad domnimanie ludzkie jej uczynki, obcowanie i żywot[a] daleko więcej były godne ku dziwowaniu. Ani sie też temu nie trzeba dziwować, gdy od czasow Jadama, ojca pirwego, nie naleziona taka niewiasta, którą by wybrał Bog wszechmogący, iżby była starą matką jego syna a matką matki Bożej.
>
> [Therefore, as a widow, Saint Anne has lived a life so virtuous that her deeds, conduct, and life were far from human imagination and admirable. One should not be surprised by it, since from the times of Adam, the first father, no other virgin had been chosen by God almighty for his son's grandmother and the mother of the mother of God]. (*ŻSA* 18r/6–14)

It is clear from the content of *ŻSA* that Adam's times remain related to the times of Christ, specifically, the times of his grandmother, Saint Anne. It is claimed that since the time of Adam, no woman would have been chosen by God to be the grandmother of His Son and the mother of the Mother of God. Naturally, it is not the case that God previously chose Eve to serve this role. After all, if not for Eve, God would not have had to sacrifice his only Son. This is about stressing the uniqueness of Saint Anne, who, as her life shows, was the first woman from the beginning of the world's creation to be called to execute this grand plan of God. The grandmother of Christ is the origin of the sacred life of Mary and, therefore, the incarnation of the Son of God. Saint Anne's holiness manifested in her faithfulness to God, trust in His will, and reliance on His grace. The very same characteristics were found in Mary, the long-awaited daughter of Anne and Joachim. And as Mary was the child her parents longed, waited, and prayed for, Christ's birth was desired by all humankind.

In turn, *SCh* involves an exegesis of the hour of Jesus's death:

> A gdy jest krzyżowan i umarł prze grzechy nasze – bo Adam po szostej godzinie, gdy zgrzeszył, głos Boży usłyszał, a przeto stało sie jest podług obrzęda, aby w krotki czas Adamowi, przestępcy, zamknion był raj, w ktoryż czas łotrowi pokutę strojącemu rajska uliczka otworzona była – a od szostej godziny po wszytkim świecie ciemność sie uczyniła przez trzy godziny, aż do dziewiątej godziny.
>
> [And once Jesus had been crucified and died for our sins, for Adam after six o'clock, when he sinned, heard the voice of God, and thus it came to being as is the custom, that after a short time, paradise was closed for Adam the perpetrator, and at the same time, the gate to paradise was opened for the robber seeking penance, and from six o'clock darkness fell around the world, which lasted for three hours until nine]. (*SCh* 115r/11–20)

Six is the time at which Adam broke God's commandment. At the very same hour, the gates of paradise closed for man. For this reason, Jesus gave up his spirit at six o'clock, reopening the door to salvation for the first of the converted sinners (*SCh* 115r/11–20) – Dismas the Penitent Thief, who confessed his sins while hanging with Jesus on the cross on Golgotha Hill, who was ensured salvation by dying Christ.

3. Adam and Eve

Considered an elaborated passion sermon, *SCh* mentions the figures of Adam and Eve in its first lines. This passage is an excerpt from a sermon on the causes of Jesus's death, which is linked by the preacher to the original sin of the first humans:

> Jakoż święty Grzegorz mowi: A gdyż naszej pierwej rodziny, Adama i Jewy, grzech a niemoc była jest pycha, łakomstwo a nieposłusztwo, przez posłusztwo miano oprawiono być. A przeto, jakoż ku pierwemu członku doliczają, iże za pychę naszej pierwej rodziny nie mogło przez innego dosyćuczynienie być, jedno przez śmierność Jesuchrystowę, bo odrzucenie wszej służby a posłusztwa jest między sobą nierowne a przeciwne. A gdyż wszego posłusztwa odrzucenie był grzech naszego pierwego ojca, potrzebizna była, iżby uleczono było przez przyjęcie drugiego posłuszeństwa tego, iżby użyteczno było, eżby niekto przyjął naszę wszytkę służbę, ale żadny inny przyjaciel nie mogł, jedno ten, jenże jej nie imał, jakoż jest sam Bog, gdyż każde stworzenie jest służbie poddano. Tedy sam Bog za grzech *pychy* pirwego naszego ojca mogł dosyć uczynić, a człowieka wyzwolić.
>
> [As Saint Gregory says, 'And since the sin and weakness of our first parents, Adam and Eve, were pride, gluttony, and disobedience, this evil was to be amended by obedience. Therefore, as claimed in point one, there could not have been no remedy for the pride of our first parents other than the death of Jesus Christ, for the rejection of every service and

> obedience varies from case to case. And since the first father's sin was the rejection of all obedience, it was necessary that it is amended by choosing obedience that would be beneficial to us that someone takes on himself all our service, but no other friend could have done that but the one who has not served this duty, as he is God, while all creatures were made to serve. Then, God himself was able to remedy our first father's sin of pride and liberate man']. (*SCh* 2r/5–2v/4)

The author cites Gregory the Great, describing the tripartite structure of the first parents' sin and stressing their complicity. According to the preacher, the repercussions of the disobedience were to be remedied by compliance. The only form of compensation capable of removing the stain of the original sin (which was a consequence of Adam's and Eve's insubordination) was Jesus's death. Showing his compliance with the will of God the Father, Jesus took on the duties (service) of every human as an individual but also of all humanity in its totality. This excerpt shows the impact of exegesis, including Saint Augustine's on the hereditary burden of Eve's sin, on the legacy people received from their first parents (Żurek 2016, 149–50). Since every being was ordained for something even before it was born, the only person who could take on another duty was Jesus, the Son of God. Therefore, the sin of pride could have been amended only by God himself, leading straight to man's salvation from the shackles of sin and the snares of evil.

Conclusions

Though rarely mentioned, the figures of Adam and Eve play an essential part in the Old Polish apocrypha of the New Testament. On the one hand, they are used as rhetorical characters, while on the other hand, authors use them in exegesis, like in *RP*, *ŻPJK*, or *HTK*. Their usefulness is not restricted to building the Eve – Mary and Adam – Jesus typology, though; in the case of both parents, the heritage they both left for humanity is emphasised. And although it is a legacy that most likely people would not accept willingly, it shapes all the subsequent events in the Judeo-Christian history of humankind. From the apocryphal foreshadowing of the coming of the Saviour that Seth heard about from Michael at the gates of the paradise, through the subsequent falls of men – Samson, David, Salomon, Peter; through the scenes of the annunciation to Saint Anne and Mary; to the conservations that Jesus held with his mother before giving himself up to death, in which he stressed the awareness of his destiny. Adam's role in the salvation of humans is also underlined in the scene of Jesus's death on the cross, which reopened the paradise gates for the people and also in the descent of the Resurrected to Sheol and the leading of the just ones who had been waiting in the dark for the arrival of light, which complements the work of salvation.

On the other hand, these particular antitheses have an immense catechetic value, building the world of the believers' values simply and using examples well-known to Christians from the pages of the Holy Scripture and present in the liturgy but also in the culture (carols, songs, rites, apocryphal texts), they explain the long story of salvation.

One should also bear in mind the excerpts pertaining to the original sin itself and the role of the first parents in its creation. It seems crucial that not only Eve's role is emphasised but also Adam's. Given the above, it is possible to bridge the figure of the forefather and Jesus, which is evident in, among others, excerpts on the tempting of Christ in the desert.

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VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 345–359
Received: Oct 30, 2023 | Accepted: Apr 26, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

The Critique of Secularism by Talal Asad as a Chance to Look for New Ways of Proclamation

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Abstract: In democratic societies, it is taken for granted to withdraw religiosity from public life. In this paper, we point to Talal Asad's critique of this taken-for-grantedness. Using his genealogical method, he attempts to find the origin of this relegation of religiosity to the private sphere. The concept of secularity, he argues, is primarily an expression of the power of those who insist on enlightened reason. At the same time, secularism becomes, in a sense, a new religion, the only one acceptable in a democratic society. While we point out the causes of the secularization process, we also point out the aspects that are problematic in such a conception of religion. The Church's response must take into account the process of secularization, but it must not fall into the same logic that led to this process in the first place. We point out the danger that the separation between the sacred and the profane, the physical and the spiritual, is increasing even in the new religious movements. We therefore propose a form of proclamation that involves the whole person and addresses him or her in everyday life.

Keywords: secularism, Talal Asad, religiosity, proclamation, Church

Rodney Stark begins his book on contemporary religiosity with this statement: "The world is more religious than it has ever been" (Stark 2015). In his sociological research, he makes a pretty good case for this initial assertion. All of us who work in the field of pastoral care would find it hard to agree. Experience shows that religious participation is declining. Empty churches speak for themselves. The declining number of the sacraments of initiation and other statistics also point to declining religiosity, or at least we are quick to conclude that. The concept of secularism[1] is quickly invoked to explain this situation. We often conclude that it is almost impossible to talk about God and religion in public today. "We are all imbued with a general belief that is a kind of practical atheism" (Sesboüé 1999, 19). In reaching such a conclusion, a distinction must of course be made between the so-called Western world and other parts of the world. Even when the new *Directory for Catechesis* (PCPNE 2020, 103) speaks of contemporary culture, it refers to the secularization that is supposedly

1 The terms secularism, secularity and secularization are difficult to define. Many researchers try to define them in their own way. If we look at it from a Christian perspective, secularism is directed against everything that is fundamentally Christian (Napiórkowski 2014). Secularization itself is here understood as a process that takes place primarily in the social sphere of political, economic and administrative life. The process of secularism, on the other hand, is understood as a process of change in the life of the individual and the community as a result of secularization.

typical of the Christian world: "Over the course of the centuries, nonetheless, those societies shaped by Christian culture in particular have arrived at a cultural crisis resulting from an exaggerated secularism that has led to a false concept of autonomy. The only criteria accepted have been those based on social consensus or on subjective opinions, often in contrast with natural ethics" (Sesboüé 1999, 103). Secularism is understood as a crisis of the entire culture that stems from a false understanding of autonomy. The individual has the first and last word. It is the value of a pluralistic society, the freedom to choose between different value systems, which is supposed to be the basis of a modern liberal society (Donegani 2017, 26), which the *Directory* identifies as the cause of a crisis of the whole culture (PCPNE 2020, 103). On the other hand, it is good to recognize that modern democracy, human rights, and pluralism of values emerged in the environment of Christianity: "It is Christianity that has established in history this indifference to difference in order to preserve the dignity of every human being" (Donegani 2017, 36). In this universality and plurality of the world, secularism is understood differently. Certainly, for the proclamation of the Christian Goods today, secularism is a danger, as the new *Directory for Catechesis* mentions. However, the emphasis in that text is on 'excessive' secularism. On the other hand, a certain level of secularism has made possible the pluralism that is the basis of Christian humanism.

We will try to show, through a critique of secularism as presented by Talal Asad, that this concept is very much tied to the Christian tradition and far from being neutral and plural in terms of religiosity, as various liberal political communities try to show. We will also try to show how, precisely in secular society, the phenomenon of radical alienation from the world is increasingly developing through contemporary religious life. The various renewal movements in many religions are increasingly turning inward, condemning the secular world and largely even hostile to a pluralistic democratic society. Stark notes that religion is increasingly distancing itself from traditional Christian rationality. "Belief in unchurched spirituality is especially prevalent among the young, who are given to belief in paranormal phenomena such as premonitions and UFOs. (A similar tendency to embrace esoteric and magical beliefs has been reported for students in Germany and Austria, as well as in the Netherlands.)" (Stark 2015) It is therefore important to look at the issue of secularism not only from a sociological and religious perspective, but also from a pastoral perspective. It is precisely the covenant that all Christians received in baptism to proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ that obligates us to do so. In times of crisis, which secularity certainly represents for the believer, we are obliged to seek new ways of proclamation (Morel 2020, 11).

1. The Genealogical Method of Talal Asad

Raised in Pakistan and educated in Catholic schools, Asad, studying in England, quickly discovered a hidden and unconscious disdain for other cultures and especially for the religious in a self-proclaimed open cultural-scientific space. Although he and Jose Casanova, as one of the best known and recognized authors of the definition of the secular, often contradict each other, he clearly establishes the starting point of Asad's critique,

> The ideological critique of religion developed by the Enlightenment and carried out by a series of social movements throughout Europe from the eighteenth to the twentieth century has informed European theories of secularization in such a way that those theories came to function not only as descriptive theories of social processes but also and more significantly as critical-genealogical theories of religion and as normative-teleological theories of religious development that presupposed religious decline as the telos of history (Casanova 2006, 17–18).

The critique of secularization is particularly understandable in terms of the Marxist critique of power that Assad discovers upon his arrival to Europe. Secularization, he argues, approaches religion through the covert expression of social power. He uses the genealogical method to demonstrate this. If Friedrich Nietzsche explored the emergence of modern morality in this way, and this method was consolidated by Michel Foucault, Asad uses it to understand the development of the anthropological method of participant observation of both concrete life and the elaboration of theories about it.

When it comes to secularity, secularism, and secularization, critical anthropological genealogy can hardly be a substitute for social and societal research or history as found in modern history textbooks, but rather a way to explore from our present all the unpredictable situations that have befallen us. The goal would be to question our current taken-for-grantedness while maintaining the assumption that some of what is analyzed is nonetheless real. The desired anthropology would thus move away from a characteristic defined only by research technique, i.e., the method of so-called fieldwork, focused on local particularities and their dense description, as envisioned by Clifford Geertz. It must return to the direction outlined by Marcel Mauss, "the systematic inquiry into cultural concepts" (Asad 2003, 16–17). Indeed, Asad argues, conceptual analysis is as old as philosophy, "What is distinctive about modern anthropology is the comparison of embedded concepts (representations) between societies differently located in time and space. The important thing in this comparison is not their origin (Western or non-Western), but the forms of life that articulate them, the powers they release or enable" (Vries 2006, 117).

In his genealogical research, Asad asks how modern society came to understand religion as such. He notes that even the general definition of religion is historically conditioned. This makes a truly general – universal – definition impossible. Especially since the quest for universalization, for general definitions, is also historically and culturally conditioned, as it goes back to the development of the Western understanding of the social sciences (Asad 1993, 29). The speech – discourse about religion is at the same time embedded in other debates and understandings in society. “Discourse about religion has a history and that history determines how the concept of religion gets applied” (Kessler 2012, 204).

Speaking about religion, whether from the perspective of an anthropologist, a sociologist, or a philosopher, is always a conceptualization that takes place within a particular hermeneutic framework. This starting point must be explored, because only in this way can we discover the sources of power that determine the rightness or wrongness of certain arguments, definitions. Even the search for general definitions is conditioned by a certain background and this background must be broken down genealogically. Asad describes this as follows, “More generally, I tried not to describe historical development here in terms of a linear sequence of ideas, as Casanova and other sociologists often do (‘Protestant Reformation’ as a cause and ‘secular modernity’ as an effect), because a genealogical investigation presupposes a more complicated web of connections and recursivities than the notion of a causal chain does” (Asad 2006, 210).

Genealogical research for its own sake is pointless. It tries – which is the task of anthropology anyway – to understand the life of modern man and society in relation to religion. It does not ask about the universal role or origin of religion. Asad tends to ask a different set of questions: What are the conceptual and ideological assumptions through which the modern West (and anthropology in particular) thinks about religion? What is the history of power through which this way of thinking has emerged? And in what ways-conceptual, institutional, ideological-has the contemporary Western understanding of religion fundamentally changed the way of life of the people it has conquered and dominated (Scott 2006, 139)?

2. The Origins of a Secular Understanding of Religion

Before presenting Asad’s critique of the understanding of religions, it is important to emphasize that he himself does not see secularism as a kind of continuation of the development of ‘world history’ or as the opposite of the religious. Rather, to him the two aspects, the secular and the religious, overlap and are in many ways interdependent (Schlerka 2017, 122). In particular, it is the transfer of the role of power in society that underlies the change in the understanding of religion since the dawn of modernity. "The point I would stress here is not merely that religion and the secular interpenetrate, but that (a) both are historically constituted, (b) this happens through accidental processes bringing together a variety of concepts, practices, and sensibilities, and (c) in modern society the law is crucially involved in defining and defending the distinctiveness of social spaces—especially the legitimate space for religion" (Asad 2006, 209).

The intertwining and entanglement of the understanding of religion and the secular outlined above is one of the first points of a kind of deconstruction of the general definition of religiosity that ignores the historical conditionality of their own findings. In his critique of contemporary understandings of religion, Asad carefully demonstrates how the universal definition of religion proposed by Geertz is based on a conceptual architecture that is heavily steeped in developments in the early modern period when treating Christianity and therefore has limited scope when analyzing other traditions.

> Importantly, the problem he identifies in Geertz's model is not simply its privileging of one religion (Christianity) at the expense of others, something that might be overcome by a careful elimination of its specifically Christian and eurocentric assumptions. Rather, the very idea of religion as a universal category of human experience owes directly to developments within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theology, and specifically to the emergence of the concept of Natural Religion—namely, the idea that religion is a feature of all societies, evident in the universality of systems of belief, practices of worship, and codes of ethics (Scott and Hirschkind 2006, 6).

The anthropologist, who by definition must be concerned with concrete life, is further cornered by the emphasis on the experience of religiosity in this commonly accepted definition of religion. It is precisely the shift to personal experience that has greatly contributed to the "expelling" of religion from the public sphere.

The fallacy of universalizing personal experience as the basis of the religious points to the problematic nature of secularism. In its development, secularism was based on the idea of a personal experience of the religious and a kind of inner personal faith. When Asad critiques this, he assumes the personal experience.

> For example, it was one of the things that, you know, having been brought up as a strict Muslim, that first made me skeptical about some generalizations in Geertz's conception of religion. The proposition that you have to believe and once you believe, other things will follow didn't make sense to me given the way I was brought up. That personal knowledge of Islamic tradition enabled me to begin questioning the way in which religion was being conceived of in this universalizing framework (Asad 2006, 282).

The personal experience of belief, which has a firm place in William James' (2015) attempt at a scientific definition, is one of the possible sources for contemporary understandings of secularism as well as secular society's relationship to religiosity.

Geertz's understanding of religion is therefore limited, both because it is based on a particular Christian tradition that sees religion primarily as a dimension of belief, of faith; and partly because it is based on a modern understanding of the development of the concept of 'natural religion' – which in turn is conditioned in particular by the philosophical views of Immanuel Kant. Here belief is understood as an inner, autonomous mental dimension, which for Asad is fundamentally a legacy of Protestantism. The anthropological background that Asad brings to his theoretical thinking leads to a holistic view of religiosity – it cannot be limited to some kind of 'private' sphere of psychic experience or symbolic understanding of religious truths.

Contrary to the growing anthropological tendency to view culture as fundamentally textual – as a system of symbols, as Geertz put it – Asad insists that the meaning of symbols must be understood in relation to the practical context in which they operate and the forms of social discipline through which particular readings are permitted and enacted. "When anthropologists or historians approach cultural phenomena as texts to be read, they are in a sense adopting the stance of modern theology, one that takes religion to be fundamentally about the affirmation of propositions expressed in symbolic form. Can we know, Asad asks in this essay, what [religious symbols] mean without regard to the social disciplines by which their correct reading is secured?" (Scott and Hirschkind 2006, 7). The basic anthropological method of fieldwork increasingly led him to conclude that we cannot apply the same criteria to all environments and all times. Religiosity, of course, is a dimension of its own that, in its historical conditionality, requires reflection on the path to that understanding for a true understanding.

Asad's objection to general definitions of religion and to Geertz is not that he neglects the influence of religion on action (or power in action),

> but that he conceptualizes the symbolic realm of culture as being separable at the outset of the analysis from action in society—and that he then attempts to reconnect or re-engage culture and social action in an ad hoc or ex post facto fashion. This analytical fallacy, it is claimed, leads to others in Geertz's scheme, the most serious of which is a separation of thought from (social) action, resulting in what might be called cognitivism, which might be defined as the claim that thoughts are in the mind to begin with and only need to be expressed through symbols or signs in order to be communicated and acted upon (Caton 2006, 35).

The advantage of a cognitive understanding of society as a whole is questionable because it does not really consider concrete life – and in concrete life it is behavior that counts. It is in action, in behavior, that power is expressed – and the locus of power is at the heart of the problem of the relationship between secularism and religiosity. Geertz accepts, as already derived from Max Weber, the idea of "symbolic action." It is a kind of intrinsic motivation – a support for personal and social action that arises from a symbolic constellation (Anter 2014, 15–16). If secularism, in a sense, leaves freedom to the personal symbolic constellation of the world and one's being, this is not the case in public life, and it would be useful to accept one of the major criticisms of Geertz's approach – its apparent lack of concern for the problem of power influencing decision-making at both the individual and community levels (Caton 2006, 41). If we take Assad's historical imprint on the understanding of the secular seriously, the question of power, especially in light of the genealogical method, must also be seen in this perspective. The claim that the shift of the religious from the public to the private is a social achievement, culminating in the liberation of human beings in their fundamental dignity as persons, is largely based on the argument of power. And we do not even question its supremacy. "In the European context, secularization is a concept overloaded with multiple historically sedimented meanings that simply points to the ubiquitous and undeniable long-term historical shrinkage of the size, power, and functions of ecclesiastical institutions vis-à-vis other secular institutions" (Casanova 2006, 16).

3. Religion as a Specific Way of Socialization

Asad seeks to explore and understand the secular in two ways. In doing so, he follows in part the changing grammar of concepts central to modernity in terms of meaning, namely the secular, the sacred, religion, and myth. He locates these concepts within the social and political geographies of state power, disciplinary practice, and academic discourse. Through this genealogy, Asad challenges the ideology of "secularism" and the grand narrative of "secularization" central to anthropology, liberal nationalism, and Western domination of the world, which he describes as pre-modern (Shulman 2006, 154). Power that is not obvious and often unrealized is often more powerful than power that is direct and visible. Thus, the concept of power that Asad explores in the relationship between the secular and the religious is premised on two central assumptions – first, that modernity, and even more so postmodernity, is neither fully coherent nor clearly delineated, and that many of the elements that are considered to be the result of the last few centuries have their origins in relations to the history of peoples outside Europe; second, that the project of modernity is not primarily about the recognition of truth, but about the recognition of a way of being in the world, and – Asad immediately adds – "Since this is true for every epoch, what is distinctive about modernity as a historical epoch includes modernity as a political economic project" (2003, 14). Indeed, this political project is intrinsically linked to the secular as its ontology and epistemology (Asad 2003, 21). These philosophical – or in Ludwig Wittgenstein's sense "grammatical" – questions would be central to anthropology, as it is a discipline that from its inception has sought to understand the unusual in non-European cultures. And it seeks to record, often literally record, the meaning and impact of religion in particular cultures – not least through the genealogical formation of their own "others." When the anthropologist engages with religion, this "other" is always examined in light of the "modern" and "secular" heritage. Yet despite this open and pluralistic approach, the question arises as to how it is that the world commonly believes that certain cultures are better, more democratic, and more progressive. We should not ignore, Asad said, that the U.S. has repeatedly tried to promote a single and only correct model of society throughout the world. If this project has not succeeded on a global scale, if it has led to further instability rather than homogeneity, it is certainly not because those who have the power to decide the affairs of the world reject the doctrine of a single human destiny – a transcendental truth – for all societies (Vries 2006, 116). Rather, the conflict between different understandings of society is to blame. This is not just a failure of understanding at the level of cognition – it is about life itself, about political power and domination.

> Something that I gained from Marx very early on was the recognition that structures of domination need not be rooted directly in force or consent, but in what at that time I called "structural exclusion," something independent of what people might consciously think. Both force and consent were states of consciousness, but they were of minor significance, I thought, for explaining structures of domination—both political and intellectual (Scott and Asad 2006, 249).

Asad compares this inner attitude of obedience achieved by the dominant culture to the attitude toward a loved one. A person who is overwhelmed by love for someone lives in the conviction that he is living the same truth in his relationship with that person. He is simultaneously internal and external, with himself and with the loved one. Of course, both the physical and the emotional and mental contexts in which this relationship is embedded must be right for the individual to identify with them. Power, in this case, manifests as a match between the individual's capacity and all the practical conditions that have helped to shape a concrete personal desire and realize it in a way that is reflected in that relationship (Asad 2006, 213). If we generalize this to social conditions, it is understandable that signs, symbols, in themselves do not explain human recognition (acceptance) of authority, but rather how people have learned to make, feel, and remember signs. Or (in another key) how they perceive the signs of a loved one when they fall in love (Asad 2006, 214). Perceiving signs and integrating them into one's life is a process of socialization. It is a process of transferring the "old," familiar, habitual way of coping with life to new situations.

Even though modern society emerged from a tradition of religiosity, today it more or less believes that it has freed itself from it. This process is the basis for the creation of an autonomous subject and a democratic political order. Democracy is good in itself, but Assad is afraid of the power of the liberal state, mainly because it promises to fulfill the 'will of the people,' which derives from Kant's justification of individual autonomy. It is not so much that there are good and bad motives for actions to liberate and redeem people – what is dangerous is the insistence that there is no need for violence and revenge in secular "redemption" today. "I argue that the idea of political redemption is grotesquely out of place in the secular world, a danger to politics and a parody of spirituality" (Asad 2006, 237). In our modern world, where democratic politics is often presented as the highest public good, God is not dead but, in his view, has reincarnated as Man – that is, in a multitude of morally self-governing people united in a politics that could easily be called "transcendent" politics. Therefore, liberal democratic states, which seem to represent and defend humanity as a whole, can decide the question of life and death. They want to generalize birth policies and regulate health care, determine just wars and prescribe international jurisdiction, and conduct various kinds of armed interventions with humanitarian overtones (Asad 2006, 237). For this very reason, it is worthwhile and necessary to trace the evolution of the concept of secularism. Even more important is how it functions today: It is taken for granted and also determines attitudes toward the Other, especially toward a religiosity that "refuses to move with the times" because it supposedly clings too closely to tradition.

Tradition is also a space where one experiences the diversity of times and confronts a variety of memories and challenges for today (Nežič Glavica 2019, 195–96). This gives learned habits a certain weight of authority and openness. Therefore, as he puts it, genealogy is a way of (re)narrating history by tracing unpredictable events that came together to create a seemingly natural evolution.

> But tradition, of course, is not just a matter of argument—indeed argument is mostly peripheral to it. Tradition is primarily about practice, about learning the point of a practice and performing it properly and making it a part of oneself, something that embraces Mauss's concept of habitus. Of course this doesn't mean that the traditional disciplines by which particular virtues are cultivated always produce what they are designed to do. Even the monks I wrote about in *Genealogies of Religion* knew that well when they employed the idea of original sin, and all confessors knew (or at any rate were supposed to know) about the fragility of human virtue (Asad 2006, 234).

Tradition brings with it a greater self-confidence and a firmer notion of moral and epistemological location in embodied and historical contexts. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, our lives take the form of an embodied dramatic narrative, and so from the perspective of tradition, every assertion in its concrete context must be understood as the work of someone who understands himself and has held himself accountable for his expressions in the community. This has a history through which a very particular shared set of capacities for understanding, evaluating, and responding to the individual's utterances has emerged (Scott 2006, 144). In MacIntyre's conception of tradition, Asad emphasizes the possibility of different interpretations, the space of argumentation in receiving what has been handed down. The old notion that tradition means something unarguable, and as its counterpart the new enlightened age of argumentativity, is therefore untenable. The adoption of tradition is not an automatism – every religion presupposes the failure of education, of socialization. Therefore, tradition is first a help and then an orientation for common life. What disappoints Asad in MacIntyre is his neglect of the body:

> Because argument is itself interwoven with the body in its entirety, it always invokes historical bodies, bodies placed within particular traditions, with their potentialities of feeling, of receptivity, and of suspicion. So much of this is part of everybody's experience of what argument is about. We know it's not a matter simply of "the mind." Argument is always rooted in temporal processes, it's always embodied (Scott and Asad 2006, 288).

Asad shows that in the liberal understanding of religiosity, belief, as a purely spiritual process is the core of religion – and as private, intimate, truly one's own. This understanding of religiosity goes back to the sharp distinction between mind and body introduced in the early modern period. It was also taken up by certain Christian theologies. As the language of religion changes to conform to the modern Christian vision of life, not only does the way of life change, but the body and its senses change as well.

> One crucial aspect of that is the distinction between a "real" self (subjectivity) and the self that is conventional—the "apparent" self. Another is the sharp distinction between the materiality of the body and the meaning-producing mind. The language of the "real" self and its external appearance is itself closely connected to sixteenth- and seventeenth- century reforms in European Christianity that afforded possibilities for secular developments (Asad 2018, 90).

This shift of rationality and the placing of the religious in an inner dimension is not, in his view, typically Christian:

> But, you know, Christians right from early modern times have disputed this distinction. […] The body, of course, is enmeshed in traditions of cultivation. Not just the physical body, but the body in its capacity to sense things, to be persuaded and convinced. So I'm less interested in the body simply as the object of a certain kind of domination, something about which a lot has been written. This interests me less. I've often said that taking

> the idea of "the docile subject" to mean the worker who is exploited by capital, the woman who is oppressed by patriarchy, is all very well, but it's not that sense that interests me in the first place. I point to the etymology of "docile," that is, "teachable." So I'm interested in "the docile subject" as someone who is teachable and therefore as someone who has the capacity to be taught. A taught body is one to which "belief" (as a conscious supposition of what is the case in the world, or as a proposition to which one assents) is at best secondary (Scott and Asad 2006, 287).

The ritualization, the learned behavior, is the core of the teaching of religiosity. This is also what is happening with secularized modernity: It introduces its own conception of the body, its own behaviors that are ritualized and unconsciously accepted in the process of socialization. Every time we are confronted with a new challenge and what we have learned does not work, this "ritual" is questioned and new ways to apply it are sought – and so we create a new tradition. For this reason, tradition, according to Asad, is more fluid, time-dependent, and open-ended than most definitions of culture – and it looks not only to the past but also to the future (Scott and Asad 2006, 289). It is in this role of tradition that the adoption of patterns is central, and it is not mechanical but dynamic. Such a process of tradition is also inherent in secularism. It is said to have arisen from the above-mentioned shift in the understanding of the religious toward an emphasis on inner experience, which is losing force in public discourse-due to the prevalence of a mathematical, positivist worldview. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it. That slogan works most efficiently when the secular language of mathematics translates reality into numbers by which it can then regulate and reinvent the world" (Asad 2018, 133).

The mathematical view has triumphed over uncertainty. It has enabled humans to order the world as they wish. But Asad argues: "so I maintain finally, not only mark the triumph of mathematical calculation and secular reason; they also point to a dark future: the certainty of climate change and environmental destruction and the probability of nuclear war" (Asad 2018, 10). And perseverance is on the side of those who endure uncertainty, which is always one of the fundamental dimensions of the strength that comes from a life of faith.

4. The Mission of the Church in a Secular Society

If we assume that Asad's analysis of the secular is correct, then we can gain certain points of reference for our pastoral and catechetical work. Asad's arguments are similar to what the *Directory for Catechesis* states and what Pope Francis points out. Of course, these are not demands that arise directly from theology, but they can give direction and new emphasis to practical theology. First of all, we find the focus and the demand for attention for our topic: "it is important to pay attention to the secular condition of adults" (PCPNE 2020, 262).

Pope Francis similarly points out the consequences of secularism for the faith of modern believers:

> The Catholic faith of many peoples is nowadays being challenged by the proliferation of new religious movements, some of which tend to fundamentalism while others seem to propose a spirituality without God. This is, on the one hand, a human reaction to a materialistic, consumerist and individualistic society, but it is also a means of exploiting the weaknesses of people living in poverty and on the fringes of society, people who make ends meet amid great human suffering and are looking for immediate solutions to their needs. These religious movements, not without a certain shrewdness, come to fill, within a predominantly individualistic culture, a vacuum left by secularist rationalism (Francis 2013, 63).

The secular society project, subject of Assad's critique, which was supposed to resolve social conflict by separating religiosity from public life, has largely failed. On the one hand, it has not solved the insecurity of life that Pope Francis calls secular rationality; on the other hand, it has given rise to religious movements that are far from the ideas of a democratic society that the process of secularization sought to introduce. Our goal is not to offer solutions to social issues. Starting from an analysis of the critique of the secular, we can only point to the possibility of a more authentic proclamation of the Church.

First of all, Asad sees the problem of defining religiosity by mere belief, by inner experience. In this, at least a certain part of the Christian tradition has neglected corporeality. It is therefore more and more necessary to include the whole person in the proclamation. The Catholic Church has always stressed the importance of popular piety. This was largely passed down from generation to generation through bodily habits that had a deeply religious content (Stegu 2022, 709). The sacraments themselves are based on this. They are always about bodily signs, about the involvement of the whole person. Pope Francis even mentions this as a possibility for a new evangelization: "Expressions of popular piety have much to teach us; for those who are capable of reading them, they are a locus theologicus which demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization" (Francis 2013, 126). The first opportunity for a more time-appropriate proclamation could be better integration of corporality in pastoral work.

Attention to popular devotions and corporeality must not lead us to be too quick to adopt the highly successful methods of the various American evangelical renewal movements, which might be called Pentecostal. In their opposition to liberal, secular society, they increasingly adopt precisely this division: religious-sacred, as opposed to non-religious-damnable. In such religiosity, the whole body is central, but only as a medium of experience. It is full of emotionality, healing processes, conversion experiences, while life turns. “The sacred becomes tangible and concrete, in a physically touching way: through stirring music, through miraculous healings, through ascetic rules of life – everything is somehow meant to document having direct access to the sacred and thus being on the right side in the existential concerns of life – namely, the side of God” (Schüßler 2018, 236). Secular society no longer offers the certainty it promised. We can therefore conclude with Stark that it is full of religiosities that reflect the restlessness that the age of the enlightened mind brings.

In response, our proclamation must not be afraid, offering ritual as a tool deeply rooted in religious history, but often locally familiar and existentially plausible, consisting of exorcisms, incantations, and acts of signs that can respond to people’s fears of sorcery and their need for protection. This is a far cry from the freedom that salvation through Jesus Christ brings. What we can learn from Assad’s critique of secularism is the need to pay attention to a religiosity that embraces the whole person and integrates him or her into daily life. At the same time, we must be careful not to fall into the mapping of the secular process in the Church: only our beliefs about faith are sacred and we must profess them according to the proper rituals; everything else, the worldly, is damnable. Faith in the Incarnate God clearly shows us the way out of secularism and religious renewal movements that fundamentally reject everything worldly. Such faith obliges us all the more to raise families who will live their faith in all its naturalness and find in it a place of integral expression (PCPNE 2020, 260). They will raise children who will accept, critically of course, the integral role of religion through the rituals of the home and then in the Church.

Translated by Matej Bevc

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VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 361–376
Received: Oct 8, 2023 | Accepted: Jan 30, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

Ontological Dimension of Community Education Refers to Augustine's Thought in *The City of God*

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Abstract: To educate each person integrally as a member of society, ethical principles with an ontological dimension are needed. This qualitative research with literature study method aims to explore the ontological dimension of community education refers to Augustine's thought in *The City of God*. The results of this study show that community education is synonymous with building the City of God, which is characterized by human relationships with God so that they are able to use freedom driven by altruist love to implement social responsibility for the realization of peace, justice and happiness in common life. Education of conscience plays an important role in developing the sensitivity, concern and responsibility of each person to realize true happiness in life together. True happiness, which is the goal of everyone's life, has a moral, relational-dialogical, dynamic and affective character. Altruistic love, which stems from man's relationship with God, is an ethical principle in social life. At the same time, the idea of each person's relationship with God and his presence in conscience confirms Augustine's position on the ontological dimension of the morality of living together. Augustine's ideas about the ontological dimension of social morality have influenced moral education in the Christian tradition and philosophical discourse over time.

Keywords: conscience, ethical principles, happiness, altruistic love, community education

Education plays an important role in improving the quality of life in society by constructing moral awareness and fostering good habits as members of society (Lee and Misco 2016, 85). Therefore, ethical principles are needed to cultivate the awareness, motivation, and behavior of every individual in social life. All of these develop in dynamic relationships among individuals within the family, community, school, and society (Grzadziel 2014, 92–98). As social beings living in society, every individual undergoes an educational process by realizing and embodying ethical principles that serve as the fundamental motivation for moral actions within society (Liu 2014, 137). Every individual is a global citizen who needs ethical principles to interact and act within global relationships (Waterson and Moffa 2015, 130). These ethical principles serve as the basis for respecting the beliefs of each individual that develop within different family traditions and cultural contexts. As global citizens, every individual interacts and influences others in building a quality world through the tradition of ethical behavior. Good deeds need to be continually performed and become a tradition passed down from generation to generation.

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16811

Augustine (354–430), an influential Church Father, renowned Christian philosopher, and a great teacher of the Christian faith, emphasized that the history of human life has ontological, pedagogical, and soteriological dimensions (Casella 2009, 329). Human life is always connected to God, develops within history, and requires integral education to realize a life that is just, peaceful, happy, and full of brotherhood. For Augustine, the process of education for individual and collective development needs to be understood integrally based on the principles of Christian anthropology, which optimize the development of the ontological, epistemological, physical, social, and moral dimensions of human life (Kanu 2019, 47). The education of each individual, therefore, is a dynamic process in relation to God or living in God throughout one's life (Maloney 1973, 197).

Augustine's thoughts on education have become the foundation of the Christian vision of education from the patristic era to the present (Osuji and Suleh 2015, 22). From the perspective that education is a lifelong dynamic process, contemporary educational philosophers such as Alfred N. Whitehead, John Dewey, and naturalist figures strongly advocate for this. However, they do not place the ontological dimension as a fundamental part of the dynamics of human education. Therefore, researchers are interested in exploring the ontological dimension of community-based education with reference to Augustine's thoughts, especially in *The City of God* (*De civitate Dei*). There are three main research questions that serve as the research instrument. First, what is the socio-cultural context of Augustine's life and the writing of *The City of God*? Second, how does Augustine explain the ontological dimension of community-based education? Third, how is the dynamics of community-based education implemented? The answers to these three questions lead to the goal of this research to explore Augustine's ideas about the importance of the ontological dimension in the community education process.

1. The Socio-Cultural Context of *The City of God*

Augustine's encounter with Ambrose during his life time in Milan since 384 led him to become interested in Christian teachings, until he definitively decided to believe in Christ and became a member of the Church in 387. His life experiences in Tagaste and Carthage provided him with valuable knowledge for engaging in dialogue with people from diverse backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, language, beliefs, culture, and ethnicity (Mondin 1991, 84–86). Augustine described his life journey as a pilgrimage to know the soul and God better, as God is believed to be the home of the soul (Augustinus, *Soliloquiorum libri II* 85; Hazelton 1947, 91–101). This pilgrimage in life is a movement of the soul in God, with the purpose of seeking truth, enriching the soul, fostering personal maturity, and developing peaceful and brotherly coexistence (Kanu 2019, 48). All of these, later, had a great influence when he wrote *The City of God*.

The City of God is not only one of the Augustine's, but ranks, along with his *Confessions*, among the classics of all literature (Gilson 2010, xi). It was composed around the year of Marcellinus' death (413), and published separately from time to time, until it was completed in 426, occupied therefore the maturest years of Augustine's life, from his fifty-ninth year to his seventy-second year (Dods 1887, xii). In the "Preface" of Book I, Augustine wrote,

> My dear Marcellinus, this This work which I have begun makes good my promise to you. In it I am undertaking nothing less than the task of defending the glorious City of God against those who prefer their own gods to its Founder. I shall consider it both in its temporal stage here below (where it journeys as a pilgrim among sinners and lives by faith) and as solidly established in its eternal abode that blessed goal for which we patiently hope 'until justice be turned into judgment,' but which, one day, is to be the reward of excellence in a final victory and a perfect peace. The task, I realize, is a high and hard one, but God will help me (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* I, Preface [FC 8, 17–18]).

It can be said, therefore, that Augustine composed *The City of God* as a moral responsibility to guide and direct the community in living together in society, since he considered "the city" not in the material, but in the social sense (Gilson 2010, xiv). *The City of God* contains universal ethical principles for building communal life (Tarnas 1991, 107–8). It is a philosophical-theological work serving catechesis, pastoral care, and community education.

The City of God consists of 22 books. In the first ten books, Augustine extensively criticizes paganism, while in the remaining twelve books, he discusses the concept of the City of God and the earthly city (Ferrari 1972, 198–208). The City of God symbolizes or represents a good way of life because it is filled with love for God, and its realization is worth striving for. On the other hand, the earthly city represents a situation of moral decay due to excessive self-love, making it morally unworthy. Augustine emphasizes the duty of believers in defending the ethical principles that motivate life for the realization of the City of God. The contrasting depiction of the City of God and the earthly city serves to explain that Christians need to uphold ethical principles derived from the teachings of the Christian faith in order to attain happiness and peace. Living out these ethical principles in communal life is an educational process that nurtures personal growth, humanity, and responsibility (Kanu 2019, 48).

At the time *The City of God* was written, society was marked by the decline of Roman government power. There was a struggle for power among the heirs to the Roman imperial throne, and moral degradation was prevalent. Roman officials were more concerned with personal pleasures and luxurious living, and social concern and responsibility had greatly declined. At this point, Augustine shared with

Cicero's opinion about the fall Rome as the consequence of their moral degradation (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* II, 21 [FC 8, 106–11]). Cicero conceived that every society should resemble a symphonic concert, in which the different notes of instruments and voices blend into a final harmony. What musicians call harmony, politicians call concord. Without concord, there is no city. Meanwhile, Augustine, who saw that the dominant feature in the pagan concept of the city, as a political and social body, was the idea of justice, added that without justice, there would be no harmony. Therefore, justice is the first condition necessary for the existence of the city. That is why Augustine felt justified in concluding that Rome, which had lost all justice, no longer existed.

Christians, who were tirelessly striving for a brotherly and solidary communal life, were accused by political rulers as a group opposing the government. As a leader of the community, Augustine defended the people and reassured them that the survival of humanity in this world is in the hands of God. In Jacques Maritain's view, Augustine is a shepherd of the people who is remembered in the hearts of humanity because all of his works and service flow from a sincere heart (Maritain 2022, 345). Firmness of faith is necessary so that Christians do not get swept away by a life that goes against the ethical principles of communal living in *The City of God*. Augustine elaborates on the foundation or ethical basis of communal life based on the values of the Christian faith. In other words, for Augustine, community education has an ontological dimension.

2. Ontological Dimension of Community Education

The City of God contains Christian ethical principles to educate the faithful in community life. Augustine elaborates on philosophical and theological ideas about wisdom and happiness in communal life. In the light of the Christian faith, philosophy is a holistic journey of faith to attain happiness in perfect unity with God (Bourke 1964, 151). A true philosopher is a friend of God who directs his soul to unite perfectly with God as the source and pinnacle of happiness. This was affirmed by Augustine: "Great is the Lord, and exceedingly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain, increasing the joy of the whole earth" (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI, 1 [Walsh *et al.*, 187]). When humans truly listen to the voice of God's love planted in their conscience, life on earth will be filled with happiness and praise to God. The happiness of humans, as explained by Augustine in his thoughts on ethics in communal living, encompasses ontological dimensions that are moral, relational-dialogical, dynamic, and affective (Zizioulas 2010, 147).

Regarding the love of God poured into the heart of each individual, Augustine finds the foundation of the Christian faith based on the teachings of the Bible

(Prelipcean 2014, 766). He finds inspiration from the writings of Paul, who affirms that the love of God has been poured into our hearts (Rom 5:5). Love is the power of the Holy Spirit that unites all those who believe in God. The love of friendship is emphasized by Jesus by stating, "I no longer call you servants, but I have called you friends" (John 15:15). The love of God in the heart of each individual moves life from self-love to love of God and neighbor (Prelipcean 2014, 766–67). Altruistic love, sourced from the relationship between humans and God, becomes an ethical principle in communal living that has an ontological dimension.

The idea of life as a process of experiencing the relationship between the soul and God to attain happiness is the central focus of Augustine's philosophical-theological reflection (Chervin and Kevane 1988, 92). The human soul contains eternal divine values. The relationship between humans and God as the home of the soul is directed towards earthly happiness that reaches its fullness in eternal happiness in heaven. Considering that the purpose of philosophy and theology is to find happiness (beatitude), philosophy is not just a rational activity or form of reflection but a pilgrimage to give meaning to the lives of individuals in relation to God, the Creator.

In the light of the Christian faith, philosophical activity is not enough to simply use rational dialectic methods and logic as developed by Greek philosophers. Christian philosophy is a process of pilgrimage in life with the method of transcendental introspection (Mondin 1988, 145). This means that life is a pilgrimage of humans in relation to God towards the goal of happiness and salvation, which is fully achieved in eternal life in heaven. Life is a process of education that has ontological, epistemological, and moral-social dimensions (Kanu 2019, 48). This means that the pilgrimage of human life is a process of developing integral qualities aimed at achieving perfect happiness. Each individual is a pilgrim together with others to build a communal life of care, unity of hearts, and peace (Painadath 2014, 75).

The teachings of Christian faith about God as the source of all life events and truth form the ontological foundation of community education. In the Christian faith, the Trinity is a unity of three persons who dynamically relate to humans and urge them to direct their lives towards salvation (Zizioulas 2010, 148). The Christian faith also believes that within the human heart, there is a divine power that directs life and the humans free will to achieve the fullness of life in God. Augustine creates a hierarchical framework that colors the relationship between humans and God. God is at the top of the hierarchy of human life. God dwells in the human heart, directing human life to achieve the fullness of the relationship with God in eternity. The hierarchy below is reason and conscience, which is the place of God's power that moves humans to know and unite perfectly with God and his truth. The seed of truth and eternity (*ratio aeterna*) is planted in the human mind (*ratio seminales*). The lowest hierarchy is the mortal body. The eternal principle or *ratio aeterna* is unchanging forms of principles or essences of everything.

Humans are endowed with spiritual abilities to build and preserve the city of God. The city of God is a reflection of the moral quality of human life surrounded by justice, truth, equality, and brotherhood. Living in the city of God is described as a process of realizing the suitability of each person's life and behavior based on Christian moral and ethical principles. The affirmation of the ontological dimension of communal living plays an important role in ensuring the sustainability of human education (Cox 2018, 47). Communal education places the free will and free choice of humans not only on the orientation of happy earthly life but also on the fullness of heavenly happiness. Community education is oriented towards the development of communal life built on the obedience of its citizens to God's love. The model of obedience to God's love is shown in the example of Abraham who entrusted his life and family to God's call (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIV, 32 [Walsh *et al.*, 544–47]).

Building the city of God is identical to the process of community education based on ontological ethical principles. The ethical principles of the city of God should inspire and move the life of each person in determining moral attitudes and behaviour for the realization of a peaceful and happy communal life. Ethical principles, eternal values, and ways of life to realize a humane way of life are emphasized in *The City of God*. *Civitas Dei* and *Civitas Terrena* are two contrasting communal environments and ways of life:

> Worldly society has flowered from a selfish love which dared to despise even God, whereas the communion of saints is rooted in a love of God that is ready to trample on self. In a word, this latter relies on the Lord, whereas the other boasts that it can get along by itself. The city of man seeks the praise of men, whereas the height of glory for the other is to hear God in the witness of conscience. The one lifts up its head in its own boasting; the other says to God: "Thou art my glory, thou liftest up my head" (Ps 3:4) (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIV, 28 [Walsh *et al.*, 410]).

Civitas Dei or the *City of God* is a quality and dynamic of communal life inspired by Christian moral principles, namely altruistic love. Loving God's eternal law is the spiritual basis for loving fellow humans and all creatures created by God. Augustine emphasizes that to human being,

> God teaches him two chief commandments, the love of God and the love of neighbor. In these precepts man finds three beings to love, namely, God, himself, and his fellow man, and knows that he is not wrong in loving himself so long as he loves God. As a result, he must help his neighbor (whom he is obliged to love as himself) to love God (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIX, 14 [Walsh *et al.*, 222]).

This idea shows that loving others is the embodiment of love for God, the Creator. The city of God is a reality of human life inspired and driven by divine altruistic love, which produces brotherhood and peace. In the life of the world city, each person seeks their own glory, not fighting for a brotherly and peaceful communal life that glorifies God, as each person in the city of God strives for. Divine altruistic love is an ontological ethical principle and the basis for the implementation of moral responsibility to build a just, brotherly, and peaceful society.

Community-based education motivated by altruistic love becomes increasingly urgent to improve the fragility of the world order (Martini 1995, 43). The longing of human beings from different religious and cultural backgrounds for a brotherly and peaceful way of life becomes a starting point for building dialogue and cooperation based on the principles of love for God and others. In reality, religions also teach ethical principles that value love and brotherhood in society. Religions also encourage their followers to strive for justice and peace. Dialogue and cooperation among followers of different religions further emphasize the role of religion as a source of light that purifies the world and makes it a home for humanity to live in peace, help one another, strengthen the weak, and give hope (Martini 1995, 43).

In reality, the world city that represents the moral quality and dynamics of life driven by selfish love is always present in this worldly life. This is the challenge for the Christian faith and all of humanity. Efforts to realize altruistic love can still be infiltrated by the desire for power that shapes the "world city." Augustine states clearly:

The earthly one has made for herself, according to her heart's desire, false gods out of any sources at all, even out of human beings, that she might adore them with sacrifices. The heavenly one, on the other hand, living like a wayfarer in this world, makes no false gods for herself. On the contrary, she herself is made by the true God that she may be herself a true sacrifice to Him (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XVIII, 54 [Walsh *et al.*, 182]). This statement illustrates that in the pilgrimage in this world the members of the city of God strive to direct themselves to the goal of the goodness of life lived in relationship with God.

Augustine's pedagogy emphasizes unity and practices that strengthen the will to act rightly. He saw such education of the will, along with the memory and the understanding, as character building.

> For it is from these three that we are also wont to gain an insight into the talents and the character of the young. For the more tenaciously and the more easily a boy remembers, the more acutely he understands; and the more eagerly he studies, the more praiseworthy is his talent. But when we inquire into a person's learning, we do not ask about the sureness or the facility of his memory, or the keenness of his understanding, but what he remembers and what he understands. And because a mind is deemed worthy of praise, not only for its learning, but also for its goodness, we have to consider not only what it remembers and understands, but also what it wills – not how ardently it wills, but first what it wills and then how much it wills it. For a mind that loves fervently is only to be praised when that which it loves deserves to be fervently loved (Augustinus, *De Trinitate* X, 17 [McKenna, 57]).

Furthermore, Augustine stated that to strengthen character and to develop good habits it is necessary to practice continuous dialogue with the Divine Master living in the inner self through reflective reasoning and the realization of truth for the sake of the unity of the common life that helps each person to transcend the self.

> Do not go outside, come back into yourself. It is in the inner self that Truth dwells. And if you find your own nature to be subject to change, transcend even yourself. But remember, when you are transcending yourself, that it is your reasoning soul transcending yourself. So then, direct your course to what the light of reason itself gets its light from. (Augustinus, *De vera religione* 39, 72 [Hill, 78]).

The process of community education that takes place in dialogue and reflective reasoning needs to include honest self-evaluation and examination of conscience. Augustine's pedagogy that emphasizes the power of sincere love as the impetus for righteous and fraternal living goes beyond a pedagogy that emphasizes the development of mere intellectual intelligence. Each person develops in communal life under the guidance of the true Master. This idea was affirmed by Augustine: "God is the Author of the existence of our nature and, therefore, He must be our Teacher if we are ever to be wise, and He must be the Source of our inmost consolation if we are ever to be happy" (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI, 25 [Walsh *et al.*, 227–28]).

As Augustine stated, the city of the world and the city of God are realities that exist in the actual experience of human life. The task of community education is to direct members of the city of the world towards members of the city of God. This means that the reality of human life which is dominated by the power of self-love needs to be directed through community education towards a communal life driven by divine love or altruistic love. Thus, an example of an educator is very important so that students have a clear model of the reflection of the divine city. Augustine testified that all his human endeavors did not yield the results he expected. He states: "This was the controversy I felt in my heart, about nothing but myself, against myself," (Augustinus, *Confessiones* VIII, 11 [Watts, 461]). Thus, he discovered that life is not about seeking success or fame but about cultivating love for the truth. In Augustine's view, the process of education is not enough to mobilize community members to know the right but primarily to cultivate humility that enables them to love the right and act rightly. Thus, educating community members who live in the tension between the forces of the city of this world and the city of God is a process of cultivating humility, sensitivity of conscience and social responsibility.

3. Conscience Education and Social Responsibility

Augustine draws attention to the important role of conscience and the human soul that leads to goodness and a happy life. He asserts that "even today we rightly regard as happy all those whom we see leading a good and holy life in the hope of future immortality, untroubled in conscience and with easy access to God's forgiveness for the sins which are due to the frailty of human nature" (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XI, 12 [Walsh *et al.*, 206]). Conscience is the inner voice that provides guidance on what is right and wrong. Augustine stresses the need to educate the conscience to understand and respond to moral calls and avoid the domination of self-love. The education of conscience aims to shape moral character that will guide individuals and society in achieving spiritual salvation in perfect relation with God. The education of conscience also plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to use freedom wisely, choose good, and fulfill their responsibility driven by altruistic love. It should be realized that,

> There will remain in each and all of us an inalienable freedom of the will, emancipating us from every evil and filling us with every good, rejoicing in the inexhaustible beatitude of everlasting happiness, unclouded by the memory of any sin or of sanction suffered, yet with no forgetfulness of our redemption nor any loss of gratitude for our Redeemer (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XXII, 30 [Walsh *et al.*, 508]).

Although Augustine wrote extensively on the meaning of conscience in his various writings, the focus of the writings is to explore the importance of conscience education, which is to strengthen altruistic love in each person as a moral and spiritual force to develop community life. Conscience education is crucial to direct freedom towards altruistic love that originates from the unity of the soul and God (Mondin 1988, 155). Education of conscience guides humans in achieving a deeper relationship with God, nurturing sensitivity to others, and strengthening cooperation to achieve true happiness in unity with God. Education should teach us to love God above all things and our brothers and sisters as ourselves. Teachers play a spiritual guide role in helping students understand and apply the teachings of faith, form good character, and develop a conscience that is sensitive to truth and goodness. In other words, Augustine emphasizes the importance of conscience education in building moral awareness, creating an integral life vision, and strengthening responsibility to guide the history of the development of the city of God. The term city of God does not primarily refer to a place or a specific city like Carthage, Rome, or any other city, but rather a situation of community life throughout the world driven by altruistic love according to the will of God (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XIX, 17 [Walsh *et al.*, 228]).

Altruistic love as the ethical principle of the city of God is already embedded in the conscience of every person as a member of community since created by God. This ethical principle also drives human life towards the goal of eternal happiness and salvation. Thus, Augustine believes that as God's creation, every individual has the seed of orientation to God in their hearts to experience perfect happiness (Bourke 1964, 151). Directing life towards achieving eternal happiness in God becomes the goal of conscience education.

Augustine's ideas about the ethics of conscience become the basis for building an integral vision of life history. For Augustine, the main actor of the history of life is God who loves human beings and dwells in their hearts. Humans participate in God's work of building a peaceful and happy life history together. Augustine's ethics is very different from classical Greek ethics that emphasizes human beings as the main actor of the dynamics of life history. For Augustine, when humans listen and realize the whisper of conscience driven by the love of God, they participate in God's work to realize the community of God, namely peaceful and just life. Every individual has the ability to participate in realizing God's love because of the gift of the Holy Spirit (Sandlin 2022, 5). God's love embedded in human hearts makes humans partners of God in realizing happiness and peace. Peace and happiness, both inner and outer, which become the characteristics of the community of God, will become real when humans live morally. Thus, it can be concluded that education of conscience is an essential part of enabling every individual to fulfill their responsibility to guide the history of life towards the realization of happiness and salvation.

Christian believers have the responsibility to educate the conscience of members of society by listening to the Word of God, praying, making positive plans for others, and habitually acting in accordance with God's law. Community education plays a crucial role in developing sensitivity and clarity of conscience so that each person as a member of community is able to distinguish between the ethical principles of the city of God and the city of the world. Clarity of conscience guides each person to choose the city of God as the ultimate goal of their life. Education of conscience is essential in developing the responsibility of each person in realizing a brotherly and peaceful community life.

It is the responsibility of all human beings, regardless of their religion or belief, to guide the history of life based on the principle of altruistic love that fosters peace and prosperity. The primary task of every believer is to build the city of God through dialogue and cooperation so that the city of the world, which is characterized by hostility towards others, self-love, egoism, and exclusive living, is eroded. The atmosphere of life that reflects the realization of the city of God is fought for by those who love God and live according to the law of love.

Although there is conflict between good and evil in this world, Augustine believes that in the future, the city of God will triumph. This hope is based on the nature of God's love itself, which cannot be defeated by evil. This view is a response to those who are cynical about the role of religion and its followers in society. Augustine cultivates hope that the end of the pilgrimage to the city of God is eternal happiness, peace, and prosperity that surpasses all effort and sacrifice during life in this world. At that time, God, the King full of mercy, will wipe away every tear from his people. From that moment on, there will be no more hardship, crying, or suffering because "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away" (Augustinus, *De civitate Dei* XX, 17 [Walsh *et al*., 292]). The conscience of each person that is moved and led by the love of God will produce the fruits of a peaceful and brotherly community life. The principle of love is the basis for personal and communal life transformation in society.

The City of God contains a pedagogical message. Augustine himself was an educator who took on his duties and responsibilities as an educator throughout his life. He began this responsibility as a rhetoric teacher and ended it as a church leader. Augustine's main concern was to build a consistent personal character in living and fighting for moral principles to realize a just and peaceful community. Through his thoughts, Augustine invites readers to be sensitive to their conscience. Anyone who listens to the divine voice within themselves will have a vision and attitude towards realizing a just and peaceful community or society. Thus, it is clear to Augustine that philosophy and theology must be contextual and provide a solid foundation and impetus for the transformation of community life.

Augustine shows that the essence of community education is the effort to cultivate a strong personal character as a member of community. A strong personal character is marked by awareness and responsibility to build a peaceful, just, and brotherly communal life, while still maintaining hope amidst life's challenges. Augustine's ethics are based on a Christian anthropological-religious vision. Augustine uses the term "person" to indicate the integrity of human beings as the foundation of their dignity. Every person has dignity because they come from God, the same Creator, and will return to Him as the purpose of life. Placing humans as God's creation is the basis for human responsibility to develop brotherhood in building communal life. Brotherhood is not just a social fact to avoid harming others. Brotherhood is the essence of human beings as God's creation. Disrupting brotherhood means hurting God the Creator and hurting human dignity.

Augustine's thoughts on communal ethics and the education of conscience provide a framework for reflecting on the phenomenon of communal and state life. When moral principles rooted in the conscience of human beings are neglected and life is dominated by self-love (egoism), destruction will soon befall communal life. *The City of God* is a prophetic voice for human life that has deified self-interests. Greed and covetousness, which are the clearest faces of egoism, will never lead to happiness. Egoism has given birth to a culture of violence characterized by cruelty, slander, and various forms of cheating for the sake of momentary self-gratification.

Worldly things (bodies, material possessions, and social status) are not the ultimate goal because they themselves will not provide perfect happiness. For Augustine, worldly things only have meaning when they are placed as a means to achieve the goal of life, which is happiness in the love of God and others. Therefore, the order of communal and state life will not bring about a peaceful, just, and prosperous life if it ignores the voice of God's love planted in the conscience of human beings.

Live according to the love of God planted in your conscience because living in love is the implementation of the law embedded in the heart of every individual. This is the essential message that Augustine wants to convey through *The City of God*. Augustine's message remains relevant to the struggle to realize a more brotherly and peaceful society in our time. When egoism has taken over all aspects of life, the prophetic voice becomes very important in re-orienting personal and communal life towards the realization of ethical principles with an ontological dimension to answer the longing for a happy life (Karpov 2019, 233). Based on Madi's analysis, the city of God as envisioned by St. Augustine is an answer to human hope that unites truth and happiness (Madi 2022, 10). The worldly longings of humans cannot provide satisfaction for a happy life because happiness only occurs when one attains the eternal good of abiding in God himself. In other words, Augustine shows the connection between righteousness, eternal good and happiness in God.

In the realm of state and communal life, these moral principles need to be translated into positive norms to assist and guarantee the implementation of these moral principles. Ethical principles also serve as criteria for evaluating positive norms and communal traditions. Positive law is very useful because of its rational-objective nature and its focus on the awareness of equal dignity. Thus, positive law will help provide a clear scope for each individual to realize subjective-affective, dynamic, and complex brotherly love in communal life. Without positive legal norms, there will be clashes in the implementation and realization of human values as believed by each individual.

Conclusion

Augustine understands humans as moral creatures who have ontological roots in their relationship with God. In *The City of God*, he describes two cities known as the city of the world and the City of God. Humans are involved in building these cities. When human life is driven by altruistic love, the dynamics of life reflect the atmosphere of the City of God, which is peaceful, brotherly, and happy. When the hearts of humans are dominated by self-love or egoism, the dynamics of communal life are marked by chaos, greed, violence, and hatred. Education of conscience is crucial so that every individual realizes and fulfills their responsibility to build the City of God. Education of conscience is essential to cultivate sensitivity, care, and social responsibility towards achieving peace and happiness that reaches its perfection in heaven. It is evident that Augustine emphasizes the importance of ethical principles with ontological dimensions in community education for the realization of the City of God.

Augustine's idea of sincere love as the internal driver of each human person restores the orientation of community education which ideologically adheres to a pedagogy of activism based on mere human abilities and calculations. Augustine developed a reflective and transformative integral pedagogical vision to realize the community of brotherly love as the real image of the city of God. Relationships in community life are educational spaces to realize a peaceful, united and happy life together that is imbued with brotherly love. With reference to *De magistro*, educators in Augustine's view need to involve students in the learning process. This is emphasized: "What foolish curiosity could ever prompt a man to send his child to school in order to have him learn what the teacher thinks?" (Augustinus, *De magistro* XIV, 45 [FC 59, 59]). The educational process takes place in a dialogical community that learns from each other.

> For so great is the power of a sympathetic disposition of mind, that, as they are affected while we are speaking, and we are affected while they are learning, we have our dwelling in each other; and thus, at one and the same time, they as it were in us speak what they hear, and we in them learn after a certain fashion what we teach. […] And this is so much the more our experience in proportion to the intimacy of our friendship with them because, just as we are in them in virtue of the bond of love, in the same degree do things become new to us which previously were old (Augustinus, *Enchiridion de fide, spe, et caritate* XII, 17 [Shaw, 292])

Christian education, therefore, needs to pay attention to various experiences and life contexts so that students have broad insights and are able to contribute to the transformation of life together.

Some of Augustine's key thoughts on community education to build the City of God include education of conscience, altruistic love as an ethical principle, freedom driven by altruistic love, and social responsibility to create a humane communal life. Augustine emphasizes the crucial role of education of conscience in building the City of God. Education plays a role in developing knowledge of truth, awareness of ethical principles in communal life, and humane ways to build a just, brotherly, and peaceful communal life. Education of conscience plays a crucial role in the process of character formation, moral awareness, and behavior to achieve the ultimate goal of humans in the eternal City of God. Augustine's idea of education of conscience to cultivate ethical awareness and social responsibility becomes the foundation for the development of a humanistic-religious vision of education amidst the education system that tends to prioritize the formation of pragmatic and applicable knowledge in response to the demands of productivity of the industrial society (Topping 2010, 378).

Augustine provides a relevant contribution to the development of communal life based on Christian wisdom that unites human rational abilities with divine power embedded in the conscience. Ethical reflection on communal life is related to the increase in knowledge of truth that drives the realization of concrete steps in achieving a brotherly, peaceful, and happy communal life. *The City of God* explains ethical principles and the ontological dimension of human life and action. There is unity between human phenomena and divine power that becomes the primary element in forming the ethical behavior of each individual in communal life. Furthermore, Augustine's ethics not only explain the basics of individual choices to achieve happiness but also the responsibility of each individual to build a just, peaceful, and happy communal life. Augustine shows the foundation of a happy life and the way to achieve it. In the midst of communal life marked by increasingly blurred communal norms, Augustine's thoughts provide enlightenment for anyone who loves truth, peace, and brotherhood.

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VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 377–400
Received: Jan 3, 2024 | Accepted: May 23, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

The Crisis of Western Culture and Secularism

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Abstract: The subject of this article is the crisis of Western culture (Christianity) in terms of its sources and consequences. The author attempts to present the diagnosis of European culture by John Paul II and Benedict XVI. They associate its crisis with the internal weakness of Christianity (the Catholic religion) and the influence of philosophical trends and ideologies with the purpose of creating a "new culture" on the ruins of the old one. Postmodern thought, which not only breaks with the rationalism of the Enlightenment but questions (in the name of individual freedom) the truth and the ability to get to know it, plays a special role in this respect. The anti-Christian narrative adopted by intellectual elites in the West, which in some manifestations becomes an ideology of secularism, is thus a consequence of philosophical assumptions. The author suggests that the popularisation of a model of life according to the principle "as if God did not exist," i.e. the acceleration of de-Christianisation processes (e.g. in Poland) is significantly related to the development of the so-called new media, especially in the form of virtual reality.

Keywords: culture, crisis, Christianity, secularism, Internet

It is customary to say that a man is a religious being. That statement is confirmed not only by historical data (archaeology, religions of extinct cultures, inscriptions and written myths) but also by the prevalence of religion in the modern human family. For years, however, historians and religious scholars have been writing about the "European exception," i.e. the phenomenon of non-religiosity, declared – at least since the Enlightenment – by an increasing number of social circles in the West. Mass unbelief and religious indifference are thus a product of Christian culture. Yet, this study does not deal with the processes that led to the above. This is because secularisation, i.e. the emancipation of successive sectors of social life from the guardianship of religion, is an excellently researched and described phenomenon. Even so, there is a connection between secularisation and secularism, i.e. an ideology the purpose of which is to eliminate Christianity from public space. It can be assumed that the progress of the spontaneous de-Christianisation of a particular community facilitates the emergence of secularist trends. (Neuhaus 2010, 59, 381–92)

The abandonment of Christianity includes a whole spectrum of attitudes and theoretical concepts; different types of atheism (from its ideological versions, e.g. Marxism or philosophical atheism, to the committed so-called new atheism, actively eradicating religion); practical materialism (sometimes combined with utilitarianism

Fragments of this study refer to the texts: Perszon 2024 [forthcoming]; Perszon 2023.

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17061

and hedonism); religious indifference – from "scientific" agnosticism, which assumes a conflict between faith and science, to nihilism and unwillingness to pose metaphysical questions. More and more often, sociologists and cultural experts mention the Western fashion of distancing from Christianity imposed on the rest of society by opinion-forming (and with wide-ranging powers) elites. Consequently, it is something normal in most Western countries to have (at least declaratively) a religiously and axiologically neutral state and the dominance of – often aggressive – secularism and laicism in social policy. One of the by-products of such policy is the axiom of desirable pluralism in the sphere of ideas and life choices. Pluralism, i.e. the diversity of society (religious, worldview, ethical and moral anomie, preference for the individual, breakdown of consensus regarding the understanding of a man as a person, crisis of the classical family, etc.), is considered an unquestionable good in postmodernity; therefore, no wonder that every "strong" identity and thought (narrative) is considered a threat to freedom.

One of the consequences of the above processes is the so-called new spirituality.[1] That phenomenon reflects the diversity and confusion of modern society; in a way, it illustrates the internal contradictions that plague the modern Western man. Existing in a *pluriversum*, a man must constantly make choices – to some extent, every day-trying to establish the truth and meaning of his existence on his own. Convinced of his absolute autonomy, the Western man tries to compose his own spiritual and (less and less often) religious creed. A process of weakening – and this applies to the entire West – of religion institutionalised in the Churches has been observed for decades. In the case of Poland, it is primarily the Roman Catholic Church. In Poland, since the beginning of the 21st century, a rather rapid process of de-churchification of young people has been taking place. It may be assumed that the generational departure from the Church, i.e. religious declarations and practices quantifiable by sociological tools, is correlated with abandoning the Catholic spiritual life, i.e. Christian spirituality. Catholic piety based on intergenerational tradition and proven by past generations is weakening. That process, however, is not, as one might think, caused by the poverty of the Church's spiritual offer and the non-attractiveness of the models of living the Gospel formed over the centuries. The abandonment of the Catholic tradition and its spiritual treasures can, albeit to a limited extent, be linked to the problems that beset the Church in the 21st century (paedophile scandals, doctrinal disunity, loss of credibility of the Church as an institution). Still, giving up religious life (as understood by Christianity) does not always lead to a spiritual desert, to the land of irreligion, atheism or practical materialism and sometimes (though less often than it seems) encourages a spiritual search to construct one's own individualised concept of personal development and the pursuit of happiness or "salvation." Such trends are derived from postmodern ideas to a large extent, but also from the development of new

1 Sutcliffe and Bowman 2009, 1–13; Pasek 2013; Mariański 2016, 263–330; Leszczyńska and Pasek 2008.

technologies that affect the economic sphere or media communication and – at the same time – transform interpersonal relationships and the way in which individuals perceive themselves and the reality around them.[2] There is a return to pre-Christian ideas of the sacred, a fascination with oriental beliefs, pantheistic concepts and cosmotheism (Delsol 2021; 2023, 117–36).

Of far greater importance seems to be the pressure of postmodern culture, with its predilection for individualism and rejection of everything that restrains unlimited individual freedom. Some even call it a programmatic revolution, abolishing (erasing, the so-called *cancel culture*) the entire cultural legacy to date.[3] Chantal Delsol mentions a rupture and total transformation in the name of progress, and the recognition of individual emancipation as an absolute good. (Delsol 2016; 2017, 17–46) Leszek Kołakowski, in an essay written in the 1980s, asked with great concern: "Will our culture survive if it forgets Jesus? Do we believe that if Jesus is banished from our world, this world will be lost?" (Kołakowski 2014, 11) In the religious transformation, but also in the offensive of militant secularism, too little importance seems to be given to the impact of the Internet, i.e. the virtual world.

In this study, the crisis of a culture that for centuries has been considered Christian is presented first. Based primarily on the teaching of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, the issue of its genesis (sources, mechanisms; thought, intellectual and social processes) will be addressed (although only in rudimentary form), which has prepared the ground for "living as if God did not exist."[4] This cannot be done without even a cursory analysis of the crisis of religiosity (and religion) introduced in traditional Christian churches and communities.

More and more often, not only in the circle of Catholic thought, one can notice totalitarian attempts of liberal democracy inherent in the project of creating a new man and a new, perfect world. The obstacle to the implementation of that project is – primarily Catholic – Christianity. Therefore, its elimination is necessary; by mockery, marginalisation and other "soft" methods of social engineering. Both John Paul II and Benedict XVI warned of a "camouflaged totalitarianism" and a "dictatorship of relativism" that threatened people – not only those who believe in God – in the countries of Western civilisation. Their diagnoses indicate that laicism and secularism are becoming the dominant religion in the West.

2 Postmodernism – with its programmatic deconstructivism, rejection of the Enlightenment and Cartesian thought, radical relativism and axiological minimalism – is characterised by Andrzej Bronk (1998, 23–74). Attention is drawn to the blurring and fluidity of the terms used in sociology: religion, spirituality and postmodernism (Zwierżdżyński 2010, 79–93).

3 Critical accounts of that phenomenon are written by Kevin Donnelly (2021), Alan M. Dershowitz (2020), Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsay (2020), inter alia. Cf. Wildstein 2020 (especially chapter "Nowy, wspaniały totalitaryzm," 80–106).

4 That expression (*etsi Deus non daretur*) was used by both John Paul II (*EiE*, 9) and Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.

In the next section of the paper, the potential impact of the Internet on the changes taking place in terms of culture and religiosity will be outlined. The impact of virtual reality changes not only the forms of social communication but also largely shapes (forms) the mentality, views and attitudes of a considerable part of the population. Unrestricted access to the immeasurable resources of the Internet accelerates the pluralism postulated by postmodernism, promotes the absolute freedom of the individual, allows a man to break with tradition (and the whole existing culture) and construct his own "self." It can be assumed that in the religious/spiritual sphere, the influence of the Internet (at least to some extent) – precisely due to "erasing" the past and focusing on the present and the postulated establishment of a human paradise – accelerates the de-Christianisation of its users/participants. It is also becoming a dynamic factor in the secularisation of public space (both virtual and real).

1. The Crisis of Western (Christian) Culture

The popes at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries (especially John Paul II and Benedict XVI) were well aware of the difficulties encountered by the world of faith and the mission of the Church in the modern world. They expressed their opinions in many speeches and documents. Their teaching has remained relevant even today, when the crisis of Western culture – which they diagnosed – has coincided with a growing crisis and confusion in the Catholic Church. The situation is viewed similarly – although from a different perspective – by social analysts. Many thinkers, analysing the transformations taking place in the minds and existential attitudes of the inhabitants of Christian civilisation, consider them to be a comprehensive crisis (Delsol 2011; 2021; Chaput 2017; Mariański 2006). Thus, it is not only about the religious dimension (secularisation processes, the rapid and systematic weakening of religiosity, the crisis of the so-called traditional Churches and denominations, the privatisation of religion and the selective approach to the truths of faith and morals, the removal of Christianity from public life, etc.) but the whole social, family and personal life (R. T. Ptaszek 2023, 13–19). If society is defined as a system of communication and relations (as Jürgen Habermas does, for example), it is difficult to speak of the privatisation of religion or individual spirituality (Besecke 2010, 98–105). They always have a social dimension. The transformations – in the context of subsequent stages of secularisation – are described by Charles Taylor in his monumental monograph (Taylor 2007).[5] Some selected and signalled by both popes symptoms of that crisis are analysed below. Since contemporary culture (e.g., human relationships

5 It is worth paying attention to the sequence of stages of secularisation in the West. The researcher considers the Enlightenment as the "turning point" in this respect (cf. Kaufmann 2004).

mediated by electronics) is hybrid in nature (with a growing predominance of virtual reality), traditional means of communicating the Gospel are largely failing. The new culture generated by the computerisation of life is mentioned more and more often.[6]

For the reflections in the study, postmodernism is an important aspect. As Max Seckler notes, secularisation, postmodernism and religious pluralism are intrinsically interconnected. Thus, the gradual liberation of the state, society, culture and science from the governance of religion and churches already in the 19th century resulted in the "de-churchification" of social institutions, the de-Christianisation of customs and the removal of religion from public life. Secularisation (but not secularism) was viewed positively (in theological terms) by Friedrich Gogarten and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, inter alia. One of the leading motifs of postmodernism is pluralism and diversity, encompassing the entire social life. Factual and postulated pluralism gives up one "strong" principle, which for centuries has been God the Creator; thus, it promises the contemporary man liberation from Transcendence and the universal moral law. However, at the same time, it places the postmodern man in a situation of fundamental disorientation, uprooting, helplessness and relativism. A reality composed of "equivalent" fragments, disjointed, "condemns" a man to constant choice, collisions of values, contradictions, conflicts and confusion. Moreover; pluralism and relativism become social "virtues" as – by definition – they shape a tolerant, diverse society that respects differences and minorities. Every "strong" idea and philosophy – since it may not respect other views – must be depotentialised, weakened, incorporated into a democratic, tolerant universe (Seckler 2002, 150–52). Therefore, it is not surprising that any clear identity, rational metaphysical thinking or traditional doctrine of Creator and creation are questioned and eliminated. Postmodern thought assumes the unknowability of truth in the field of religion; it excludes a universal methodology and convergence of types of rationality. Instead, it proposes a plurality of forms of thought, a multiplicity of ways of knowing, language games and criteria of rationality. With such an approach, omnipresent pluralism allows humans to better realise themselves (Seckler 2002, 156–64). John Paul II claimed that "the synthesis of culture and faith is a requirement not only of culture but also of faith [...]. A faith that does not become culture is a faith not fully accepted, not fully thought out, not lived faithfully" (Giovanni Paolo II 1982). Even at the end of the 20th century, the pope postulated – although he was well aware of the power of secular globalisation processes in Western culture – the inculturation of the Gospel in the "modern public square."[7]

6 The threats of manipulation (or even dictatorship of electronic media) that the virtual world poses to modern societies are discussed by: Osiński 2023; Zybertowicz and Piekutowski 2022; Kreft 2019, inter alia. The literature presenting the dramatic effects of human computerisation is vast and well-grounded in reality. While assessing the possible effects of computerisation, Jastrzębski (2020, 15–27) warns against both hurray-optimism and gloomy vision (cf. Izdebski 2019; G. Ptaszek 2019).

7 The European debates known as Areopagi have long had a negative approach to Christianity and are methodically eliminating it from the *forum publicum* (Weigel 2005).

Over the centuries, the Church has grown into specific European cultures, gradually evangelising them (Shorter 1988; Perszon 2019, 21–68). The most important tool and forum for the inculturation of the Gospel, according to John Paul, is the media (the world of mass media) and digital communication (*RM* 37; Kamińska 2020, 91–199).

Thirty years later, the pope's hopes seem unrealistic (even naive), or at least over the top. The new media, without which humanity is no longer able to live, are a threat rather than an opportunity for the world of Christian faith (understood as a community of persons rather than a "system" of ideas).[8] It is worth adding that for John Paul II the crisis of European culture meant not so much the depopulation of churches and the departure of a significant part of society from the principles of Christian morality. He claimed that the source of the crisis (including de-Christianisation) was the abandonment of culture in favour of the cult of power and wealth, the primacy of the ideology of "having" over "being." Knowing that it is part of the nature of European culture to question established truths and structures and to strive for the whole truth (and thus also to contest Christianity), the pope saw the abandonment of reference to transcendence as a crisis-generating factor (Jan Paweł II 1985, 15–16; Giovanni Paolo II 1990). Towards the end of his pontificate (20 years ago), the pope, stating that the adoption of anthropology without God and Christ leads to the false divinisation of a man, wrote: "Forgetfulness of God led to the abandonment of a man," therefore "no wonder that in this context a vast field has opened for the unrestrained development of nihilism in philosophy, of relativism in values and morality, of pragmatism – and even a cynical hedonism – in daily life" (*EiE* 9).

In postmodern society, which is hugely diverse (fragmented), the sacred (outside the context of the Christian faith, the sacred is essentially undefinable) has "spread" beyond the framework of traditionally understood religion (institution).[9] Due to increasing structural and functional differentiation, there is a breakdown of social consensus (and of all traditional communities) in the sphere of ontological and moral certainties.[10] At the same time, the coupling of new technologies with its concentration in the hands of large owners allows a few to create a new world and a "new man"; it also means (at least potentially) breaking with the existing vision of a man,

8 Andrzej Zybertowicz (Zybertowicz and Piekutowski 2022, 310–11) argues that the owners of the Internet (transnational corporations), in an almost perfect way (i.e. complete, holistic), first make their "customers" dependent, format their perceptive abilities, and then shape them arbitrarily (preventing reason and conscience from working). According to the sociologist, it is a programmatic manipulation of broad masses of society, who voluntarily surrender their souls to the control of the owners of virtual space.

9 Hence, many sociologists mention "liquid spirituality," "liquid religiosity" and "liquid sacred" disseminated in society, e.g., in the digital world. It should be added that a distinction is made between the religious/theistic sacred and the sacred understood as a non-theistic category (Mariański and Wargacki 2016, 7–12). The "fragmentation of existence" of contemporary Europeans was mentioned already by John Paul II (*EiE* 7–9).

10 Zybertowicz sarcastically states that contemporary young people are "bound" and held together not by a common culture and tradition (or moral principles), but by money; specifically, by the obligation to repay the loan (Zybertowicz and Piekutowski 2022, 147–50).

culture, society and religion. (Zybertowicz 2015, 429–52)[11] It also makes it impossible (or difficult) to reach wider sections of society with the Gospel (Capucao 2010, 183–86).[12] The contemporary mentality is characterised by pragmatism and belief in democratic mechanisms. Hence the prejudice towards authoritarian (including religious) leadership and individualism, often associated with an autonomous approach to morality, criticism of inherited tradition, social order and religion.[13] The image of God has also been changing for several decades. Fewer and fewer people believe in His actions and interference in the human world and space (Ven 2001, 195–217). God is perceived as energy, the spirit of the universe, a cosmic power. Thus, He is aiconic and non-personal.

Since the world of faith no longer communicates with culture (both high and mass, popular) and does not inspire it, as it – although not entirely – has moved to the Internet or has been fragmented into different segments, it is slowly becoming an open-air museum, a space set aside for religion. Faith is becoming a private hobby, irrelevant to public affairs and everyday life. This, in turn, means that the process of deculturation of Christianity is progressing. That process is spontaneous only in appearance.[14] For decades, actions have been observed in the West, effectively marginalising the presence of Christianity (the Church) in social life. Many of those seem to be an extensive programme or implementation of the ideology of secularism. The fashion for secularism is created by the so-called elites, i.e. opinion-forming circles. The secularising assumptions of the social sciences (including the sociology of religion) are extensively discussed by (Kupś 2021, 79–95; Limbaugh 2006).[15] It is, obviously, about Christianity having a real impact on society, institutional and ecclesiastical, which – at least in Poland – is still folk, popular and mass in many of its manifestations.[16] When it comes to the so-called People's Church (mass), the latest research and forecasts are not encouraging (Szauer 2023, 19–30). Particularly

11 John Paul II (*EiE* 9) speaks of the birth of a new culture, which – due to erroneous anthropology – becomes a "culture of death."

12 One should not succumb to the illusion that conscious, integral Christianity was a mass phenomenon in the distant past. Even in the centuries of the reign of the so-called *christianitas* or Christian civilisation, the actual living by faith concerned minorities. (Ven 2001, 188–91; Stark 1999). On the structural and cultural dimensions of secularisation and the response of churches to it, see: Ven 2001, 1996, 153–62.

13 Egalitarian universalism and tendencies towards the (often extreme) emancipation of the individual are, as Jürgen Habermas argued, a legacy (consequence) of the Jewish ethics of justice and the Christian principle of love. (Reikerstorfer 2001, 67).

14 The thesis of a natural (and therefore not programmed) weakening of religion in the context of other social systems (e.g. technology, politics) is promoted by Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge (1985, 339–79).

15 David Limbaugh (2006) mentions the "elimination of religion" from education, political circles, the media and the U.S. judiciary. In the American media (in the 1990s), there was an over-representation of atheists and those openly fighting Catholicism among journalists (over 90%). (Riley and Shaw 1993; Massa 2003; Lockwood 2000).

16 Until recently, the stability of religiosity (i.e. Catholicism) in Poland, despite slow secularisation (de-Christianisation), was considered obvious (Grabowska 2018). The crisis of the Churches throughout the

alarming are the data on the sharp decline in the religiosity of children, adolescents and young adults (Adamczyk 2023, 31–44).

It is worth mentioning a significant detail: a sharp drop (by 26%) in the declarations of affiliation of Polish youth to Catholicism (from 83.9% in 1994 to 54.4% in 2021) is associated with the unification of attitudes of urban and rural residents regarding marriage and family morality (Adamczyk 2023, 39).[17]

John Paul thought that the remedy for anthropological reductionism and materialism (consumerism) was the opening of society to Transcendence (Giovanni Paolo II 1985). However, this is hindered by practical agnosticism, widespread religious indifference and the emptying of interpersonal relationships of reference to God.[18] The consequence of that attitude is the demand for Christianity to justify its presence in public space (Giovanni Paolo II 1985). This is undoubtedly an echo of the Enlightenment, which recognised reason as the only criterion for knowledge and action. Religion would have the right to exist if it was "rational." Hence a popular conviction among elites in the West that anything bearing the imprint of faith must be treated with suspicion and rejecting unproven claims of faith is an act of intellectual honesty. With such a mentality, faith (especially Christian faith) is synonymous with obscurantism (Capucao 2010, 182–83). For that reason, Joseph Weiler wrote twenty years ago that there was a superstition among the political elites of Europe that religion and reason were in contradiction with each other, therefore Christianity (as the constitutive basis of European culture) was deliberately "suppressed." In turn, Joseph Ratzinger (in the same period) attempted to answer the question of what the so-called "Constitution for Europe" should contain. His answer included three elements: the affirmation of the inalienable dignity of the human person and his rights, the defence of marriage and the family (in the context of the claims of homosexual organisations), and respect for the sacred in public life. The latter, of course, refers to the supreme holiness, i.e. God. "In the eyes of the cultures of the world, the absolute profanity gradually assuming form in the West is something profoundly alien. These cultures are convinced that a Godless world has

West is confirmed by all sociological studies. This does not mean that religious sensitivity and personal religiosity are also disappearing.

17 Tomasz Adamczyk (2023, 39) adds that secularisation (over the last 5 years) has changed from creeping to galloping in the group of teens. The equalisation of differences between the urban and rural communities (where religious practices are still much more popular) in relation to morality related to sexuality (marriage) indicates a strong normative influence of Internet patterns. A teenager spends approximately 5 hours a day on the Internet (during out-of-school time), on average Research conducted in Kashubia indicates that the process of "breaking" the religious tradition within the family was already evident several years ago in that region (Perszon 2015, 53–67).

18 Years ago, the well-known constitutionalist Weiler (2003b) wrote about the intellectual revulsion against Christianity and the fear of it (Christophobia) among European elites and the deliberate elimination of it from the public space (also the reasons for that).

no future" – wrote the Ratzinger (2007, 21–30; cf. Weiler 2003b; 2003a, 11; Delsol 2021; 2023, 56–60).[19]

John Paul II – like Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI – notices the loss of hope and fear of the future among the manifestations of the "non-existence of God." Existential emptiness and loss of meaning in life make it difficult (especially for the young) to make decisions about marriage or priesthood, generate reluctance to pass on life to children and give rise to sadness and despair (*EiE* 7). John Paul II states:

> Man is no longer able to see himself as "mysteriously different" from other earthly creatures; he regards himself merely as one more living being, as an organism which, at most, has reached a very high stage of perfection. Enclosed in the narrow horizon of his physical nature, he is somehow reduced to being "a thing", and no longer grasps the "transcendent" character of his "existence as man". He no longer considers life as a splendid gift of God, something "sacred" entrusted to his responsibility and thus also to his loving care and "veneration". Life itself becomes a mere "thing", which man claims as his exclusive property, completely subject to his control and manipulation. (*EV* 22)[20]

In turn, Joseph Ratzinger wrote:

> Is European culture that civilisation of technology and trade so victoriously widespread through the world? Or didn't that civilisation come into being in a post-European world following the end of the early European cultures? What I see here is a paradoxical synchrony: with things like the victory of the technical-secular/post-European world and the globalisation of its model of life and way of thinking, people all over the world […] have the distinct impression that the values, culture and faith of Europe – the very bases of its identity – have reached their end and exited life's stage, while now the centre stage is being taken by the value systems of other worlds […]. Europe seems to have reached the pinnacle of success, it seems like it has become empty within, paralysed by a crisis of its circulatory system, paralysed by a crisis threatening its very survival, which is entrusted to transplants that cannot help but alter its identity. Corresponding to this interior sapping of its constituent spiritual forces is the fact that Europe seems to be taking its leave in ethnic termsq (Ratzinger 2004; cf. 2007, 23–24).

The pope mentions the astonishing disappearance of the will to survive, for Europeans do not want to have children.

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19 Ratzinger (2004) adds that the sanctity of Judaism and Islam are rightly protected in European countries; but when it comes to Christ and Christianity, one encounters a strange "West self-hatred" i.e. a pathological consent to tarnish its sanctities.

20 Benedict XVI (*SpS* 10) writes about Europeans "being tired of life" and their resignation from the idea of eternal life, which for many is something unrealistic and undesirable. Cf. Ratzinger (2012, 489–94).

Ratzinger adds that a major challenge for Christian culture (and therefore also for the Church) is the secularisation of salvation. Salvation is already an empty word for many, absent from public discourse and increasingly misunderstood. It has been replaced by – located exclusively in the temporal – happiness; this, however, does not concern everyone (as salvation does) but only one's own self, which approves one's quality of life only if it serves the happiness of the individual. In this way, faith (Christianity) has become an obstacle, an impediment to human progress and an enemy of future (accomplished by revolution and therefore by the power of a man) happiness (Ratzinger 2012, 489–94; Delsol 2016; 2017, 173–84).

With the increasing fragmentation of the Catholic Church, which in many dimensions – at least as far as the West is concerned – is rapidly becoming a more and more pluralised society, it is becoming more and more difficult to get to know what (whom and why) the Church believes in; what worship should be given to the God of Revelation; what moral and ethical principles flow from the faith and remain binding for Catholics.[21] For several decades now, there has been a blurring and fluidity in the area of Catholic doctrine; this is currently evident, e.g., in the attempts to modernise the truths of the faith, including the resurrection of Christ (Skrzypczak 2023, 273–83; Salij 2021, 69–91; Piotrowski 2022). The same is true (since Vaticanum II) in the sphere of worship (crisis or renewal of the liturgy: Benedict XVI 2023, 59, 183; Skrzypczak 2023, 35–36),[22] especially in matters of moral principles after the 1968 revolution. (Skrzypczak and Chmielewski 2021, 143–68; Skrzypczak 2021a, 18–24). The turning point for the internal breakdown of the Church in the West (which was no longer a monolith, contrary to popular belief) could have been the revolt of 1968. At that time, a large group of Catholics (including clergy) joined the student protests and brought revolutionary ideals into the Ecclesia (Chiron 2021).

One of the characteristics of contemporary culture is – largely as a result of the influence of mass culture – the departure of young people from tradition, universal values and moral authorities. More than 30 years ago, John Paul II spoke to the youth about the "temptation," the essence of which was liberation from all constraints and autonomy: to possess more, to be famous (well-known) and to experience pleasure. He said that social media, the entertainment world and literature would present the old moral ideals as limitations and deprivation, an obstacle to the full development of the personality. They would suggest a model of life in which everyone lived only

21 The authors of the book: Grzegorz Górny, Krystian Kratiuk, Paweł Lisicki (2023) talk in a simple, critical and specific way about the confusion in the Church (starting with the actions and statements of the papacy and Roman dicasteries). Antonio Socci (2016, 78–127) asks Pope Francis why he does not defend the Church and faith and preaches relativism instead (indulgence, prayer, the Eucharist, marriage) focusing on helping the poor, waste selection and climate protection.

22 Skrzypczak (2023) discusses at length the crisis in the Church caused by the reformist reception of the Second Vatican Council and the widespread attitude among theologians to question the competence of the Church's Magisterium (especially Pope Paul VI). One of the factors blurring the identity of the faith was the absorption by the Catholic theology of the methodology of "demythologising" of the sources of Christianity.

for themselves and the most important thing was unbridled self-affirmation (Jan Paweł II 2008, 30–31). The pope's predictions, as we saw during the so-called "women's strike" three years ago in Poland, are coming true.

The symptoms of the transformation of European culture indicated above – although only selectively – were identified by John Paul II and Benedict XVI as its deep crisis. In their view, the fundamental source of that crisis is the "forgetting of God," i.e. the gradual perception of a man, society and the world in separation from the Creator. This contributes to the disintegration of society and the extinction of civilisation, the splendour of which grew from the Gospel. It also intensifies the pressure on Christians to become silent and disappear from the public space.

2. The "Camouflaged Totalitarianism" of Democracy and Secularism

Although the copyright to the expression "camouflaged totalitarianism" is disputed (as it was used by John Paul II and Benedict XVI), it denotes those forms of society, which – by calling themselves democratic, liberal and free (and functioning according to democratic mechanisms) – in a "soft" and informal way eliminate the Christian God (and the world of faith – the Church) from community/public life (Tarasiewicz 2011; Kucharczyk 2010; Kiereś 2011; Bartyzel 2011; Lekka-Kowalik 2011; Delsol 2016; 2017, 28–85). Benedict XVI speaks of the clash between the intolerance of the modern state, the lifestyle it shapes and "fidelity to the faith of the fathers." John Paul II (*CA* 44–46), on the other hand, states that totalitarianism is born from the negation of objective truth:

> If one does not acknowledge transcendent truth, then the force of power takes over, and each person tends to make full use of the means at his disposal […]. Thus, the root of modern totalitarianism is to be found in the denial of the transcendent dignity of the human person who, as the visible image of the invisible God, is therefore by his very nature the subject of rights which no one may violate […] if there is no ultimate truth to guide and direct political activity, then ideas and convictions can easily be manipulated for reasons of power. As history demonstrates, a democracy without values easily turns into open or thinly disguised totalitarianism (*CA* 44–46).

In turn, Ratzinger (2005) says: "Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labelled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be 'tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine', seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognise anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one's own ego and desires."

The proclamation of tolerance and unlimited freedom is accompanied by the persistent pushing of Christianity underground, into the private sphere. Hence the mockery, contempt and ridicule of those who dare to publicly demonstrate their faith (and its consequences). Obviously, such a form of public life has a philosophical basis, history and specific implications for citizens. It may also take the form of hidden (or overt) discrimination of Christians and the Church. Although the modern Western states consider themselves models of tolerance (for they break with the preracial claims of each religion), they impose a radical manipulation of a man and his gender at the same time. The embodiment of those aspirations is the gender ideology with all its consequences. Therefore, the demand (using authoritarian legal tools) for the abandonment of Christian anthropology and the morality that follows from it. It is precisely the fact that Christianity understands itself as truth and claims universality contributes to it being accused of intolerance (Benedict XVI 2023, 31–33, 37, 39, 41–46). The pope adds that this is because the postmodern culture "makes man his own creator and disputes the original gift of creation." And continues: "[...] society that sets itself against the truth is totalitarian, and therefore, proudly intolerant [...]" (Benedict XVI 2023, 46).[23] Those statements relate us in many ways to the long process of de-Christianisation of European countries. Robert Skrzypczak notes that the first revolution in the Western world was the Protestant reform, separating Christ from church structures.[24] A significant breakthrough and symptom of the decline of the "primacy of God" in societies was the French Revolution (1789).[25] As Joseph Ratzinger writes: from that time onwards "God ceases to be the public *Summum bonum*" and His place is taken by the nation, then the proletariat and the world revolution. Post-Christian Europe, and this process accelerated after World War II, keeps moving away from its spiritual and religious identity (Ratzinger 2024, 59–60, 62).[26] Enlightenment rationalism has turned into a dominant scientism: only what is experimentally verifiable is rational (reasonable). Hence, the whole sphere of morality and religion, which is beyond the rational, becomes private and subjective (Ratzinger 2024, 59–60).

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23 Delsol (2016; 2017, 226) reports that in January 2014, the German parent association Besorgte Eltern in West Germany published a list of ten parents who were sentenced to prison for refusing to send their four-year-old children to *gender classes*.

24 On the spiritual processes, the disenchantment of the world, the change of social structures and the preparation of the ground for deism by the Reformation, see: Taylor 2007, 75–89. Cf. Dalferth 2017; Kaufmann 1979, 54–60.

25 Skrzypczak (2021a, 14). Deism emerged from the revolution of the Enlightenment rejecting Revelation (Christ as Saviour) in favour of an "indifferent God." The construction of a new world required the desacralisation of power (the beheading of Louis XVI) and the sacralisation of the collective will embodied in an idealised democracy. It has become the sole legislator, the arbiter over good and evil. Cf. Delsol 2016; 2017, 86–125.

26 As the latest sociological study concludes, "de-churchification" and de-Christianisation are processes that result in a systematic increase in the number of irreligious people (*the nones*). Secularisation trends make the West (Europe) an exception on a global scale; in Africa and Asia, religions are doing well (Díaz de Rada and Gil-Gimeno 2023, 1–48).

Moreover; the post-Enlightenment belief that economics and technology would bring true liberation to a man had a significant impact on the deconstruction of a society based on religion founded on the biblical concept of God. Marxism brought a radical breakthrough in this regard. Since the world is the product of irrational evolution, a man must create his own rational world. The belief in progress brought about by a man has made the "happy society" the ultimate normative moral idea (Delsol 2016). Good is whatever serves the establishment of universal happiness; bad is whatever hinders that process. The "Second Enlightenment," that we are currently dealing with – as Ratzinger writes, postulates a rational goal of the future being the "new world order" constructed entirely by a man (Ratzinger 2024, 164–65; 2007; Delsol 2016; De Mattei, 2007; Wildstein 2018, 17–35).

The Italian philosopher Augusto Del Noce described the era of post-war modernity as "anthropological nihilism." The radical equality and freedom proclaimed today abolish all differences (including those determined by nature) destroying (eliminating) the entire culture and foundations of anthropology (Skrzypczak 2021b, 15).[27] A significant moment in this reconstruction of the world of values (and social mentality) was the 1968 rebellion. It intensified the fascination with ugliness, proclaimed the rejection of all moral brakes (and principles), the subordination of life to the principle of pleasure (erotic debauchery and the praise of drugs) and introduced the duty of optimism (Ratzinger 2024, 172, 256).[28] Robert Skrzypczak proposes to distinguish a fourth revolution, which he calls the "particle revolution." Here, the anti-Christian offensive is transferred to the interior of a man; from rebellion against God the ruler and the state, the new man moves to rebellion against moral conscience. He rejects them and chooses savagery, i.e. self-will (anarchy), liberation from all obligations, the obligation to seek the truth and respect it (Skrzypczak 2021b, 15–19).[29]

The status of Christianity is thus changing not only because of the attractiveness of alternative proposals and because of the loss of evangelistic zeal by the Churches. For at the root of its crisis lies, as Benedict XVI argued, the new (i.e. non-Christian) vision of reality, of man and human freedom is widely shared (and embraced) by Christians. It is not so much a matter of widespread opposition to the Church's teaching on morality, especially sexual morality (Szauer 2022, 307–44), but of changing

27 The theologian adds that the "remodelling" of society questions gender differences (woman, man), destroys the family and marriage, normalises homophily and promotes sexual perversion. As a result, marital fidelity, chastity or virginity are considered to be manifestations of psychological disorders that hinder human development.

28 The pope, reflecting on the consequences of rejecting the transcendent dimension (man's reference to God), claims that it leads to the elimination of a man. Indulging in all desires inevitably turns into contempt for life. He writes: "Misshapen triplets – abortion, euthanasia, suicide – are the natural progeny of this fundamental decision – the denial of eternal responsibility and eternal hope." (Ratzinger 2024, 202)

29 The author wryly states: "Among the standards of pop culture, the apotheosis of a happy, mindless idiot takes the lead."

the socially professed paradigm. This paradigm rejects the doctrine of creation and metaphysics (and consequently of nature and the doctrine of natural law derived from it), resulting in people feeling they are creators of themselves and builders of a utopian better world. The realisation of this utopia increasingly takes the form of "soft totalitarianism" towards Christians and the marginalisation of the "God question" in public life (Ratzinger 2024, 158, 365; Delsol 2021). Benedict XVI notes that the Christian faith, as a result of its very essence (i.e. its claim to truth: the revelation of the true, monotheistic God), is, as it were, condemned to an irremediable conflict with the modern, supposedly tolerant state. Ratzinger undoubtedly alludes to the ideas of postmodernism, which emerged in Europe as a result of the disillusionment with modernity and the havoc wrought by totalitarian systems (communism and Nazism) (Bronk 1998, 23–113; Mariański 2016). It would not be out of place to mention the so-called cultural Marxism that has inspired the intellectual and political elites of Western Europe even before the Second World War. Its ideas perfectly coincide with calls for the creation of a new man and a new society (Rozwadowski 2018; Wildstein 2020).

Following the revolution of 1968 in the West, the crisis of the Churches and the exodus from them (Ratzinger writes of the "progressive dissolution of religion") resulted in politics taking over the role of religion. Belief in transcendence no longer seems rationally indefensible and, at the same time, the "experience of non-redemption," which people expect not from God (religion) but from this world, is intensifying in society. The disintegration of religion has given rise to various forms of substitute religions, esotericism, occultism, magic, rituals and psychological practices. All of these do not require faith but offer the possibility of self-salvation. Thereby, a change in the essence of religion takes place, according to Ratzinger (2024, 261). The processes signalled by Ratzinger set the stage not only for religious pluralism and extreme individualism (together with the idea of self-salvation – autosoterism) but also for various types of new spirituality, often involving elements of so-called mystical religions (Benedict XVI 2023, 26).

As can be seen, the popes of the late 20th and early 21st centuries accurately diagnosed the crisis of European culture and the threats it presents to Europe's identity and the future of its people. The publications by Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI note that the Church in Europe (as a real community of people) is also experiencing a profound crisis and, in some aspects, even a breakdown. The rapid (and unexpected) de-Christianisation of a large part of society, particularly after the Second Vatican Council, coincided with the growing influence of ideological secularism, which aimed to eliminate Christianity from public discourse. This, in turn, draws abundantly on the philosophical upheaval wrought by the luminaries of postmodernism. It can be concluded that the changes taking place in Western societies (which include Poland) will continue in the same direction as before. The Living Church is becoming an increasingly marginalised minority; the social elites, constructed on mechanisms of influence and power (and money), are implementing the successive stages of the revolution described by the ideologues of postmodernism; the education system of children and young people is subordinated to the ideal of self-fulfilment and the individual pursuit of happiness. "The dictatorship of relativism" – for the time being – appears to have triumphed, eliminating, step by step, the Christian vision of the world and the anthropology that created the greatness of European culture for centuries.

3. The Levelling Power of the Internet

The impact of the so-called new media appears to be underestimated in social diagnoses and research (concerning changes in religiosity, among other things). The world of electronic media (with the Internet at its forefront) is by its very nature indifferent to Christianity. Indeed, there are media scholars – not excluding Catholic researchers – who emphasise the more positive aspects of virtual reality. Mariusz Kuciński (2019), Józef Kloch (2011, 282–97) and Justyna Szulich-Kałuża (2021, 133–50), among others, write with hope and optimism about the Internet as a space for evangelisation.[30] However, there is much evidence that the presence of religion on the Internet is significantly changing it (Hjarvard 2012, 21–44; Hjarvard 2011, 119–35; Sierocki 2021a; Sierocki 2021b). Computerisation encompasses all dimensions of people's lives, radically changing not only the tools they use but, above all, themselves. This is the reason why there is talk about the construction of a new identity and its fluidity, about the loss of the human being and the transformation of the "pilgrim" into a "vagabond" who is nowhere at home and self-defines temporary goals (Szczepański and Śliz 2015, 79–96; Mariański and Wargacki 2016). Thanks to the Internet, the Western man simultaneously exists in many cultures; therefore, a personality type that is a cultural hybrid has emerged (Szczepański and Śliz 2015, 86–92). In sociology, one speaks of a hybrid, fluid and online identity. This is because most young people live more in the virtual than in the real world. Cyberspace also shapes – at unprecedented intensity – interpersonal relationships, subverting the existing social set-up and value system (Konarska and Urbaniak 2020, 7–13). Stig Hjarvard concludes that mediatisation has remodelled the essential foundations of culture and society: the media has become an "opinion industry"; media-delivered excitement has taken the place of ecclesiastical religion; entertainment and games are the domain of bytes; traditions and customs have been displaced by a socially determined new individualism (Hjarvard 2023).

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30 For example, Wojciech Misztal (2020, 157–69) tracks the number of views for the entry "Spirituality" on Wikipedia in 2015–2019; it amounted to 70,223, indicating little interest from Internet users. The author cites numerous positive statements by popes (Pius XI, Pius XII, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Francis) encouraging the proclamation of the Gospel in modern media.

This is why this paper attempts to show that the religious changes taking place in Europe (and more broadly in the West) (including laicisation, secularisation, de-Christianisation and "de-churchification") are caused by the dynamism of the transformation of social life of the entire cultural context. One of the decisive factors that (as we can see in Poland) lead to the rupture of young people with the Catholic religion (the entire faith tradition) is the widespread, daily and many hours of "being" on the Internet (virtual world) (Perszon 2019, 154).[31] The question remains whether, in the face of the dominance of the Internet, it will be possible to save human beings and genuine culture, i.e. one corresponding to human nature. The generational changes that occur every 15 years or so in a hybrid world (interpenetration of virtual and real dimensions) make the dominant category of change somewhat invalidate classical models of understanding culture and human beings and force educators and parents to make (constantly new) attempts to understand young people and communicate with them (Nowicka 2020, 164–76; Batorski 2017, 79–94; McCrindle and Fell 2019; Turk 2017; Twenge 2017). A separate issue, which is rapidly levelling out the legacy/established and inherited culture, is the peculiar digitalisation of the mentality of Internet users. Although IT tools represent an invaluable treasure trove and excellent equipment for "enhancing" human potential, they paradoxically often lead to the instrumentalisation of the person and the degradation of cognitive abilities. The impact of technology (the Internet) on the intelligence and cognitive faculties of its users and, consequently, on their mentality, spiritual life, moral conduct and social relationships is richly debated in the literature (Morbitzer 2007, 115–30; Tapscott 2010; Carr 2011; Flynn 2012; Small and Vorgan 2008).[32] Exposure from early childhood to electronic media (television, tablets, smartphones, computers) leads to changes in the structure and functioning of the human brain (Morbitzer 2014, 118–20). The educator, citing research, states that digital natives show no resilience in the face of adversity, lacking fortitude and a sense of responsibility. They are "strangers" to their (older) relatives, as they inhabit "a different anthropological space." The consequence of being online for a long time is the emergence of so-called hypertextual minds, i.e. a change from linear to multithreaded thinking. The digital native remembers much information but is incapable of interpretation and creativity. Children show impairment of the part of the cerebral cortex (prefrontal cortex) responsible for empathy, higher emotions, tolerance (Morbitzer 2014, 118–20). In light of research from a decade ago,

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31 The author conducted a survey in 2017 (a total of 123 respondents) with lower-secondary school students in Jastarnia and Lipusz in Kashubia (Poland), regarded as a hotbed of Kashubian and religious tradition. In the surveyed group, young people spent between 3.5 and 4 hours online (outside of school) daily. Only three people used the Internet less frequently, under parental supervision, while the "record-breakers" stayed in the virtual world 12 hours per day.

32 Manfred Spitzer (2013, 64–65) warns that replacing a book with a display impairs the development of synapses in the child's brain.

the Internet generation is not interested in politics, religion and work. Many behave like autistic patients (Carr 2013, 21–23, 36).

There is no shortage of scholars who do not hesitate to refer to the Internet reality (dominated by a few powerful owners) as a "new dictatorship," not only perfectly controlling all participant-users, imposing a way of thinking and living on billions of people, but beforehand training and formatting their minds accordingly (Zybertowicz 2015; Zybertowicz 2022).[33] Leszek Kołakowski warned against such a turn of events more than 40 years ago, writing about an "anthropological catastrophe" and digital (technological) totalitarianism (Kołakowski 2012, 13–33; Kołakowski 2009, 145–62).

Janusz Morbitzer takes a moderate stance on this issue; he recognises the dangers that the dominance of new technologies brings to human beings and their development; on the other hand, he adds that the Internet offers an excellent opportunity to access information. In his view, however, it is difficult to blame the technology itself as a tool. The impact of the Internet and other communication tools on human beings (their intellect, imagination, moral attitudes and concept of reality) depends on prudence in their use. The problem is that the "communalised intelligence" or collective knowledge is shallow and chaotic and inclines the user to mental laziness. The vastness and excess of information give a sense of having "knowledge" but impair not only thinking but also will, emotions and social behaviour (Morbitzer 2014, 126–28).[34] The culture crisis in general (especially true of the Christian culture of the West) is therefore not only strongly related to the trends/characteristics of postmodern society (e.g. pluralism and individualism). Nor is it merely the result of the dominant elite (professors, intellectuals, the political class, literary authors, philosophers) of postmodern ideas that, as it were, a priori exclude the seriousness of the Christian proposal. The cultural rupture, observed mainly in the younger population, is due to the literal dismantling of traditional society and the traditional family, enforced by the spread of new technologies, especially the Internet. In conclusion, the Internet is of paramount importance for the state of the Christian religion (and spirituality) and its profound crisis. At the same time, it is a crisis of culture, the destabilisation of which must hit the world of faith, *nolens volens* based on tradition (and Tradition).

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33 In contrast, US professor Mark Bauerlein (Bauerlein 2022), in his comprehensive monograph, traces the decline of (primarily higher) education in the United States, which the country "owes to" the massive (and compulsory) computerisation of the school and teaching process. As the eponymous "dumbest generation" is approaching the age of 50, in his view, not only American culture but the very existence of the United States as a country is under threat. For example, a dozen years or so ago, students spent only about seven minutes a day reading books. In his view, Western culture is under mortal threat from the "feral" and stupefied relativists that the modern school and society educate.

34 The author adds that the "digital dementia" that Manfred Spitzer wrote about may be a deliberate effect, for narrow elites are sufficient to rule society and generate progress. Moreover, the Internet and computer lobbies are interested not in human development but in profits. Morbitzer asks why we as a society (parents, teachers) permit a "hard media determinism," which is destructive for the young person.

In other words, the digital natives, shaped by the Internet, do not so much abandon the religion of their fathers (probably never have accepted it in a personal act of faith) as they do not encounter it, fully incorporated into virtual reality. When a significant part of the population is cut off from the culture or heritage of past generations, this can have dramatic consequences for society as a whole.

Conclusions

From the perspective of the Catholic Church (John Paul II and Benedict XVI), Western culture has been gradually, yet continuously, cutting itself off from its Christian roots for over 200 years. In their view, this process is perhaps the most important cause of its crisis and increasingly visible decline. The papal reflection on Europe and its state of affairs emphasises the importance of an erroneous anthropology which contrasts man with God and – already in the postmodern era – proclaims man's absolute autonomy. Both popes and many other contemporary thinkers see a shift – typical of the West – from laicisation (secularisation) of public life and de-Christianisation of nominal (cultural) Christians to open hostility towards the Catholic Church and the biblical vision of man. Secularism, seeking to eliminate any influence of Christianity in public life, as well as the "question of God" itself in the social space, systematically conquers territory, taking society through successive stages of revolution. Starting from the French Revolution, through Marxism and postmodernism, to the very aptly named technological revolution, an attempt is made to create a new man and society. The Catholic Church appears in this context as an enemy of progress and of this project. In the context of the internal crisis that Ecclesia is experiencing (at least in Europe), it seems incapable of reversing de-Christianising trends as things stand.

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VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 401–429
Received: Jan 19, 2024 | Accepted: Mar 1, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

Isaiah 6:1–3 and Angelomorphic Christology. An Approach to Understand Origen's Isaiah Exegesis

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Abstract: This article deals with Origen's interpretation of Isaiah's vision in Isa 6. Origen refers to his Hebrew Master's statement in *Orig. Princ.* 1.3.4 where two Seraphim are identified with Christ and the Holy Spirit. The main scope in the article is to put the Hebrew Master's opinion in balance with Origen's own Christology. The problem is approached from the method of biblical argumentation by using ancient reception historical ways to understand scripture. The Hebrew Master's statement is related to three important themes: *First*, the angelomorphic theophanies in the Old Testament provide a general background for the idea that Christ (and the Holy Spirit) can be identified with Seraphim. *Second*, Origen relates Isaiah's Seraphim to Cherubim in the Ark of Covenant and use Hab 3:2 to illustrate his Christology. *Third*, the Christology of the *Ascension of Isaiah* provides a good parallel to understand the Hebrew Master's statement about Seraphim. The main result in the article is that Origen's own Christology is well balanced with the statement of the Hebrew Master. Origen's teachings about Christ can be characterized as high and subordinate Christology, and its roots are in early Jewish-Christian circles.

Keywords: angelomorphic Christology, *Ascension of Isaiah*, Cherubim, Hebrew Master, Isaiah, Origen, Seraphim, subordinationism

The starting-point of this article is Origen's statement in *Orig. Princ.* 1.3.4:[1] "My Hebrew Master also used to say that those two seraphim in Isaiah, which are described as having each six wings, and calling to one another, and saying, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts,' were to be understood of the only-begotten Son of God and of the Holy Spirit." This same interpretation is also presented in Origen's Isaiah

This article is a part of the research project "Isaiah in the Judeo-Christian Border Lines" which has received financial support from the Academy of Finland and Polin Institute for the years 2022–2026 that is hereby gratefully acknowledged. The preliminary version of this article was presented in Center of Advanced Studies in the University of Regensburg: Beyond Canon led by Professor Tobias Nicklas in 2023. I am grateful for important feedback which I received.

1 Origen's text has been preserved mainly in the Latin translation of Rufinus. See Origenes, *De principiis*, SC 252, 148–53; OECT, 70–73. See also the English translations in Justinus, *Dialogus cum Tryphone*, ANF 1. However, the essential part of this passage in *De Principiis* 1.3.4 has also been preserved in Greek. For this see Origenes, *De principiis*, GCS 22, 52–53; OECT, 70. This means that we have the Hebrew Master's statement even in Greek. This shows that Rufinus' translation is accurate.

homilies which were translated by Jerome, namely in the first and fourth homilies.[2] Origen refers to the opinion of a Jew, presumably a Jewish Christian,[3] who was his teacher in Hebrew and who interpreted the two Seraphim as being "the only-begotten Son of God" and "the Holy Spirit." Origen's reference here has been the object of critical treatment since late antiquity and Origen has been accused of unorthodox (i.e. non-Nicene) Christology. Such critical treatment of Origen's Christology is documented, for example, in Jerome's writings.[4] In modern scholarly literature Origen has been criticized as having accepted uncritically a Christological model related to the two Seraphim. Origen has also been blamed for clearing the path for Arius' Christology,[5] where Christ was associated with a created figure by the Father. For example, in Alois Grillmeier's influential presentation of Christology, early Jewish-Christian angel Christology is regarded as an early step toward Arian Christology.[6] While stating this Grillmeier does not claim that Arius would have identified Christ with an angel.[7] His point was to emphasize that identifying Christ with an angel is parallel to Arian Christological claim where Christ did not receive the full divine status as Father. Arius' own Christology was based on the biblical argumentation as noted also by Grillmeier.[8] The most important biblical argument for Arius was Prov 8:22 in its Septuagint version and the expression of Col 1:15, "the firstborn of every creature". While the Septuagint uses the verb ἔκτισέν, "he (God) created (me)," in Prov 8:22 the Hebrew text has the verb *qānâ* which can mean "create" but in the context

2 See Origenes, *Homiliae in Isaiam*, GCS 33, 242–89. The English translation can be found in the appendix of Jerome's Isaiah Commentary. See Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri XVIII*, ACW 68, 881–928.

3 Origen refers to "the Hebrew (Master)" also elsewhere. Concerning these references see the useful and balanced discussion in Skarsaune 2007a, 325–78, esp. 362–73. Oskar Skarsaune emphasizes that we cannot be sure whether all references are to one and the same Hebrew (Master). Skarsaune is of the opinion that Origen may refer to a Jewish Christian. See the similar view also in Hannah 1999a, 80–101, esp. 91–93. For another view see De Lange 1976, 43.

4 The critical discussion of this saying of Origen has been presented in Jerome's writings. Concerning this, see especially Fürst 2009, 141–52; see also Mantelli 2013 where Jerome's interpretation of Hab 3:2 and its relation to Origen's exegesis and to the statement of the Hebrew Master has been discussed.

5 In this article I cannot deal with the many and complicated details in Arian controversy. Concerning Arian Christology see its nutshell with Arius' own letter to Eusebios presented in Andersson 2010, 44–47; more detailed analysis can be found in Simonetti 1975; Williams 1987; Ayres 2004. As far as the topic of this article concerned, Ayres deals with scholars who have argued that Arius developed his Christology from Origen, but he regards this influence as minimal (2004, 20–30).

6 Grillmeier 1975, 37–53, esp. 52–53. While Alois Grillmeier notes that Origen's Christology is different he nevertheless insists that "this path, by way of the angel-christology, could lead to Arianism" (1975, 53). See also the similar statement in the English summary of Mantelli 2013, 202: "Afterwards, this kind of Biblical exegesis became unacceptable under the influence of the Arian controversy and led to the sharpest criticism of Origen's ideas."

7 See Grillmeier's detailed analysis of the Arian Christology in Grillmeier 1975, 219–48.

8 Concerning the centrality of Prov 8:22 (especially its Septuagint version) and Col 1:15 in the Arian biblical argumentation, see especially Simonetti 1975, 46–55, 478–80.

of Proverbs its usual meaning is “possess” or “acquire” (wisdom).[9] The Hebrew verb is open for different semantic interpretations. In addition, it is worth noting that the parallel verbs in Prov 8:23–25 means “I was installed” (v. 23) and “I was born” (vv. 24–25) which gives even more flexibility to understand the verb *qānâ*. The reception of history of Prov 8:22 in Christian writings was established in an early stage[10] when the Hebrew text was still available for Christian argumentation and then verses 23–25 (with emphasis “I was born”) influenced the way how the verb ἔκτισέν in the Septuagint version was understood in Christian discourses, i.e. as a metaphoric expression for “be born.”[11] As far as Col 1:15 is concerned, Arius understood its expression “the firstborn of every creature” so that in the final analysis Christ is a part of creature. However, already Col 1:17 indicates how the genitive construction in the expression should be understood: not so that Christ is a part of creation, but that Christ has existed before anything was created. Justin understands the expression “the firstborn of every creature” in *Dial.* 85.2 in a similar way so that Christ has existed before anything was created (*Dial.* 100.2).[12]

The aim of this article is to deal with the exegesis of Isa 6:1–3 presented by the Hebrew Master in Origen’s writings and throw light on its background, both reception-historical as well as tradition-historical.[13] Special attention is given to the presumable Jewish-Christian tradition on which Origen may be dependent.[14]

In the case of Origen, the reception history of Isa 6:1–3 cannot be separated from two other biblical texts and their reception history. In *Orig. Princ.* 1.3.4, Origen writes: “And we think that that expression also which occurs in the hymn of Habakkuk, ‘In the midst either of the two living things, or of the two lives, You will be known,’ ought to be understood of Christ and of the Holy Spirit.” Origen refers to Hab 3:2 (in its Septuagint version) which he regards as parallel to Isa 6:1–3. Finally, in his *Commentary on Romans* (3.8.2–8), Origen interprets Hab 3:2 by connecting

9 This meaning in Hebrew becomes even clearer when the word’s semantic value is seen in comparative Semitic perspective. For this see Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995, 1015–16.

10 The earliest Christian interpretation of Prov 8:22 can be detected already in 1 Cor 8:6; John 1; Heb 1:1–3; Col 1:15–20.

11 I have dealt with the interpretation of Prov 8:22–31 earlier in Laato 1997, 252.

12 I am thankful for my colleague and friend, adjunct professor Sven-Olav Back, who has noted to me these passages in Justin Martyr’s writing.

13 Concerning the early tradition history of Isa 6:1–3 note Williamson 2009. Cf. also Scoralick 1989. With regard to the reception history of Trishagion in Jewish and Christian writings and liturgies see Werner 1966, 19–32; Osten-Sacken 1995, 172–87; Spinks 2002. Worth noting, too, is the study Nitzan 1994, where he refers to the use of Isa 6:3 in Qumran writings. See especially Nitzan 1994, 276–82; 367–69.

14 Earlier, I have briefly referred to Origen’s Christological viewpoints related to Isa 6:1–3 in Laato 2010, 85–107. In this article I deepen the discussion to include the biblical reception history and the tradition-historical background of Isa 6:1–3 by considering how the Isaiah text has been understood in the Judeo-Christian borderlines.

it to Exod 25:22 and arguing that the two living ones in Hab 3:2 refer to the Cherubim on the Ark.[15] This being the case, my primary focus is on the interpretation of Isa 6:1–3 in Origen's writings but I also discuss his way of understanding Hab 3:2 and Exod 25:17–22 (as far as the Cherubim depicted on the Ark are concerned) in conjunction with Isa 6.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that the Hebrew Master's interpretation of Isa 6:1–3 is not the oldest Christian interpretation of those Isaianic verses. Isa 6:1–3 is interpreted already in the New Testament, so that the Lord who revealed himself to Isaiah was Christ (John 12:41): "Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke about him." It is clear in this context that "his glory" refers to Christ. Another interpretation is documented in Rev 4:6–9 where the four living creatures (corresponding to the Cherubim in Ezek 1), each of them with six wings (like Seraphim in Isa 6) are singing Trishagion (Isa 6:3) to God (the Father). From the time of the New Testament onwards it is, therefore, possible to detect a reception historical tradition where the Lord in Isa 6:1–3 is identified with Christ.[16] In the light of this interpretation of Isa 6 where the Lord is identified with Christ in Isa 6:1–3 it may be tempting to presuppose that Origen's teacher would have represented a Christology which decreased the divine status of Christ to the level of (created) angel. It is specifically this understanding of the Hebrew Master's Christology which I want to problematize in this article. My opinion is that it is possible to set the Hebrew Master's Christology in balance with Origen's high and subordinate Christology.

The content of this article is built up in such a way that I will demonstrate in which way the Hebrew Master's interpretation of Isa 6:1–3 parallels well to Origen's Christology, and in so way not to the Arian Christology. I shall demonstrate the tradition-historical outcome of the Hebrew Master's interpretation from the perspective of biblical argumentation as it was applied in the late antiquity. The argument in this article runs as follows. *First*, I discuss the difference between the angel Christology where Christ is identified with the created angel and the angelomorphic Christology where Christ is identified with those angelomorphic figures of the Hebrew Bible (or of the Septuagint) who appeared to humans in theophanies and who represent themselves as God. *Second*, I discuss the textual problems in Hab 3:2 and show that this text was intimately related to the symbolic figures of the Ark of Covenant. *Third*, I demonstrate that in early Christian theology, especially in Origen's writings, angelomorphic figures (Cherubim) of the Ark of Covenant (Exod 25:17–22) were intimately related to angelomorphic divine theophanies of the Hebrew Bible, and that the prophet's vision in Isa 6 was understood as having taken place in the Temple of Jerusalem, apparently in front of the Ark of Covenant and the two massive Cherubim

15 See the text of Origen in Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos*, SC 539. The English translation is available in Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos*, FC 103, 217–21. The useful discussion of Hab 3:2 and its interpretation in the writings of Jerome and Origen is in Mantelli 2013.

16 For this see, in particular, Bucur 2014, 309–30.

built by Solomon (1 Kgs 6:23–28). This explains why in early Christological tradition the Seraphim in Isa 6:1–3 were identified with the Cherubim. *Fourth*, I discuss the Christology of the *Ascension of Isaiah* which is related to Isa 6:1–3, and which clearly represents the high Christology of the Origenian style and identifies both the Beloved One (= Christ) and Holy Spirit as angelomorphic figures. And finally, *fifth*, I briefly explain in which ways the Christological viewpoint which Origen learned from his Hebrew Master corroborates well with Origen's high but subordinate Christology presented elsewhere in his writings.

1. Angelomorhpic Christology

In recent years scholars have emphasized the importance of angelomorphic figures in the early development of Christology and Pneumatology (concerning the Holy Spirit).[17] In this section I relate this scholarly discussion to the way early Christians used certain passages in the Hebrew Bible or in the Septuagint where God reveals himself through angelomorphic agents. What is significant in these biblical theophanies is that Christians argued that the angelomorphic figures could represents Christ because they speak or act in the name of Yahweh. Especially illustrative are the biblical theophanies to which Justin Martyr refers; he uses them as proofs that Christ has manifested his power in the divine revelations.[18] Christ himself appeared to the patriarchs, Moses and Joshua, as an Angel[19] who looked like a human figure.[20]

17 Very instructive is the article of Hurtado 2012, 546–64. From 1990s onwards angelomorphic Christology and its Jewish background have been examined in varied ways. See e.g. Stuckenbruck 1995; Gieschen 1998; Hannah 1999b; Sullivan 2004; Orlov 2005; Bucur 2009; Poirier 2010. See also articles in Newman, Davila, and Lewis 1999. Worth noting is also the new printing of Segal 2002 where he deals with rabbinical reactions against Christian but also against different Gnostic systems concerning two powers in the heaven.

18 Concerning Justin's works, I have consulted the following editions and translations: Justinus, *Apologiae*, Goodspeed; PTS 38; PTS 47; Falls; Lehtipuu; Back. Recently, in a reading group at Åbo Akademi University, we have been discussing the Swedish translation of Justin's *Dialogue* made by Sven-Olav Back. This reading group is one part of our research project "Isaiah between Judeo-Christian Borderlines" funded by the Polin Institute and the Academy of Finland for 2022–2026. The English translation in the series Ante-Nicene Fathers is quite verbatim and has been useful for this article where I am particularly interested in analysing Justin's theology.

19 The Greek word *aggelos* can be translated also as "a messenger." In this article I write Angel with a capital letter when I refer to Christian argumentation that certain angelomorphic theophanies in the Old Testament should be related to the appearance of Christ.

20 From the religious-historical perspective the outcome of the theophanic texts used by Justin Martyr for Christological proofs can be analysed in other ways. For this see especially Sommer 2009. In the reception history these theophanic texts are open in multiple ways which cannot be discussed in this article.

The following Old Testament texts concerning angelomorphic theophanies are discussed in Justin Martyr's writings:[21]

OT passage	Who does see the Angel?	Justin's passage
Gen 18–19	Abraham	*Dial.* 56–57
Gen 28:10–19	Jacob	*Dial.* 58
Gen 31:10–13	Jacob	*Dial.* 58
Gen 32:23–31	Jacob	*Dial.* 58; 125
Gen 35:6–10	Jacob	*Dial.* 58
Exod 3	Moses	*1 Apol.* 62–63; *Dial.* 59–60
Exod 23:20–21	Promise given to Israel	*Dial.* 75
Josh 5:13–15	Joshua	*Dial.* 61–62

Justin has chosen these biblical theophanies carefully so that the Angel who reveals himself to humans represents in the Old Testament writings God himself. Three men (Gen 18:2) visited Abraham, and Gen 19:1 indicates that these men were angels. The story continues that two of them went to Sodom (Gen 18:16; 19:1) while the third started up a dialogue with Abraham (Gen 18:17–33).[22] This dialogue is described in Genesis as having taken place between Abraham and Yahweh. This being the case, the Angel who revealed himself to Abraham represented God. Especially important for Justin is Gen 19:24: "Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulphur and fire from the Lord out of heaven." This verse indicates that the Angel who appeared to Abraham and discussed with him was the second divine person, the Lord. It is clear that for Justin, the Angel was not a created figure. There is evidence that that Justin knew the Letter to Hebrews.[23] Therefore, he apparently followed its main theological emphasis that the Son of God is a fundamentally different angelomorphic person than the created angels – which is the main argument in Heb 1–2.

Before referring to the texts where the Angel or the Lord reveals himself to Jacob, Justin summarizes his theological argument in the following way (*Dial.* 58.3):[24] "It is

21 For this list see Trakatellis 1976; Skarsaune 1987, 409–24. See also Barbel 1941, 50–63; Gieschen 1998, 189–90. In Sullivan 2004, 37–59 there is an important discussion on how Gen 18–19, Gen 32 and Josh 5:13–15 were understood in early Jewish reception history.

22 The text has been understood in this way in the Septuagint, too. See further *Jub.* 16:1 ("we appeared to Abraham") that clearly refers that the men must be angels. The Book of Jubilees indicates that "the angel of the Presence" revealed to Moses at Sinai (Jub. 1:27), and this same Angel associated with two other angels appeared to Abraham – something that explains the style of "we." The angelic interpretations are also presented by Josephus (*Ant.* 1.196) and Philo (*Abr.* 107, 115).

23 Concerning Justin's knowledge of the Letter to Hebrews, see Skarsaune 1987, 72–73, 107–8; 126–27, 168, 179–80, 296; 2007b, 53–76, 179–87, esp. 74–75, 187.

24 Translations from *Dialogue* are from the series ANF if not indicated otherwise.

again written by Moses, my brethren, that He who is called God and appeared to the patriarchs is called both Angel and Lord, in order that from this you may understand Him to be minister to the Father of all things, as you have already admitted, and may remain firm, persuaded by additional arguments." What is important for Justin's argument is that, in theophany, a human meets an Angel who has a mandate to speak in the name of Lord/God so that he is even called Lord/God in the text. The text form which Justin quotes when giving a proof for the meeting between an Angel and Jacob is significant (*Dial.* 58.4–5):

Gen 31:10–13: "… and the Angel of God (ὁ ἄγγελος τοῦ θεοῦ) said to me in the dream, Jacob, Jacob. And I said, What is it, Lord? (τί ἐστι, κύριε) … I am the God (ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ θεὸς) who appeared to you in Bethel… I shall be with you."

This quotation indicates that the Angel who spoke to Jacob is called *Kyrios* by the patriarch. Justin's text is not identical with the Septuagint text, however, because the vocative *Kyrie* is lacking in the Septuagint.[25] The additional element in the text which Justin quotes from some unknown source (testimonia?!) is not contrived, however, because the whole story of Jacob is based on the idea that the Lord appears to him in the form of an Angel.[26]

In *Dial.* 58.6–7 Justin quotes Gen 32:23–31:

> … but Jacob was left behind alone, and an angel (ἄγγελος)[27] wrestled with him until morning. And He saw that He is not prevailing against him, and He touched the broad part of his thigh; and the broad part of Jacob's thigh grew stiff while he wrestled with Him. And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks." But he said, "I will not let You go, except You bless me." And He said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." And He said, "Your name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel shall be your name; for you have prevailed with God (μετὰ τοῦ θεοῦ), and with men shall be powerful." And Jacob asked Him, and said, "Tell me Your name." But he said, "Why do you ask after My name?" And He blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of that place Peniel, for I saw God face to face (θεὸν πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον), and my soul rejoiced.

Justin's exegesis is based on the fact that Jacob wrestled with an Angel (as clearly attested in Hos 12:4) who is subsequently identified with God himself. The exegesis Justin represents is not without parallel in early Jewish reception history. For example,

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25 Concerning the textual evidence of Gen 31:10–13 see the John Wevers's edition in Göttingen Septuagint as well as Wevers 1993, 500–503. It is worth noting that Wevers writes (1993, 502) that it is clear from the LXX text that "the angel of God" represents God as the verse Gen 31:13 makes clear.

26 For this, see Susan Brayford (2007, 365): "As is often the case, God's identity is interchangeable with that of his angels or messengers (e.g., 18:1–13). The one speaking to Jacob in his sleep now defines himself as the God whom Jacob saw earlier (28:12–13)."

27 This is the reading in Goodspeed's edition although Markovich has the reading *anthrōpos*. I follow the reading in Goodspeed's edition because the early Christian exegesis on Gen 32 was apparently based on Hos 12:4 where the "human" mentioned in Gen 32 is identified with an angel.

Philo (*De mutatione nominum* 87; *De somniis* I.129) identifies the human who wrestled with Jacob as an angel and even Logos, presumably on the basis of Hos 12:4.[28]

Gen 35:6–10: "… And there he built an altar and called the name of that place Bethel; for there God appeared to him when he fled from the face of his brother Esau."

In this passage reference is made to Gen 28 where the Lord, the God of Abraham and Isaac, appeared to Jacob when the patriarch saw his vision about many angels and the Lord himself.

Gen 28:10–19:

> … behold, a ladder was set up on the earth, whose top reached to heaven; and the angels of God ascended and descended upon it. And the Lord stood above it, and He said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham your father, and of Isaac…" And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." And he was afraid, and said, "How dreadful is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven..." and Jacob called the name of the place The House of God…

It is significant that Justin quotes Gen 28 only after he has quoted other passages (Gen 31:10–13; 35:6–10) where the theophany of Gen 28 was related to the revelation of the Angel. This gives Justin the possibility to identify *Kyrios* (the God himself) who speaks with Jacob in Gen 28 with the Angel.

In *Dial.* 59 (a similar argument is put forward in *1 Apol.* 62–63 too) Justin continues the argument that the one who spoke to Moses from the burning bush was the Angel (as noted in Exod 3:2) who nevertheless identifies himself with God: "Have you perceived, sirs, that this very God whom Moses speaks of as an Angel that talked to him in the flame of fire, declares to Moses that He is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob?" It seems obvious that for Justin the angelomorphic Lord who spoke to Moses could not have been a created angel because otherwise he could not have been said to be God himself.

In *Dial.* 75 Justin refers to Exod 23:20–21 where God appointed a certain Angel to lead Israel. It is *expressis verbis* stated that the name of the Lord will be in the Angel:

> Moreover, in the book of Exodus we have also perceived that the name of God Himself which, He says, was not revealed to Abraham or to Jacob, was Jesus, and was declared mysteriously through Moses. Thus it is written: "And the Lord spoke to Moses, Say to this people, Behold, I send My angel before your face, to keep you in the way, to bring you into the land which I have prepared for you. Give heed to Him and obey Him; do not disobey Him. For He will not draw back from you; for My name is in Him."

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28 Skarsaune (1987, 415) notes that "Justin's identification of the man as Christ wrestling with Jacob creates confusion within a simple Jacob/Christ typology." I will discuss Justin's Jacob-exegesis in a forthcoming article "Jacob is Christ" (in the WUNT series).

In *Dial.* 61 Justin summarizes different forms of revelation of Christ in the Old Testament scriptures and refers to Josh 5:13–15 too:

> I shall give you another testimony, my friends, from the Scriptures, that God begot before all creatures a Beginning, [who was] a certain rational power [proceeding] from Himself, who is called by the Holy Spirit, now the Glory of the Lord, now the Son, again Wisdom, again an Angel, then God, and then Lord and Logos; and on another occasion He calls Himself Captain (ἀρχιστράτηγος), when He appeared in human form to Joshua the son of Nave (Nun).

He then continues to quote Proverbs 8 and notes that Christ is also referred to as the personified Wisdom of God – a passage which had already played an important role in the New Testament Christology (John 1:1–3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15–20; Heb 1:1–3).[29]

It is significant that all Old Testament passages to which Justin refers as proofs about the angelomorphic revelations of God indicate that the Angel in question cannot be regarded as a created figure. Instead, these passages refer to the Angel who represents himself as the Lord. This background to Justin's writings indicates that there is no *prima facie* reason to argue that Origen's Hebrew Master would have understood the reference to Seraphim in Isa 6:1–3 as them having to be created angels. The possibility that the Seraphim were interpreted as referring to divine Angels according to theophanies of the Old Testament is a good alternative which must be evaluated along with other remarks Origen gave us, as well as from the larger perspective of early Christian writings.

In *Orig. Princ.* 1.3.4 Origen relates the Seraphim of Isa 6:3 to the Cherubim in Hab 3:2. The Hebrew text of Hab 3:2 is extremely difficult, while the Septuagint version more clearly refers to the two living ones. Before proceeding, it is first necessary to discuss the textual transmission of Hab 3:2, as theologically speaking, this is clearly a potential text for Christological purposes.

2. Textual Problems in Hab 3:2

The text of Hab 3:2 is an old crux. The MT version is difficult to understand, while the Septuagint version of Hab 3:2 is clearer.[30] I have elsewhere dealt with Hab 3:2, its textual problems and interpretation.[31] Here I discuss only those problems relat-

29 Concerning the importance of Prov 8:22–31 see especially Hengel 1977.

30 Concerning this, see Andersen 2001, 273–83. The reading of Hab 3:2 is identical in the so-called Barberini version (based on the manuscripts used for liturgical purposes in an Alexandrian synagogue) and the LXX. See Good 1959, 11–30; Gelston 2010, 122*.

31 Laato 2015, 55–64.

ing to the text which are relevant to understanding the topic of this article. At first sight the Septuagint version seems to indicate that its Hebrew Vorlage was longer. The following parallels can be detected between the Septuagint and the Masoretic consonant text:

Κύριε, εἰσακήκοα τὴν ἀκοήν σου καὶ ἐφοβήθην	יהוה שמעתי שמעך
κατενόησα τὰ ἔργα σου καὶ ἐξέστην.	יראתי יהוה פעלך
ἐν μέσῳ δύο ζῴων γνωσθήσῃ,	בקרב שנים חייהו
ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν τὰ ἔτη ἐπιγνωσθήσῃ,	בקרב שנים תודיע
ἐν τῷ παρεῖναι τὸν καιρὸν ἀναδειχθήσῃ,	
ἐν τῷ ταραχθῆναι τὴν ψυχήν μου	
ἐν ὀργῇ ἐλέους μνησθήσῃ.	תזכור רחם ברגז

The Septuagint reading ἐν μέσῳ δύο ζῴων γνωσθήσῃ ("in the midst of two living figures you will be known") indicates that the Jewish translator has understood the Hebrew unvocalized text as rendering *běqereb šěnayim ḥayyôt*. On the other hand, ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν τὰ ἔτη ἐπιγνωσθήσῃ ("when the years draw near, you will be recognized") can be translated back to *běqereb šānîm tiwwādēa*^{c}. Thus, the Hebrew Vorlage of the Septuagint was understood *běqereb šěnayim ḥayyôt běqereb šānîm tiwwādēa*^{c} and after vocalizing *tiwwādēa*^{c} (instead of the MT's *tôdîa*^{c}) the translator understood it elliptically. This resulted in the double translations γνωσθήσῃ and ἐπιγνωσθήσῃ. Is such a Hebrew text meaningful in the context? It becomes so if the two living figures, in the midst of whom Yahweh will be known, signify either the two Cherubim which are depicted in the Mercy Seat of the Ark (Exod 25:17–22) or the two massive Cherubim over the Mercy Seat (1 Kgs 6:23–28).[32] In Hab 2:20, the verse immediately preceding the prayer of Habakkuk, the reference is to Yahweh, who will manifest his message from the Temple of Jerusalem. The verb *yāda*^{c} (niphal) has been used elsewhere for Yahweh as the subject in the meaning "make oneself known", for example, in Exod 6:3; Isa 19:21; Ps 9:17. That Yahweh will reveal himself in the midst of the Mercy Seat of the Ark is a prominent theme in the Hebrew Bible (see e.g. Lev 16:2). Yahweh's epithet is ישב הכרבים ("the one who is enthroned over cherubim", 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15; Ps 80:2; 99:1; Isa 37:16) indicating that he is seated as king between the two living cherubim.

Additional support for this religious-historical understanding of Hab 3:2 can be found in Hab 3:5, which describes how two personified powers, Deber and Resheph, will assist Yahweh in his march to help his people. That these powers are angelomorphic receives support from the Hebrew Bible. In 2 Sam 24, Yahweh's angel will spread pestilence among the Israelites. Amos 5:10 reports that Deber was sent against

32 This option is also mentioned by Andersen (2001, 280) but he does not develop idea further.

the Egyptians and the parallel passages in Ps 78:49–50 speak of "destroying angels" deployed against the Egyptians to kill them with pestilence (*deber*). This evidence shows that Deber was an angelomorphic figure. Resheph is attested in Ugaritic texts (KTU 1.14 I:18–19; 1.15 II:6; 1.82:3) and it is clear that he is a god of destruction. Deut 32:23–24 and Ps 78:48, as well as the imagery in Job 5:7, Ps 91:5–6, and Ben Sira 43:17, make it probable that Resheph, too, was regarded as a flying demon or angel.[33] This being the case, we have good grounds to argue that the religious-historical background of Hab 3:2 are the two Cherubim in the Mercy Seat which were interpreted as referring to Deber and Resheph in Hab 3:5.

The expression ἐν τῷ παρεῖναι τὸν καιρὸν ἀναδειχθήσῃ ("when the right time comes you will be displayed") is, however, more problematic. Its outcome may be a double translation of the Hebrew *bĕqereb šānîm tôdîa*ᶜ – a phenomenon which is well-known in the Septuagint.[34] The final phrases in the Septuagint ἐν τῷ ταραχθῆναι τὴν ψυχήν μου ἐν ὀργῇ ἐλέους μνησθήσῃ ("when my soul is troubled in wrath you will remember mercy") is probably an attempt to understand the last Hebrew phrase *bĕrōgez raḥēm tizkôr* in its context. The translator apparently argued that the prophet, after hearing the message of the invading Chaldeans, was troubled by the wrath of Yahweh, (Hab 1–2) and here simply asks Yahweh to remember his mercy.

These comments on the translation of the Septuagint suggest that its Hebrew (consonant) Vorlage was not fundamentally different to that found in the Masoretic text. However, the Septuagint version shows that at one point the Masoretic text reads otherwise, namely the reading *ḥayyêhû*. The Septuagint translates the Hebrew text as if it reads *ḥayyôt*.

The question is whether we may, nonetheless, still retain the Masoretic consonants *ḥ-y-y-h-w*? I think we may. One possible reading would be *bĕqereb šĕnayim ḥay yāh wĕbĕqereb šĕnayim tiwwādēa*ᶜ. In that case we would have an ancient form of the name of Yhwh, which appears in Ps 68 *inter alia*. The use of this ancient title in later texts is confirmed by the so-called Hallel-psalms, where the Hebrew expression Hallelujah also contains this form. The expression *ḥay yāh* (alternatively *ḥay yāhû)* has many equivalents in the Hebrew Bible as, for example, *ḥay ʾēl, ḥay Yhwh, ḥay ʾĕlōhîm* etc. and in the so-called Lachish Letters.[35] The expression *bĕqereb šĕnayim* is easy to understand in the context where the reference is to Yahweh and his Temple (Hab 2:20). As stated above, Hab 3:5 could support the interpretation whereby the reference is to two Cherubim. That *bĕqereb* can be used of Yahweh being in the midst of divine beings is clear from Ps 82:1 where the expression: "He will judge in the midst of gods (בקרב אלהים)" is found.

33 For this see Xella 1999, 700–703. Concerning the religio-historical background of Deut 32:24 and Hab 3:5 see van der Toorn 2003, 61–83; Niehr 2003, 84–107. It is also worth noting the opinion of Sanders 1996, 401–2, according to which "Rešep is still regarded as a deity in Hab. 3:5 and Deut. 32:24" (1996, 402).

34 See e.g. Tov 2015, 140–41.

35 For this solution see also Andersen 2001, 281.

In ancient Israelite poetry it was usual to emphasize that the God who revealed himself at Sinai would come to help his people and finally establish his kingship on the top of the Mount where his Temple is built (Exod 15:1–18; Deut 33; Ps 68). The prayer of Habakkuk reverses the order. When formulating his prayer in Habakkuk 3, Habakkuk is dependent on an earlier Israelite cultic tradition. This is well illustrated in Hab 3:10–12, 15 which contains close parallels to Ps 77:17–20.[36] The prophet introduced his prayer by stating how Yahweh will manifest his power from the Temple of Jerusalem (Hab 2:20). He begins by referring to the Holy of Holies and the Mercy Seat of the Ark before turning to earlier Israelite poetic traditions concerning Yahweh's march from the South to assist his people.[37]

This being the case, I suggest the following version of Hab 3:2 in its original literary context:

> Yahweh, I have heard your message,
> Yahweh, I am afraid in the face of your work.
> In the midst of the two (cherubim) Jah is alive!
> In the midst of the two (cherubim) you will reveal yourself!
> In wrath you will remember mercy!

Later transmitters of the Hebrew text apparently regarded Hab 3:2 as a theologically problematic text. The text does not say explicitly who these two living figures are and, consequently, it was regarded as problematic in its relation to Jewish monotheism.[38] The text was, therefore, revised by associating "Jah is alive" with the verb "make it live." This revision was subsequently transmitted to the Masoretes who vocalized the text according to the tradition, and thereby produced the new meaning – as can be perceived in the present form of the MT. It is worth noting that the Targum of the Book of Habakkuk (attested before the Masoretic punctuation) already used the Masoretic-like understanding of Hab 3:2 as its starting-point. The meturgeman associates the MT's "your work" with what follows and interprets the beginning of the verse:[39] "Lord, I have heard the report *of your strength and* I was afraid!" The MT reading, "your works in the midst of the years," is interpreted as referring to an exhortation to the wicked: "O Lord, your works *are great, for you grant an extension of time to the wicked to see if they will return to your law; but they have not returned and they provoke* before you in the midst of the years *in which you have given them life*."

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36 This is commonly mentioned in commentaries. See, e.g., Rudolph 1975, 244–45; Andersen 2001, 328–29.

37 It is worth noting that the discussion concerning the structure of Hab 3 should take into account the fact that the MT vocalization in Hab 3:2 cannot be correct. See, e.g., Barré 1988, 184–97; 2013, 446–62 and literature referred within. Michael Barré attempts to emend the MT without considering the fact that the LXX reading would give him the better option to integrate Hab 3:2 into its context.

38 For the theological problems related to other divine beings in addition to Yahweh see Segal 2002.

39 See Sperber 1992. Concerning the English translation see Cathcart and Gordon 1989, 156.

The MT expression "in the midst of the years make it alive" is interpreted as referring to the renewal of the world: "*Therefore you* will display *your might* in the midst of the years *for you have promised to renew the world to take vengeance on the wicked who have disregarded your Memra*." The last phrase of the MT in Hab 3:2 is interpreted in the Targum as follows: "but in *the midst of your* anger you will remember *in* mercy *the righteous who do your will*."

Instead of the MT, the Septuagint has preserved the Greek translation of the Hebrew text which, in my view, corresponded to the original understanding of Hab 3:2. This understanding clarifies well the interpretation of Hab 3:2 in patristic literature. The patristic exegesis simply followed the original meaning of the text by relating the two living beings in Hab 3:2 to the Cherubim above the Ark of Covenant. That such a reading was possible also in Hebrew before the Masoretic punctuation has already been presented above. Consequently, it is entirely possible – even though impossible to prove – that Origen received the idea of relating the Seraphim in Isa 6 to Hab 3:2 from his Hebrew Master. Our next question concerns how the two Seraphim in Isa 6 and their parallels, the Cherubim (depicted on the *kappōret* of the Ark of Covenant), are understood in early Christian interpretations.

3. Seraphim are Cherubim of the Ark of Covenant

The wording of Isa 6:3 indicates that there are only two Seraphim; one seraph calls to the other seraph by saying (καὶ ἐκέκραγον ἕτερος πρὸς τὸν ἕτερον καὶ ἔλεγον): "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth; the whole earth is full of his glory." Because Isaiah saw his vision in the Temple of Jerusalem and in front of the Holy of Holies the two seraphim could easily have been related to the two Cherubim represented on the *kappōret* or to the two massive Cherubim built by Solomon. The earliest example of where this connection between Seraphim and Cherubim has been presented is found in Irenaeus' passage in the *Epideiksis*:[40]

> Now this God is glorified by His Word who is His Son continually, and by the Holy Spirit who is the Wisdom of the Father of all: and the power(s) of these, (namely) of the Word and Wisdom, which are called Cherubim and Seraphim, with unceasing voices glorify God; and every created thing that is in the heavens offers glory to God the Father of all. He by His Word has created the whole world, and in the world are the angels; and to all the world He has given laws wherein each several thing should abide, and according to that which is determined by God should not pass their bounds, each fulfilling his appointed task. (Irenaeus, *Epid.* 10)

40 See Irenaeus, *Epideixis tou apostolikou kērygmatos*, SC 211.

The text has been preserved only in Armenian and, therefore, has been interpreted in different ways. Anthony Briggman has shown convincingly that the Armenian text does not identify the Son and the Holy Spirit with the Cherubim and Seraphim but rather regards these angelic figures as coming under their powers. He also noted that Irenaeus' other passages support such a conclusion.[41] This being the case, there is no solid textual basis for the idea that Irenaeus would have followed a similar exegesis to that of the Hebrew Master in Origen's texts.[42] Irenaeus is, apparently, dependent on other earlier Christian traditions where the Cherubim and Seraphim together with the Word (Christ) and Spirit glorify God. Such a tradition is available, for example, in the *Ascension of Isaiah* which I deal with later in this article.

Returning to the tradition of the Hebrew Master transmitted in Origen's works, we may note that an identification between the Seraphim and Cherubim was the result of logical reasoning because the theophany of God in Isa 6:1–3 was interpreted as having taken place in front of the Holy of Holies in the Temple of Jerusalem where the two massive Cherubim and the Ark of Covenant (along with two smaller Cherubim) were situated. *First*, the revelation of God for Isaiah follows the promise he has given in Lev 16:2: "I appear in the cloud upon the *kappōret*/*hilastērion*." If God himself appears upon the Ark, then two Cherubim are also present in the vision in some way. *Second*, Isaiah sees God sitting on the throne. The expression ישב הכרבים is used for Yahweh elsewhere (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 Kgs 19:15 = Isa 37:16; Ps 80:2; 99:1; 1 Chr 13:6) and is related to the *kappōret* upon which God reveals himself. Therefore, the Seraphim were regarded as Cherubim. This being the case, Isa 6:1–3 should be related to the theophany of God and – as already noted – early Christian theology used angelomorphic manifestations of God in the Old Testament to refer to the theophanies of Christ.

Irenaeus also refers to Hab 3:2 on one occasion when presenting Christological arguments (*Haer.* 3.16.7). Irenaeus understands the end of Hab 3:2 as referring to the life, passion and death of Jesus that were preordained by God. However, it is significant that the text form of Hab 3:2 which Irenaeus quotes does not contain the beginning of the verse but only the end (underlined in what follows):[43]

> O Lord, I have heard of your renown and feared;
> I considered your works and was astonished.

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41 See Briggman 2012, 194–203. Briggman concludes (2012, 202): "In *Proof* 10 Irenaeus writes not of the identity of the Son and the Holy Spirit with the Powers of God called Cherubim and Seraphim, but of their sharing with these Powers in the worship of the Father."

42 Contra Thomas Scheck who writes in his translation of Jerome's *Commentary on Isaiah* (Hieronymus, *Commentariorum in Isaiam libri XVIII*, ACW 68, 882): "The assimilation of the Word and the Spirit (Wisdom) to the cherubim and seraphim came from Judeo-Christian sources and was already found in the work of St. Irenaeus, *Dem* 10."

43 See the text in Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses*, SC 211, 314–17.

> You will be known in the midst of two living ones;
> you will be recognized when the years draw near;
> you will be displayed when the right time comes;
> you will remember mercy when my soul is troubled in wrath.

It is difficult to know whether Irenaeus relates the "two living ones" at the beginning of Hab 3:2 to the Cherubim and Seraphim. Assuming that Irenaeus interrelates Hab 3:2 and Isa 6:1–3 then he could have understood Isa 6:1–3 as the prophet having seen the Christ. This means that Irenaeus simply followed the interpretation of John 12:41. This conclusion is not in tension what we know about Irenaeus' way of using the Gospel of John in Christological matters.[44]

Tertullian (*Marc.* 4.22.12–13) connects Hab 3:2 with the story of the transfiguration of Jesus and interprets the "two living ones" as referring to Moses and Elijah. Tertullian reads Hab 3:2 according to the Septuagint version or, if the Latin translation is not his own, then according to a version of *Vetus Latina* which, in turn, follows the Septuagint:[45]

> But we have the entire structure of this same vision in Habakkuk also, where the Spirit in the person of some of the apostles says, "O Lord, I have heard Thy speech, and was afraid." What speech was this, other than the words of the voice from heaven, This is my beloved Son, hear ye, Him? "I considered thy works, and was astonished." When could this have better happened than when Peter, on seeing His glory, knew not what he was saying? "In the midst of the two living ones Thou shalt be known (*in medio duorum animalium cognosceris*)"—even Moses and Elias.[46]

There is no need to deal with the different interpretations of Hab 3:2.[47] More essential to the task at hand is to see how these parallel patristic texts help us understand Origen's interpretation of Hab 3:2 in *Orig. Princ.* 1.3.4. As we have already seen Origen combines Isa 6:3 with Hab 3:2 and argues that the "two living ones" are the Seraphim and Cherubim of the Ark and refer to Christ and the Holy Spirit. Origen continues by explaining how the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are intimately related to each other (*Orig. Princ.* 1.3.4): "We must understand, therefore, that as the Son, who alone knows the Father, reveals Him to whom He will, so the Holy Spirit, who alone searches the deep things of God, reveals God to whom He will." In another passage, (*Orig. Princ.* 4.3.14),[48] Origen explains what he means

44 Concerning the connection between the theology of Irenaeus and that of the Gospel of John, note especially Mutschler 2004; 2010, 319–43.
45 See the text in Tertullianus, *Adversus Marcionem*, SC 456, 286–89.
46 The translation is according to ANF.
47 For this see Bucur and Mueller 2011, 86–103.
48 See the text Origenes, *De principiis*, OECT 2:556–59.

by this identification of the two Seraphim/Cherubim with our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Only the two Seraphim/Cherubim – and not ordinary created angels – can comprehend the beginning and the end of everything:

> For my Hebrew teacher also used thus to teach, that as the beginning or end of all things could be comprehended by no one, save only our Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, so under the form of a vision Isaiah spoke of two seraphim alone, who with two wings cover the countenance of God, and with two His feet, and with two do fly, calling to each other alternately, and saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of Sabaoth; the whole earth is full of Your glory." That the seraphim alone have both their wings over the face of God, and over His feet, we venture to declare as meaning that neither the hosts of holy angels, nor the holy seats, nor the dominions, nor the principalities, nor the powers, can fully understand the beginning of all things, and the limits of the universe.

Origen continues by explaining that the many divine mysteries have been revealed "through revelation from the Son of God and from the Holy Spirit" even though "The most part of the works of God are hid' [Sir 16:21]."

Orig. Princ. 4.3.14 is important for three reasons. *First*, Origen explains further how he has understood the teaching of his Hebrew Master. As the quotation reveals, the two Seraphim or Cherubim had to be distinguished from other created angels. *Second*, Origen connects Hab 3:2 with Isa 6:3 and uses them both as arguments for Christology and, in fact, also for the Holy Triad.[49] *Third*, he is dependent on some early Jewish-Christian material which was mediated to him by his Hebrew Master and which clearly represents an orthodox variant of Christology.[50] That Origen transmitted an early Jewish-Christian interpretation of Hab 3:2 in *De principiis* is optional[51] because in his *Commentary on Romans* (3.8.2–8) he interprets Hab 3:2 by connecting the verse to Exod 25:22 and argues that the two living figures refer to the Cherubim on the Ark.[52] Only then does he make his own Christological implications by emphasizing that the mercy-seat (ἱλαστήριον in Rom 3:25) is Jesus and

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49 Concerning the concept "Holy Triad," which was a common concept in early patristic literature and differs from the concept Trinity, see Kelly 1978.

50 Concerning the patristic evidence of the Jewish-Christian groups see Klijn and Reinink 1973; Skarsaune and Hvalvik 2007. The Christologies of the Jewish-Christian groups were not coherent. Ray Pritz (1988) has rightly argued that we must distinguish between two essentially different Jewish-Christian groups which had different Christologies. Origen's Hebrew Master apparently regarded Jesus as being more than "solely man." Concerning the interpretation of Origen's passage in the tradition of Jewish-Christian Christology see further Skarsaune 2007a, 325–78. Skarsaune (2007a, 367–69) comments on the passage of Origen under question and characterizes it as an example of "early Jewish Christian Trinitarian theology" (2007a, 368).

51 See my discussion of the textual problems of Hab 3:2 where I concluded that the Hebrew text before the Masoretic punctuation could well have allowed an interpretation where the passage is related to the Mercy Seat of the Ark.

52 See this text and its translation in Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos*, SC 539, 124–35; FC 103, 217–21.

the Word (Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos*, FC 103, 218): "It seemingly appears that the Apostle found the word 'propitiatory' in this passage and now has recorded it in his own writings, of which our current discourse is speaking. It also seems that this propitiatory which had been written about in Exodus referred to nothing other than the Savior and Lord since it says, 'God pre-determined him as a propitiatory through faith.'"

Origen continues to explain the mystery of Christ and argues that it can be revealed only through the Holy Spirit (Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos*, FC 103, 220): "Moreover, he writes similar things about the Holy Spirit when he says, 'But God has revealed it to us through his Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God' [1 Cor 2:10]. Therefore, he signifies, as I think, that the Word of God, who is the only begotten Son, and his Holy Spirit always dwell in the propitiatory, that is, in the soul of Jesus, and that is what the two cherubim placed over the propitiatory indicate."

So far we have seen that the two Seraphim in Isa 6:1–3 have been identified with the two Cherubim on the Ark of Covenant (Exod 25; Hab 3:2) and both cases have been understood as an example of the Holy Triad: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Moving on, we must bear in mind that the identification of the Son and the Holy Spirit with the Seraphim or Cherubim does not imply that they would have been created figures. Justin Martyr's exegesis indicates the potentiality to see these angelomorphic figures as non-created representants of the Holy Triad. In the next section I discuss the early Jewish-Christian text *Ascension of Isaiah* where the Holy Triad is closely related to Isaiah's heavenly vision in Isa 6.

4. Isaiah 6 and the *Ascension of Isaiah*

The *Ascension of Isaiah*[53] is an early Christian text written in a Judeo-Christian milieu. It contains older Jewish traditions and theological concepts.[54] It is, therefore, a suitable text for understanding which kind of tradition the Hebrew Master – presumably

53 See the text and its commentary in *Ascension of Isaiah*, CCAS 7; Norelli 1995. Concerning the additional Ge'ez manuscripts which have been found in explorations of Ethiopian collections, see Piovanelli 1990, 347–63; Erho 2013, 75–97; esp. 95–97. An English translation from the Ethiopian text (Ge'ez) is *Ascension of Isaiah*, Knibb, 143–76. I have translated the *Ascension of Isaiah* from Ge'ez to Finnish with an Introduction and commentary. This work has gone through peer-review process and will be published in Studia Patristica Fennica. While working with this fascinating early Christian (or perhaps Jewish-Christian) text I have come to realise in which ways it is relevant to understanding Origen's passage in *De principiis* 1.3.4.

54 For this, see Knight 1995. After the publication of the edition and the commentary of Norelli's team, scholars often take the Christian authorship as the self-evident starting-point. See e.g. Knight 1996; 2012, 66–105; Stuckenbruck 1995; Hannah 1999a, 80–101. See further the articles in Bremmer, Karmann, and Nicklas 2016; especially Henning and Nicklas 2016, 175–98.

a Jewish-Christian – could have been dependent on. The central belief in the *Ascension of Isaiah* is the idea of salvation which will take place in Christians' ascent to heaven (*Ascen. Isa.* 2:9). This has become possible when Beloved (i.e. Christ) has descended from heaven to save humankind. In his descent from the seventh heaven, Christ changed his form in every level of heaven and was finally born as a human through the virgin Mary. This descent has been compared to the Christological hymn in Phil 2:6–10 with good arguments.[55] The idea of a changing form is also important for Origen's Christology. Dragoş Giulea has demonstrated that Phil 2:6, with its concept "form of God", was an important aspect in Origen's Christological speculations because Christ's polymorphism was essential in the economy of salvation. According to Origen, Logos Christ could change his form so that beginners could see his human form while the more advanced were able to contemplate his invisible and eternal form.[56] The connection between Origen's Christology and that of the *Ascension of Isaiah* has been emphasized by Charles Gieschen, among others.[57] It is impossible to examine this relationship between Christology in the *Ascension of Isaiah* and in Origen's writings more closely in this short article, but it would be a good topic for further research. In this article I demonstrate in which ways Isa 6 plays an important role in the Christology of the *Ascension of Isaiah* and thus provides an important parallel to the Christological tradition of the Hebrew Master.

The *Ascension of Isaiah* contains significant Christological tradition with the early Christian concept of the Holy Triad where God (= "the Great Glory" = Father) and two angelomorphic divine agents the Lord or the Beloved One (= Christ, Son of God) and the angel of the Holy Spirit[58] are interrelated. These theological reflections on the Holy Triad are apparently based on Isa 6:1–3, the great vision of Isaiah, and it is from here that the writer developed the idea of Isaiah's ascension.[59] This becomes especially visible in *Ascen. Isa.* 9:37–42:

> 37 And I saw the Great Glory (*wareʾiku sebbeḥāta ʿabiya*) while the eyes of my spirit were open, but I could not thereafter see, nor the angel who (was) with me, nor any of the angels whom I had seen worship my Lord (*laʾegziʾeya*). 38 But I saw the righteous as they beheld with great power the glory of that one. 39 And my Lord (*ʾegziʾeya*) approached me, and the angel of the Spirit (*wamalʾaka manfas*), and said, "See how it has been given to you to see the God (*laʾegziʾabhēr*), and (how) because of you power has been given to the angel who (is) with you." 40 And I saw how my Lord (*ʾegziʾeya*) and the angel of the Holy Spirit

55 For this, see especially Bauckham 2016, 23–43.
56 Giulea 2016, 407–37.
57 Gieschen 1998, 195–96, 229–37.
58 It is worth noting that *Ascension of Isaiah* regularly speak about the Holy Spirit as an angelomorphic figure.
59 In another article, "Isaiah Reception in the Ascension of Isaiah – Comparison to Isaiah Reception in the Book of Revelation", I deal with the question of how Isaianic reception has been treated in the Ascension of Isaiah.

(*wamalʾak zamanfas*) worshiped and both together praised the God (*laʾegziʾabhēr*). 41 And then all the righteous approached and worshiped, 42 and the angels approached and worshiped, and all the angels sang praises.

It is significant that the Latin version 2 as well as the Slavonic version differ from the Geʾez text. For example, the Latin and Slavonic texts have changed the wording in *Ascen. Isa.* 9:40 by eliminating the idea according to which "my Lord" (= Christ) and "the angel of the Holy Spirit" worshiped God.[60] Such a change was due to Christological and Trinitarian reasons and the Geʾez version clearly preserved the original form of the text. The Geʾez version should not be interpreted as "my Lord" (= Christ) and "the angel of the Holy Spirit" being created angelic figures. After all, in *Ascen. Isa.* 9:37–42 the same word *ʾegziʾ* has been used both for Christ and God. This indicates that the writer of the *Ascension of Isaiah* understands Christ to be divine person and not a created angelic figure – something which receives support from the fact that even Christ (as well as "the angel of the Holy Spirit") is worth veneration (see below).

There are good arguments to conclude that *Ascen. Isa.* 9:37–42 is related to the reception of Isa 6:1–3. *First*, the text emphasizes that Isaiah had seen God. God the Father has been identified with the Great Glory which parallels Isa 6:1–3 well where reference is made to the glory of God which fills the whole earth. *Second*, the context emphasizes how everyone in the Universe will worship and praise God – a theme which is emphasized in Isa 6:1–3. *Third*, both the Beloved One (the Christ) and the angel of the Holy Spirit[61] glorified God (the Father), thus paralleling the tradition of the Hebrew Master and another interpretive tradition in Irenaeus' *Epid.* 10.

The idea of the *Ascension of Isaiah*, according to which the Lord (= Christ) and the angel of Holy Spirit worshiped and praised the Lord (= God), can be related either to the Jewish-Christian tradition according to which the Seraphim are Christ and Holy Spirit (i.e. the opinion of the Hebrew Master), or alternatively to the tradition behind Irenaeus' *Epid.* 10, where the Lord and the Holy Spirit together with the Seraphim and Cherubim worship God. Nevertheless, because the Beloved One i.e. Christ and the Holy Spirit have been presented as angelomorphic figures it seems to me that the first alternative is to be preferred. This interpretation may also receive support from *Ascen. Isa.* 11:32–33: "(32) And I saw how he ascended into the seventh heaven, and all the righteous and all the angels praised him. And then I saw that he sat down at the right hand of that Great Glory, whose glory I told you I could not behold. (33) And also I saw that the angel of the Holy Spirit sat on the left."

60 For the new wordings in Latin 2 and Slavonic versions of *Ascen. Isa.* 6–11, which are justified for Christological and Trinitarian reasons, see Norelli 1995, 498. See further Knight 2012, 66–105.

61 Actually, the Holy Spirit has been always presented as Angelomorphic figure. For this see especially Stuckenbruck 2004, 308–20.

This description has also been related to Ps 110:1[62] – an idea which I do not oppose. Nevertheless, it seems to me that *Ascen. Isa.* 11:32–33 should be related to the fundamental iconographic representation in the Temple of Jerusalem where the Ark of Covenant or the two massive Cherubim in the Holy of Holies indicate that God will reveal himself between two Cherubim (Lev 16:2; Hab 3:2). Therefore, it seems to me that the *Ascension of Isaiah* illustrates the opinion of the Hebrew Master, according to whom the Christ and the Holy Spirit can be identified with the two Seraphim and Cherubim who, in turn, correspond to divine angelic persons who, in the theophanies, represent themselves to be the Lord or God.

There is another tradition in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, which is possibly related to the Ark of Covenant, namely the quite enigmatic expression in *Ascen. Isa.* 3:17: *wawe'etu fequr nabiro diba matākeftihomu yewaḍḍe' wayefēnnu*[63] *10wa2'ardā'ihu*, "and that Beloved, sitting on their shoulders, will come forth and send out his twelve disciples." Just prior to this text reference is made to two angels who will open the grave of Christ and, therefore, the expression "their shoulders" should be taken as referring to the shoulders of angels. Behind the expression is, presumably, the Hebrew idiom ישב הכרבים. Through his resurrection Christ has been shown to be a divine king – a theme which already in the New Testament was related to the interpretation of enthronement of the Messianic king in Ps 2:7 (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5; 5:5).

5. Origen's Interpretation of Isaiah 6

Assuming that my interpretation connecting the concept of the Holy Triad in the *Ascension of Isaiah* to the opinion of the Hebrew Master in *Orig. Princ.* 1.3.4 holds, then Origen's own Christology seems to follow the interpretive tradition formulated by his teacher. The Hebrew Master presented both Christ and the Holy Spirit as divine persons albeit in a subordinate status to Father God. Origen's Christology is similar. For example, in the *Handbook to Origen*, Charles Kannengieser summarizes that "Origen categorically states that Christ is Son of God by being equal in eternity and divinity with the Father (PArch 1.2),"[64] and Joseph O'Leary again that "the variations in Origen's accounts of the status of the Logos both in respect to God and in respect to creation occur within the subordinationist context that was that of mainstream ante-Nicene theology."[65]

62 So e.g. Norelli 1995, 585.

63 The form is from the verb *fannawa* (D "send") imperfect sing 3. masc (not plural 3. masc). According to the paradigm the form is *yefēnnew* but it will be assimilated to *yefēnnu*. See Lambdin 2006, 214.

64 Kannengieser 2004, 73–78; quotation is from p. 74. A more detailed study on Origen's Christology is available in Jacobsen 2015. Jacobsen analyses several of Origen's writings.

65 O'Leary 2004, 142–45; quotation is from p. 144.

There are some other texts by Origen where Isa 6:1–3 is interpreted. In his *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis* 2.178, for example, Origen compares the mission of John the Baptist and that of Isaiah but the text is unclear as to how Origen interprets the Lord sitting on a throne in Isa 6:[66]

> The opponent to the implicit deeper sense will say that just as Isaias was sent, not from another place besides this world but, after he had seen "the Lord sitting on a throne high and elevated," he was sent to the people that he might say, "You shall certainly hear and not understand" etc., so also John, because the silence regarding the beginning of his mission is analogous to that of Isaias, is sent forth to baptize and to prepare "for the Lord a prepared people" and to give testimony "of the light."

In his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (6.23) Origen relates the two Seraphim in Isa 6 to the vision of Ezekiel where he too saw Cherubim, but offers no more particulars. A similar unclear note is also made in *Contra Celsum* 1.43 where Origen interprets Isa 6 and Ezekiel 1 so that both Isaiah and Ezekiel have seen the Lord of Sabaoth. In this context, Origen is writing about the reliability of the prophetic visions and therefore does not write *expressis verbis* to whom Isa 6:1–3 refer to. However, later in *Contra Celsum* 6.18 Origen is more explicit when he comments on Celsus' Platonic triadic statement concerning his philosophical god: "All things centre in the King of all, and are for his sake, and he is the cause of all that is good. The second things centre in the Second, and the third things centre in the Third. The human soul, then, yearns to learn about these things to find what is their nature, by looking at the things that are related to itself, none of which are perfect. Now where the king and the principles which I mentioned are concerned, there is nothing of this sort."[67]

Concerning this statement Origen continues and writes:

> I could quote the statements about the seraphim, as they are called by the Hebrews, described by Isaiah as hiding the face and the feet of God, and about what are called cherubim, which Ezekiel portrayed, and of their shapes, as it were, and of the way in which God is said to be carried upon the cherubim. But, as these things are expressed in a very obscure form because of the unworthy and irreligious who are not able to understand the deep meaning and sacredness of the doctrine of God, I have not thought it right to discuss these matters in this book.

Again, Origen is not explicit in his commentary, but his formulations do seem to corroborate well with the ideas of his Hebrew Master. The only reference to

66 See the text in Origenes, *Commentarii in evangelium Joannis*, GCS 4, 86, and the translation: FC 80, 142–43.

67 See the text in Origenes, *Contra Celsum*, GCS 3, 88–89 and the translation: Chadwick, 331.

John 12:41, according to *Biblia patristica*, is found in Origen's *Commentary on Romans* 6.7.6, where he agrees with the evangelist that Isa 6:1–3 refer to the Son of God: "So then, among the first people many were advancing in spiritual knowledge and were seeing the glory of the Word of God, as it is written that Isaiah too saw the glory of the Son of God, as John testifies when he says, 'But Isaiah said these things when he saw his glory.'"[68]

This comment confirms that Origen has no problem in accepting the bipartite interpretation in the Johannine literature where the Lord in Isa 6:1–3 can refer to Christ (John 12:41) or to Father God (Rev 4) as in the teaching of the Hebrew Master. This corroborates well with the thesis of this article that, according to the Hebrew Master, Christ and the Holy Spirit are divine subjects in the mystery of the Holy Triad.

Conclusions

The starting-point in the article was Origen's statement of the Christological tradition transmitted by his Hebrew Master concerning Isa 6:1–3. The New Testament has two different interpretive perspectives to the Isaianic passage. According to John 12:41, Isaiah saw the glorified Son of God, while Revelation 4 interprets the passage as referring to God (the Father) without saying anything specific about the roles of the Seraphim. This twofold reception of Isa 6:1–3, as early as in the New Testament writings, indicates that we cannot expect the later reception history of the passage to be coherent. Even Origen knew these alternatives and accepted them both.

I have argued in this article that the Hebrew Master's teaching of Isa 6:1–3 cannot be taken in a simplistic way so that Christ and the Holy Spirit would have been created figures. On the contrary, I have emphasized that the Hebrew Master's teaching was adopted by Origen, and he developed it in his writings. What is clear in any case is that Origen does not regard the Hebrew Master's teaching as problematic. He turns to it in several times in his writings and uses it to explain the concept of the Holy Triad where Christ and Holy Spirit are subordinate to the Father.

In this article I have dealt with the spiritual milieu where Seraphim were identified with the Son and the Holy Spirit. I demonstrated, by referring to the investigations of other scholars, that an early form of Christology was closely related to Old Testament theophanies where angelomorphic figures reveal themselves to humans and speak in the first person, and thus identify themselves with God. I took examples from Justin Martyr's writings. The angelomorphic figures in such theophanies in early Christian reception history could be related to the iconographic image where

68 See the text in Origenes, *Commentarii in Romanos*, FC 543, 142–43, and the English translation (where the passage is 6.7.7): FC 104, 23.

the Lord Sabaoth is sitting on the throne of Cherubim – a scene that the prophet Isaiah also saw in Isa 6. Isaiah saw two Seraphim in the Temple indicating that they were identified with the Cherubim, at least according to Origen's passage where he refers to the Hebrew Master's teaching on Isa 6. Origen also refers to Hab 3:2 (according to the Septuagint version) combining it with the Cherubim of the Mercy Seat on the Ark of Covenant. He identified the two living figures of Hab 3:2 with angelomorphic divine Persons representing the Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Finally, I also dealt with the Christology in the *Ascension of Isaiah*. This early Christian text gives a good basis for understanding the nature of the Christology of the Hebrew Master. In *Ascension of Isaiah* both Christ (the Beloved One) and the Holy Spirit are depicted as angelomorphic figures who are divine and worthy of worship. According to *Ascension of Isaiah*, the Beloved One and the angel of the Holy Spirit worship the Great Glory God – a theme which is visible in Isa 6:1–3 as well as in the tradition of the Hebrew Master to which Origen refers.

This evidence shows that there is no longer any valid reason to claim that the Christology of the Hebrew Master would have prepared a way for Arian Christology. On one hand, it represented a high Christology, and on the other hand, it was subordinationist in the same way as the Christology in the ante-Nicene period often was. For those two reasons alone, the Hebrew Master's teaching was suitable for Origen when he presented his own Christology.

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VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 431–451
Received: Oct 20, 2023 | Accepted: Apr 20, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

Attitudes Towards Marriage, Sexual Morality, and Parenthood of Individuals Associated with Shalom Centre in Mitunguu, Kenya: A Theological-Pastoral Perspective

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Abstract: Attitudes to marriage, sexual morality, and parenthood are currently undergoing substantial cultural transformation, noticeable also in mission countries. For this reason, the Catholic Church has in recent years treated pastoral care of married couples and families as an urgent concern. The article presents results of empirical research conducted among a selected group of Catholics in Kenya as well as conclusions and postulates for Catholic formation and pastoral care of families. It indicates a need for education that would help individuals overcome unethical conjugal and familial attitudes. It also emphasizes the value of positive attitudes to parenthood present in African culture and accentuates clear progress in rejecting a conviction that marriage without children is pointless. The text points out urgent need for formative and pastoral work to eradicate corporal punishment of children and indicates challenges related to the education of women.

Keywords: marriage, sexual morality, spouses, parenthood, pastoral theology, pastoral care of the family, Catholic education

1. Theological Introduction

Human sexuality is strictly related to a possibility of one's self-realization in and through love, which every human being is created for (*GS* 24; cf. *FC* 11; *RH* 10). The Catholic Church's current teaching on sexuality is considered particularly valuable in uncovering a proper sense of human love and is worthy of wide dissemination (Semen 2004). In the Church's postconciliar teaching, human sexuality is

The article is a part of the project financed by the Ministry of Education and Science, Republic of Poland, "Regional Initiative of Excellence" in 2019–2022, 028/RID/2018/19, the amount of funding: 11 742 500 PLN.

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16747

understood in a positive and integral way, in the context of a gift and calling for love. Sexuality is by its nature intentional, that is to say it is oriented onto interpersonal dialogue, gift of oneself in love, fertility and the transmission of life (CCE 1983, no. 32; cf. Kobak 2018, 115–16). The human body is sexual and as such expresses a human being's calling for love and for mutual gift of oneself (CCE 1983, no. 24). The Pontifical Biblical Commission pointedly argues that the purpose of a differentiation into a man and a woman is the creation of conjugal covenant, that is unity ("one body" – Gen 2:24) as a source of new life (PCB 2019, no. 157). Pope John Paul II posited that in accord with their masculinity and femininity the spouses through their conjugal covenant realize the communion of people desired by God so that human life can be conceived, born, and developed (cf. *FC* 11; *AL* 80). The spouses can in this way experience a community with God through their partner and participate in God's creative love (CCE 1983, no. 26). This way they realize their calling for love as a community of love of two persons who love each other (cf. *GS* 12; *MD* 7; CCE 1983, no. 26). Thanks to God's mercy that heels, perfects, and elevates human life, their realize the two-fold goal of marriage, that is mutual help and procreation (Granados 2014).

God's endowment of a human being with a capacity for love (cf. *MD* 11) entails a mutual gift of self that the spouses become for each other. This mutual gift-giving does not only have a private character, but encompasses as well communal and social life. A marriage of baptized individuals is a sacrament in which earthly reality is included by God in the dynamics of salvation. This way the relationship of a man and a woman married "in the Lord" (1 Cor 7:39) is rooted in what is quotidian and earthly while at the same time having a deeper spiritual dimension, for the creator of marriage is God himself (*GS* 48). As a personal community of life and love, marriage is related to ethical requirements of faithfulness, indissolubility, chastity, and openness to life (cf. Vidal 2005).

Created in the image and likeness of God, a man and a woman are equal in terms of personal dignity, while at the same time being different so as to forge a mutual bond and unity in marriage (PCB 2019, no. 157). Conjugal unity is a sign and reflection of the communion of love between God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit of love (*AL* 11, 63). The sexual union of the spouses that marks and strengthens this unity should be a reflection of their harmony in truth and love (*GrS* 8). Sexual commitment is the province of conjugal love only, as in its essence it is realized in a truly human way only when it forms part of integral love through which a man and a woman are bound to each other until death (PCF 1996, nos. 14, 16; cf. *CCC* 2337). Then a love of a man and a woman finds its fullest fulfilment, as their complete devotion encompasses also the corporeal level (PCF 1996, no. 11). Pope Francis accentuates the role of the sexual union of the spouses to an even larger degree, maintaining that "sexual union, lovingly experienced and sanctified by the sacrament, is in turn a path of growth in the life of grace for the couple." (*AL* 74) This way the spouses deploy the language of sexuality to express its sense, to communicate with each other, and to convey certain values. What seems to be a key issue for a Christian is that in an indissoluble marriage sexuality is integrated with the path of sanctity (PCF 1996, no. 30).

Created as a man and a woman in a duality of sex, a human being reflects the image of God, who decided that like himself a human being should be a source of life (Paul VI 1970). God created in the human body a dynamism of fertility incorporated within the human nature. In its anatomic and functional structure, the body itself calls a man and a woman to fulfil their basic calling to fecundity (CCE 1983, nos. 22–24). Fertility is one of the rudimentary features of conjugal love (*HV* 9). The apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (no. 28) posits that "[f]ecundity is the fruit and the sign of conjugal love, the living testimony of the full reciprocal selfgiving of the spouses." The spouses' fertility distinguishes and elevates human beings over other earthly creatures and endows their lives with sense and value (Grześkowiak 1985, 33). The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that God appointed a man and a woman to realize the lofty task of fecundity and the transmission of life. As spouses and parents, they are to complement each other in the realization of this task and cooperate with their Creator (*CCC* 1607, 1652; PCF 2006, no. 14).

At the same time, a human being is free from any pressure when it comes to procreation. Procreation does not fall within the realm of instinct but is directed by one's reason and responsibility for oneself and others (cf. *FC* 28–29; *GrS* 12; *EV* 43; Smykowski 2018, 78–81). A responsible stance in this respect requires that a close connection between sexuality and love and fecundity be respected (CCE 1983, no. 32; PCF 1996, no. 11). Parenthood understood in the context of one's relation with God is a sacred sphere. The encyclical *Evangelium vitae* (no. 44) clearly corroborates God's participation in the parents' transmission of life: "The certainty that the life which parents transmit has its origins in God. We see this attested in the many biblical passages which respectfully and lovingly speak of conception, of the forming of life in the mother's womb, of giving birth and of the intimate connection between the initial moment of life and the action of God the Creator." In the present times, however, parenthood requires willingness and an ability to overcome crises related to fear, sense of guilt, exhaustion, and situations destabilizing the relationship and antagonizing the man and the woman (*AL* 239). At times the spouses need also to overcome their own prejudices or even enmity towards procreation (*EV* 23; cf. *AL* 80).

Conjugal fecundity leads to parenthood not only in the physical sense, but also in the spiritual one, whereby "giving birth" can be understood as the shaping of souls and upbringing (Wojtyła 2010, 232; PCF 2006, no. 18). Pope John Paul II pointed out that the fecundity of conjugal love "is enlarged and enriched by all those fruits of moral, spiritual and supernatural life which the father and mother are called to hand on to their children, and through the children to the Church and to the world."

(*FC* 28; *GrS* 10) The spouses' spiritual fecundity may bring about apostolic, charitable, and social results (*FC* 41; cf. Semen 2004, 95). When the spouses realize their spiritual fecundity and parenthood, it may be of tremendous help in seeing the sense of their life and calling for love in situations of biological infertility (*AL* 178). Thanks to this, the spouses may more easily accept their suffering and view it as a source of spiritual fecundity while opening themselves up to other important service to human life (*FC* 74; *DV* 8).

Pope Francis argues that even though marriage – with its features of exclusivity, indissolubility, and openness to life – is at the moment being damaged by various whims, Christians should continue to propose it and show its motivation. The gospel of family, after all, "responds to the deepest expectations of the human person," (*AL* 201) and failing to preach it, one would deprive the world of the values that can and should be incorporated (*AL* 53, 34–35).

In Central Africa marriage is often understood as an ongoing process with a rich cultural framework engaging extended family and local community. It encompasses customary, religious, and civil elements. This is related to general social acceptance of informal and traditional relationships. Even for Catholics, it is common to first have a traditional wedding and only some time later a church ceremony. The custom of bridewealth payment is deeply ingrained, with families of the bride and the groom negotiating its amount. One of the reasons for postponing the latter is the fact that it requires a rich and costly set-up (Baral et al. 2021, 5–7). Marriage is associated with the development of broad and diverse bonds between the families of the spouses (Manderson and Block 2016, 206).

Recent scholarship on conjugal and family life in Kenya concentrates on the position of women in marriage (Scheibinger 2019; Cotton 2020), acceptance of women's inheritance rights (Harari 2019), the influence of job market (Luke and Munshi 2006) and women's education (Ikamari 2005) on getting married, as well as HIV prevention in the context of sexual behaviour and education in this respect (Duflo, Dupas, and Kremer 2015). Scholars pay attention to the significance of African customary law for getting married (including by children) and the position of spouses (in particular women) in a relationship. They point out a disjuncture between constitutional and legislative levels of protection of women's rights in polygamous customary marriages (Cotton 2020; Osman 2020; Haffejee et al. 2020; Warioba 2018), which is reflected primarily in attitudes to widow inheritance. "For most African women living in patrilineal societies where a marriage constitutes an alliance between two persons as well as two lineages, experiencing one's husband passing away does not end the marriage or the alliance. As a substitute, another male in the clan of the deceased may enter a relationship with the widow and be responsible for her, the children and the material property." (Christiansen 2009, 85) Customary law in Africa places an emphasis on an individual's responsibilities towards their family and the family's decisive role in shaping the life of each member (Scheibinger 2019, 201–3), resulting in frequent early and forced marriages (Bunting, Lawrance, and Roberts 2016). Nowadays, moreover, the attitudes of Africans may be influenced by the phenomenon of anti-natalism, although not directly present in the culture under study, but impacted from Western culture through media messages.

Christians' conjugal and family life in Africa, including Kenya, was a subject of a broadly conceived sociological, theological, and pastoral project titled Churches' Research on Marriage in Africa (CROMIA). The research encompasses statistics on church marriages and other relationships, divorces and remarriages, polygamy and widowhood, relations between the spouses, parenthood and sexuality, relations between parents and children, as well as sexual education, miscegenational and interdenominational marriages, population growth, responsible parenting, as well as relations between a married couple and community (Kisembo, Magesa, and Shorter 1998, 11–18). However, this ecumenical project,[1] headed by Benezeri Kisembo, Laurenti Magesa, and Aylward Shorter, was realized over 45 years ago, in 1973–1976.

Existing empirical research makes it possible to posit that Christians and followers of the majority of other religions evince more traditional views on marriage, its indissolubility, and its unique and key value for the community.[2] Scholars have noted a connection between mutual spiritual disclosure and a better functioning of the family (Brelsford and Mahoney 2008) and a positive attitude to generativity (Brelsford et al. 2009). Marriage as a holy union means spiritual intimacy constitutes a resource of the couple, deepening their mutual trust, attachment, emotional safety, and sense of belonging to the spouse (Padgett et al. 2019).

These results have prompted the authors of this study to conduct theological-empirical research to determine the attitudes to marriage, sexual morality of the spouses, and parenthood among a group of selected Kenyan Catholics. Knowledge of the respondents' convictions in these respects is significant for catechesis and pastoral care in Africa. The Church has developed materials for premarital education, but a lot of these have been adapted from Western contexts, without accounting for the specificity of local customs and traditions of African culture (Rotich and Starcher 2016). For this reason, it is vital to find out how individuals who have undergone Catholic formation (i.e. the Kenyans associated with the Shalom Center in Mitunguu) understand marriage, the spouses' sexual morality, and parenthood. To what extent do they share Catholic convictions on marriage and parenthood? Which elements of the Catholic sexual ethics do they accept and which do they reject?

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1 The following churches and church communities took part in the project: Anglican, Church of God, United Church of Zambia, Congregationalist, Dutch Reformed, Greek Orthodox, Lesotho Evangelical Church, Lutheran, Mennonite, Methodist, Moravian, Presbyterian, Catholic, Society of Friends, Vapostori Independent, and Zionist Independent Churches (cf. Kisembo, Magesa, and Shorter 1998, 11–18).

2 See Thornton 1985; Pearce and Thornton 2007; Adamczyk 2013; Halman and Ingen 2015; Wilkins-Laflamme 2016; Aman et al. 2019.

The article aims to signal the results in three areas: understanding of marriage, attitude to sexual morality of spouses, and approach to parenthood. Even though the present research project is of a preliminary character and is not based on a representative sample, its results provide information useful for the preparation and implementation of catechesis and pastoral care for Kenyan Catholics. Empirical research conducted within practical theology is based on a model composed of three stages – normative, executive, and praxeological (Kamiński 2018) – while analysis should contain elements of theological reflection (Szymczak 2020, 503–27). For this reason, the second goal of the article is to point out conclusions and suggestions for Catholic education and pastoral care of families as regards conjugal morality.

2. Research Methodology and Characterization of the Respondent Group

The present research among a group of Catholics in Kenya was carried out through a survey method with the use of a questionnaire specially designed for the purposes of this study to capture the respondents' understanding of marriage, sexual morality, and parenthood. The questionnaire comprised altogether 45 close-ended questions, with a few additional queries on socio-demographic features. The questions were created by the authors of this study on the basis of the teaching of the Catholic Church on marriage, sexual morality, and parenthood. Some aspects of the cultural specificity of the region that the respondents came from were also taken into consideration. The selection of questions was then verified using the method of expert judges, where a team of seven judges consisted of specialists in Catholic sexual ethics, theology of marriage and family, practical theology, social psychology, psychology of family, and sociology of family. The accuracy and internal consistency of the questions in the first part of the questionnaire on marriage was assessed through Cronbach's alpha, whose value was established at 0.68, with average correlations between statements assessed at 0.20. Ultimately, 14 statements on marriage were included in the first part of the questionnaire (see Table 2). The 19 statements on the spouses' sexual morality were arrived at in a similar vein (see Table 4). Cronbach's alpha for the questions in this part of the questionnaire was 0.82, with the average correlations between statements amounting to 0.25. Analogously, the same procedure was used to select the 12 statements on parenthood (see Table 5). Here Cronbach's alpha was assessed at 0.70, with the average correlation between the statements of 0.19.

The research was carried out in March 2022 at a group of respondents specifically selected for pastoral reasons from among individuals related to the missionary educational-pastoral Shalom Centre in Mitunguu in Central Kenya.

The Shalom Home Pastoral Center (in Matetu, St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Mitunguu, Diocese of Meru, Central Kenya) was established in 2011 on the initiative of Fr. Francis Gaciata, who has been parish priest since 2008. The center's wards are children and adolescents from about 3 to 25 years of age, mainly from the slums of Gakaromone in Mitungu Town. The facility includes a center for orphaned and vulnerable children, in addition to an elementary school, a secondary school and a vocational school, which are also attended by other willing students. Students, teachers and most of the staff, live on its premises. As of 2022, there were about 500 people under the care of the Center and 50 teachers and staff, including two missionary volunteers and seven religious. Former wards are often still affiliated with the center, taking on casual jobs or getting help with studies and becoming independent. The Shalom Home Pastoral Center was established with funding from two Italian charities: "Melamango" and "Val di Sole." The center receives material, organizational and substantive support from the Diakonia for Missions of the Light-Life Movement, founded in Poland, also through Adoption at a Distance and missionary volunteerism (cf. "La Loro Storia," n.d.; Goleń et al. 2022).

The research was a pilot for a theological-empirical project on pastoral care of the family. Respondents were from among the oldest students attending the Catholic Shalom Center in Mitunguu in Central Kenya, as well as graduates of the school. The sample was selected in a purposive manner. The age ranges of the respondents (up to 20 years, 21–25 years and over 25 years) were assumed, based on the adopted criterion for selecting respondents – participation in the process of education at the Catholic Shalom Center and Catholic formation, as well as involvement in the Center's activities after education. The research was conducted in English (the language in which the teaching takes place) using the CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) technique during the interviewer's meetings with students and graduates (auditorium questionnaire).

The survey sample was 156 individuals of the Catholic faith, of whom men accounted for 51.3 percent and women for 48.7 percent (see Table 2). The age distribution of respondents included three ranges: up to 20 years of age – 29.5 percent of respondents, 21 to 25 years of age – 38.5 percent, and over 25 years of age – 32.0 percent of respondents. 55.1 percent of respondents were residents of small towns, 30.8 percent – rural residents, and 14.1 percent were urban residents. Half of the respondents described themselves as religious (50.0 percent), 41.0 percent as very religious, and only 9.0 percent as weakly religious or religiously indifferent. 62.5 percent of respondents grew up in full families, while the remainder came from various types of single-parent, polygamous and other families. Remaining in a Catholic or civil marriage was declared by 1 in 10 people, 84.6 percent of respondents were single, and 3.8 percent were in an informal relationship.

Table 1. Characteristics of the study group

Characteristics	Categories	Parameter	
		N	%
Sex	Women	80	51.3
	Men	76	48.7
Age	Below 20	46	29.5
	Between 21 and 25	60	38.5
	Over 25	50	32.1
Conjugal-familial situation	Church/civil marriage	16	10.3
	Informal relationship	6	3.8
	Single	134	85.9
Place of residence	Countryside	48	30.8
	Town	86	55.1
	City	22	14.1
Family	Family with both parents	96	61.5
	Other types of family	60	38.5
Siblings	None	38	24.4
	Yes	118	75.6
Affiliation with a religious organization	Yes	140	89.7
	No	16	10.3
Attitude to faith	Very religious	64	41.0
	Religious	78	50.0
	Non-practicing believer	6	3.8
	Spiritual but not religious	2	1.3
	Indifferent	6	3.8

N – frequency; % – percentage.

The survey was voluntary and anonymous. In the presence of the researcher, the respondents were asked to express their opinions on the statements provided, assessing to what extent they agree or disagree with a given statement. Their acceptance of the statement or its lack thereof was assessed on a numerical scale of from -3 to 3, where the lowest number signified complete lack of acceptance, while the highest – full acceptance of the statement (-3 – I definitely disagree, -2 – I disagree to a large extent, -1 – I rather disagree, 0 – It is hard to say, 1 – I rather agree, 2 – I agree to a large extent, 3 – I definitely agree).

The responses were then statistically processed. Average values were calculated on the basis of the answers given to capture the acceptance of a given statement on the same 7-number scale. For the sake of statistical analysis of the results, – arithmetic mean, Me – median, and Mann-Whitney test results were calculated (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias 2001, 507–8; Francuz and Mackiewicz 2005, 435–36, 449–50). The differences between the results were deemed statistically significant when $p<0.05$. The use of statistical methods made it possible to formulate certain conclusions and theological-pastoral and pedagogical suggestions. Still, it needs to be remembered that the sample was not representative and does not account for the distribution of the socio-demographic features within the Kenyan society or its specific region. For those reasons, caution needs to be exercised while extrapolating the results of this study.

3. The Respondents' Convictions on Marriage

The results presented in Table 2 show that the vast majority of the respondents share the Catholic convictions on marriage (to a large or to some degree). At the same time, what seems puzzling is a high percentage of respondents who agree to some extent that the parents or community may decide on the children's marriage (30.8 percent), that a woman's status in the marriage is lower than that of a man (28.2 percent), and that in some situations violence against the spouse may or should be used (11.6 percent). It is only over half of the respondents that decisively disapprove of such convictions (see Table 2).

Table 2. The respondents' convictions on Catholic marriage in numbers and percentages.

Convictions on Catholic marriage	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Parents or society can decide about the marriage of their children	34,6	17,9	7,7	9	11,5	9	10,3
2. Friendship between husband and wife is very important to a marriage	1,3	0	1,3	0	6,4	26,9	64,1
3. Spouses should be completely faithful to each other	1,3	0	1,3	7,7	1,3	29,4	59

Convictions on Catholic marriage	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
4. Sexual bind is very important for a marriage	2,6	0	1,3	2,6	15,4	25,5	52,6
5. In a marriage the woman has a lower status than the man	34,6	23,1	10,3	3,8	7,7	7,7	12,8
6. Love of husband and wife is the basis of a marriage	0	0	3,8	1,3	3,8	29,6	61,5
7. Only union between one man and one woman can be considered to be a marriage	5,1	2,6	3,8	5,1	6,4	24,4	52,6
8. Spouses should be honest with each other	1,3	0	2,6	2,6	2,6	30,7	60,2
9. Spouses should have respect to each other	1,3	0	1,3	2,6	1,3	29,4	64,1
10. Marriage should be blessed in the Church	1,3	0	1,3	5,1	9	32,1	51,2
11. A marriage can only be successful through God's grace, which works in the sacraments	2,6	0	2,6	6,4	9	23,1	56,3
12. In some situations violence against the spouse can or should be used	41	25,6	10,3	11,5	3,8	1,3	6,5
13. Marriage is for life	1,3	2,6	3,8	6,4	7,7	26,9	51,3
14. Husband and wife should pray together	0	1,3	3,8	1,3	7,7	32,1	53,8

N=156 (100%), possible answers: -3 – I definitely disagree, -2 – I disagree to a large extent, -1 – I rather disagree, 0 – It is hard to say, 1 – I rather agree, 2 – I agree to a large extent, 3 – I definitely agree.

The results vary when the independent variable of sex is taken into account. Men more frequently than women believe that spouses should respect each other (9), that sexual bond is very important in marriage (4), that friendship between the husband and the wife is of great significance in marriage (2), and that the spouses should be completely faithful to each other (3). The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Convictions on Catholic marriage and the respondents' sex

Convictions on Catholic marriage	Sex	Test result U	Value of p
2. Friendship between husband and wife is very important to a marriage	Women	-2,349	0,019
	Men		
3. Spouses should be completely faithful to each other	Women	-2,246	0,025
	Men		
4. Sexual bind is very important for a marriage	Women	-2,380	0,017
	Men		
9. Spouses should have respect to each other	Women	-2,679	0,007
	Men		

U – Mann-Whitney test result, p – test of statistical significance.

4. The Respondents' Convictions on the Spouses' Sexual Morality

As the data in Table 4 make it clear, the respondents quite frequently share some Catholic convictions on the sexual morality of the spouses. Most frequently they agree that every conceived child should be accepted with love (93.5 percent), that men and women should remain chaste until marriage (circa 80 percent), and that natural control of a woman's fertility is the proper conduct in marriage (64.1 percent). However, in the last case only half of the respondents confirm that it is possible to determine a woman's fertile days on the basis of mucus and body temperature analysis.

At the same time, relatively high percentages of the respondents (approximately 80 percent to over 90 percent) clearly disagree with the opinions that are at odds with Catholic sexual ethics, such as acceptance of masturbation, watching pornography, homosexual intercourse, using abortion pills, marital infidelity, or polygamy. A lower percentage of the respondents disapprove of the following behaviours that are unethical from the Catholic point of view: acceptance of divorce and remarriage (disapproved of by 71.8 percent; accepted by 19.2 percent), use of contraception (disapproved of by 61.6 percent; accepted by 29.4 percent), and acceptance of informal relationships (disapproved of by 60.2 percent, accepted by 23.1 percent). What is more, 7.7 percent of the respondents accept abortion as a solution in the case of an unwanted pregnancy (see Table 4). The variable of sex does not seem to affect the results in a statistically significant way.

Table 4. The respondents' convictions on the sexual morality of the spouses in numbers and percentages

Convictions on the sexual morality of the spouses	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. A woman should remain sexually chaste until marriage	1,3	5,1	0	14,1	10,3	25,6	43,6
2. Masturbation (stimulation of one's own genital organs in order to achieve sexual pleasure) is acceptable for a man	48,7	35,9	5,1	3,8	2,6	0	3,9
3. Abortion is morally acceptable in the case of unwanted pregnancy	46,2	34,6	7,7	3,8	0	2,6	5,1
4. It is good to have children before marriage in the Church	35,9	25,6	14,1	7,7	6,4	5,1	5,2
5. Homosexual intercourses are morally acceptable	48,7	35,9	3,8	5,1	1,3	2,6	2,6
6. A man should remain sexually chaste until marriage	1,3	3,8	2,6	14,1	7,7	29,5	41
7. Abortion pills are morally acceptable	50	35,9	7,7	3,8	0	0	2,6
8. Watching pornography is morally acceptable for married people	44,9	30,8	5,1	10,3	2,6	1,3	5
9. Divorce and remarriage are morally acceptable	37,2	20,5	14,1	9	7,7	0	11,5
10. Masturbation (stimulation of one's own genital organs in order to achieve sexual pleasure) is acceptable for a woman	52,6	28,2	9	5,1	2,6	0	2,5
11. Sometimes a wife can have sexual intercourse with a man who is not her husband	51,3	34,6	5,1	2,6	3,8	1,3	1,3
12. A man can have several wives simultaneously	52,6	32,1	6,4	2,6	2,6	0	3,7
13. Spouses can use contraceptive means (condoms, pills etc.) to control conception	32,1	24,4	5,1	9	12,8	6,4	10,2
14. It is possible to identify the days on which a woman is fertile by analyzing mucus and body temperature	11,5	6,4	3,8	28,2	14,2	9	26,9
15. Sometimes a husband can have sexual intercourse with a woman who is not his wife	44,9	34,6	3,8	5,1	6,4	2,6	2,6
16. A woman can have several husbands simultaneously	48,7	38,5	5,1	2,6	1,3	0	3,8
17. Natural recognition of fertility is the appropriate way to control conception in a marriage	9	6,4	5,1	15,4	6,4	20,5	37,2
18. Living in a concubinage (free relationship) is morally acceptable	35,9	20,5	3,8	16,7	10,3	2,6	10,2
19. Every child conceived should be welcomed with love	1,3	2,6	0	2,6	5,1	26,9	61,5

N=156 (100%), possible answers: -3 – I definitely disagree, -2 – I disagree to a large extent, -1 – I rather disagree, 0 – It is hard to say, 1 – I rather agree, 2 – I agree to a large extent, 3 – I definitely agree.

5. The Respondents' Convictions on Parenthood

The results gathered show that the respondents very frequently share the Catholic convictions on parenthood. Almost all the respondents agree that having children is a blessing from God and that parents should take care of good education of their children, their religious formation, as well as their psychological and emotional growth. A similar percentage of respondents support the statement that parents should help their children become good people.

There is a substantial degree of ambivalence with regard to opinions that having children is the most important component of marriage and that the spouses should strive to have as many children as possible. When it comes to the latter statement, more respondents disagree than agree with it. There is a puzzling ambiguity also with respect to corporal punishment of children, which is approved of by 41.2 percent and rejected by 47.3 percent of the respondents. At the same time, three-fourths of the respondents (75.6 percent) disagree with the opinion that marriage without children is pointless, while 17.7 percent agree with it. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The respondents' opinions on parenthood in numbers and percentages

Opinions on parenthood	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. Parents should help their children to become good people	1,3	1,3	0	1,3	3,8	30,8	61,5
2. The most important thing in marriage is having children	17,9	7,7	17,9	7,7	12,8	15,4	20,6
3. Upbringing a child is the mother's responsibility	42,3	23,1	11,5	0	3,8	7,7	11,6
4. Having children is a God's blessing	0	0	0	0	2,6	30,8	66,6
5. Parents should love their children at first	2,6	2,6	3,8	1,3	7,7	29,5	52,5
6. Upbringing a child is the father's responsibility	46,2	21,8	14,1	0	3,8	5,1	9
7. Parents should take care of psychical and emotional development of their children	0	0	2,6	0	1,3	30,8	65,3
8. Marriage without children doesn't make sense	47,4	14,1	14,1	7,7	1,3	10,3	5,1
9. Parents should take care to develop their children's faith	0	0	0	1,3	5,1	33,3	60,3
10. Spouses should strive to have many children	37,2	17,9	16,7	12,8	7,7	3,8	3,9

Opinions on parenthood	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
11. Parents should take care of their children's good education	0	0	0	0	7,7	26,9	65,4
12. Corporal punishment of the children is acceptable	17,9	17,9	11,5	11,5	7,7	14,2	19,3

N=156 (100%), possible answers: -3 – I definitely disagree, -2 – I disagree to a large extent, -1 – I rather disagree, 0 – It is hard to say, 1 – I rather agree, 2 – I agree to a large extent, 3 – I definitely agree.

When the variable of sex is taken into consideration, men more frequently than women agree that parents should primarily love their children (5) and take care of their psychological and emotional development (7). They markedly more frequently than women disagree with the conviction that the upbringing of children is the duty of the father (6) – see Table 6.

Table 6. Convictions on parenthood and the respondents' sex

Convictions on parenthood	Sex	Test result U	Value of p
5. Parents should love their children at first	Women	-2,570	**0,010**
	Men		
6. Upbringing a child is the father's responsibility	Women	2,095	**0,036**
	Men		
7. Parents should take care of psychical and emotional development of their children	Women	-2,104	**0,035**
	Men		

U – Mann-Whitney test result, p – test of statistical significance.

6. Conclusions and Pastoral Suggestions

"The rapidity of change in the African context is startling. Traditions and practices still firmly entrenched only a generation ago are all but forgotten today. The African church today has need of relevant structures to support families and marriages in a changing cultural context." (Rotich and Starcher 2016, 59) What is of particular value are suggestions for pastoral care of spouses and families which may be deployed both locally and in intercultural missions.

1. The vast majority of the respondents share Catholic convictions on marriage (see Table 2). This may be a testimony to a positive educational and formative impact of Shalom Centre, which fosters Catholic views on marriage among its wards. At the same time, approximately one-third of the respondents to some extent subscribe to ethically dubious convictions that parents or the community may decide upon the children's marriage or that a woman's position in marriage is lower than that of a man. More than one in ten respondents (regardless of their sex) accept the use of violence against the spouse in some situations (see Table 2). These results may indicate the influence of negative models of conjugal and family life inculcated in the respondents in the past, calling for systematic educational and pastoral work to eradicate such unethical conjugal-familial attitudes in the respondents (cf. Phiri 2011, 29–33). What seems vital are educational projects that would underscore the dignity of every human person, especially women (Bujo 2009, 49–54). It is also significant to show the relation between a person's communal and individual life that would acknowledge the proper position of the parents, extended family, and local community without at the same time decreasing the autonomy of the individual (cf. Phiri 2011, 94–96).

2. The respondents frequently share the Catholic convictions on the spouses' sexual morality and disapprove of the opinions that are at odds with the teachings of the Catholic Church (see Table 4), which may corroborate the efficacy of the education and formation that the respondents have received. At the same time, however, some opinions on unethical attitudes are disapproved of to a lesser extent or even accepted. This is the case with acceptability of divorce and remarriage, the use of contraception, the acceptance of informal relationships, and – more rarely – of abortion. The acceptance of divorce and remarriage as well as of informal relationships may to some extent be culturally conditioned in Africa (Ngundo 2015, 18–27). It may also be related to high expectations that young people need to meet to gain the approval of the family and local community in order to get married. Frequently, this leads to living in an informal or traditional relationship and to the postponing of the sacramental marriage (cf. Phiri 2011, 37–40, 90–92). The influence of Western models of family life also has a bearing on the choices Africans make, as these reach them through the media and get mixed with the traditional African lifestyle (Nyaundi 2005, 73–84).

In light of the above, it seems crucial to constantly strive for a deeper integration of sacramental marriage with culturally-rooted models of conjugal and family life (Bujo 2009, 115–20). It is also important to shape the ability of reasonable and critical reception of media content that is associated with the lifestyle of advanced and affluent societies (Badejo 2017, 14–2). This can be aided by traditional African attitudes of respect towards chastity, human life, and parenthood, especially maternity (Bujo 2009, 42–49, 134–37).

3. When it comes to ethical control of fertility, the respondents accept it while at the same time admitting difficulty in recognizing the symptoms of a woman's fertility (see Table 4). It seems that respect for life and parenthood as well as a positive attitude to having many children (cf. Phiri 2011, 75–79) rooted in African culture and tradition constitute a good foundation for the formation of responsible parenthood, in which preparation for marriage (cf. Lesser 2016, 68–73) plays a significant role together with access to reliable knowledge on natural family planning and specific methods of recognizing a woman's fertile days (cf. Phiri 2011, 72). One of the biggest challenges for the pastoral care of families is lack of family centres and qualified instructors in natural family planning as well as the system of their education. It seems vital to support and develop the existing initiatives in this respect as well as propose new ones (Barasa and Nzangi 2015, 94–96).

4. Almost all the respondents agree with the Catholic views on parenthood, namely that having children is a blessing from God, that parents should take care of their children's good education, growth in faith, and psychological and emotional development (see Table 5). The state of the respondents' formation seems satisfactory in this respect. Positive attitudes and motivation should nevertheless be further enhanced via scientific justification (cf. Pireli 2015, 99–100). The value of positive attitude to parenthood present in African culture and tradition should also be underscored as a potential valuable contribution of African Catholics that could possibly enrich other communities all over the world (cf. *EAfr* 80).

5. The results of the questionnaire seem to corroborate the weakening among young Kenyans of the traditional conviction that having children is the most significant aspect of marriage and that the spouses should attempt to have as many children as possible. This is corroborated by the fact that as many as three-fourths of the respondents disagree with the view that marriage without children is pointless (see Table 5). Such results should be considered as positive from the theological-pastoral perspective. At the same time, it seems important to shape an integral vision of the intentionality of marriage among Catholics and of an expanding fruitfulness, encompassing also spouses who are biologically sterile (cf. Phiri 2011, 79–81).[3]

6. Unfortunately, the results gathered during the course of the research project indicate that opinions on corporal punishment are not as easily changed, as this form of punishment is still accepted by above 40 percent of the respondents (see Table 5). This is likely to be related to personal experiences of the substantial part of the society and to a widely propagated belief in the acceptability of corporal punishment. One possible corrective may be to systematically and patiently share with the spouses and parents accurate knowledge on the negative consequences of corporal punishment and to point our alternative methods of discipling their children (cf. Lichuma and Lichuma 2015, 111–19).

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3 About expanding fruitfulness see Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, nos. 178–86.

7. Men share the Catholic convictions on marriage more frequently than women in a statistically significant way when it comes to personal, psychological, and sexual bond within marriage (see Table 3). They are likewise more likely to subscribe to some opinions on parenthood, especially the need of loving one's children and taking care of their psychological and emotional development (see Table 6). This may indicate that women find it more difficult to clarify and express their opinions and are more prone to familial and social pressure and expectations. In light of other studies, this seems to be related to women's more difficult access to education, including religious formation. The results of the present research project point out the urgency of women's formation as one of the most urgent pastoral challenges (cf. Bujo 2009, 88–101; Mwaura 2005).

The article aimed to formulate suggestions for catechesis of youth and families based on research conducted among the community associated with the Shalom Center in Mintunguu that has undergone Catholic formation. This made it possible to find out how Catholics respond to the Church's teaching on conjugal and family life. The results of this project may be of interest to individuals involved in mission work in various contexts and may be useful in catechesis. They contribute significantly to existing literature on the subject as they provoke creative reflection on methods of conveying Catholic convictions while taking into account the cultural specificity of Africa.

7. Limitations

The article presents the results of a small research sample. We recommend continuing the study with a larger research sample so that more sophisticated statistical analyses can be applied. We did not include a control for the social attractiveness variable in our analyses. Perhaps including this variable could have strengthened the conclusions of our study.

This pilot study, moreover, requires further in-depth research among other communities associated with the Catholic Church. This will allow for a clearer perspective and more accurate conclusions.

Translated by Izabella Kimak

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VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 453–469
Received: Nov 25, 2023 | Accepted: May 16, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

Unveiling the Plant Living in the Desert (Jer 17:6): A Multidisciplinary Approach

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Abstract: In the context of the study of plants in the Bible, some translation problems are related to the identification of the plant species referred to in the biblical text. One of the unresolved problems concerns the plant living in the desert of Jer 17:6, because the botanists' proposals have not been understood in the same way by the exegetes: it is not clear whether it is a tree, a bush or a shrub and to which plant species it refers. After presenting the general characteristics of the study of plants in the Bible, the research presents proposals for identification by botanists and how these have been received by exegetes. The study of the biblical context integrated with the dynamics of plant growth allows a better understanding of the two opposing metaphorical images of Jeremiah: the plant living in the desert and the tree that grows along streams. The analysis indicates a generic tree which, due to the difficult environmental conditions, cannot develop as such and remains smaller in size. The best translation is therefore a generic shrub, which also allows the different interpretations to be reconciled.

Keywords: Bible plants, tree metaphor, Jeremiah 17:5–8, opposing metaphorical images, forest interpretation

1. Introduction: Studying Plants in the Bible

The study of plants in the Bible is generally an area of research involving mainly botanists, agronomists or, in any case, experts in the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern environment, but also scholars in the religious sphere, as well as experts in medical and food sectors, or other professionals passionate about the topic. Therefore, the type of issued publication varies according to the professional experience of individual authors which may be of a popular or scientific nature. Historically, it has mainly been botanists and religious people who have dealt with the topic (for a historical review of major publications, see Musselman 2012, 3–12), but today studies are primarily conducted by environmental and natural experts. Usually, scholars of the Sacred Scripture draw on specific studies to try to translate botanical references as best as possible: the most useful publications for exegetical purposes are those helping to identify biblical terms referring to the botanical sphere, by even going so far as to indicate the plant species.

I would like to thank Una Lowe for support in the English text.

The sources for studying plants in the Bible are various: the main one consists of dictionaries, guides and scientific articles published by botanists or other experts on the Mediterranean or Middle Eastern environment. In these sources it is possible to find the botanical species referred to in the biblical verses, but they are usually based on modern language translations of the Bible. Some authors also use other sources, such as Targum, Talmud, or Septuagint, as well as reference to other languages of Semitic origin or Jewish traditions or customs of neighbouring countries (see e.g. Zohary 1982; Musselman 2012). Evidently, the approach of these publications to the study of biblical plants is biological and not theological. Biblical dictionaries are another useful source: they can provide a synthesis between the exegetical and botanical areas. Especially in the past, biblical dictionaries supplied translations of botanical terms based on plant studies of that historical period, but which might not be up-to-date nowadays. Although the situation has improved in recent years, because some entries on plants have been completed directly by botanists, it is noted that some errors in biblical dictionaries are still being perpetuated (Musselman 2012, 12). Another source of investigation is exegetical research: the various translation hypotheses are very often found in Bible commentaries. In some cases, specific studies have also been conducted on the biblical context to confirm one plant species over other assumptions (see e.g. Tatu 2006, 106–14).

The study of these sources implies a multidisciplinary approach involving botanical issues and exegetical analysis: in this sense botany and exegesis are complementary for studying plants in the Bible. The positive effect of this approach is to provide a better understanding of the nuances of meaning of botanical terms and also to clarify and enhance the sense of the Scripture, particularly when vegetal elements are encompassed in metaphors and allegories. Nevertheless, there are issues that do not facilitate the exchange of knowledge between the two areas of study, botany and exegetics. Awareness of these problems makes it possible to use data from each area of study correctly, avoiding unpleasant misunderstandings. One of the main difficulties, as is well known, is that the Old Testament text is not stable, but susceptible to movement due to the presence of a plurality of witnesses (see e.g. Joosten 2010, 15–29) and other textual problems that force translation choices. For example, according to some authors in Isa 44:14 the term ארן (with the small final *nun*) indicates laurel (Zohary 1982, 120; Jensen 2020, 32), but the critical apparatus of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Elliger and Rudolph 1997) marks the possibility that the word is ארז, cedar. Therefore, the plant species may change depending on the choices of textual criticism. Another difficulty is that it is not always possible to recognise botanical species because in the Bible there are also collective, generic or idiomatic names which do not help in the interpretation (Zohary 1982, 15). While in the past there was an attempt to speculate which plant species were being referred to, today the tendency is to comply more with the Masoretic Text (MT) and to also accept a non-specific name. Finally, it should be considered that research on plants in the Bible is moving towards an identification of lists of plants mentioned in the Sacred Scripture, but they are under development and continue to be studied and updated. In this sense, Amots Dafni and Barbara Böck (2019, 11) revisited a list of medicinal plants from the Bible. Listing botanical species is also useful in the development of biblical gardens (Włodarczyk 2018, 230). Nevertheless, according to Zofia Włodarczyk (2007, 82), it is not possible to draw up a single list for the Bible, and only about half of the plant species were reported by all leading researchers between 1950 and 2000. Therefore, the Bible contains terms referring to both well-attested plant species, on which scholars and authors generally agree, such as the cedar of Lebanon (for more details, see Lamonaca 2023, 244–50), and other terms on which opinions differ. Usually, the greatest uncertainties occur on those names that are scarcely mentioned in the Bible and different opinions among researchers lead to a thicket of different translation proposals, resulting in disorientation.

A final remark concerns the interpretation of Bible plants by modern languages: there are different types of translations, depending on the purpose one wants to achieve and the type of professionalism of translators. Botanical authors use the scientific name of the plant species to uniquely identify the plant. When this is not possible, they indicate a genus or family plant: one of the most common cases where it is difficult to identify the species is the oak tree, and it is generally referred to as genus (see e.g. Musselman 2012, 104–6). Exegetical scholars point to the various translation possibilities but mainly enhance the biblical context. They also propose symbolic translations, which fit well with the metaphorical sense of the MT, or emphasise certain features of the Scripture, even deviating considerably from the literal meaning of the biblical text. For example, the root שׂבע, being sated, referring to trees (Ps 104:16), is interpreted by some scholars as being full of sap (see e.g. Alonso Schökel and Carniti 2007, 417; Beauchamp 2004, 185), thus indirectly alluding to the condition of the stem of tree and its diametrical dimension. The syntagma ארזי־אל (Ps 80:11), cedars of God, is translated by various scholars as "*cedri altissimi*," very tall, towering cedars (see e.g. Alonso Schökel and Carniti 2007, 122; Lorenzin 2009, 301) or the "mighty cedars" (see e.g. Brueggemann and Bellinger 2014, 347). In the translation of Susanna's appendix (Sus 1:54–59) Marco Settembrini (2019, 170–71) chooses to emphasise the wordplay between trees and the fate of the old men, without respecting the Greek botanical names.

The translation of plants in the Bible is also reader-dependent; therefore it varies according to the modern language used. In this sense, a native English reader's perception of a certain kind of vegetation is not the same as that of a native Italian reader. Similarly, the translation of plant species from the Holy Land which are not found in the environment known to readers may be difficult because it is not understood. The diffusion of Biblical gardens around the world (Włodarczyk and Kapczyńska 2019, 850–51) and the planting in the past of certain species outside of their range such as the cedar of Lebanon (Hepper 2001, 198–216) has helped in the recognition of the plant mentioned in the Bible, but has not solved the problem. Therefore, to facilitate understanding of the text, some plants have been translated using known species of European flora (Zohary 1982, 15).

One of the ambiguous cases in the Bible concerns the plant living in the desert, in a land of salt, cursed by God and unable to see good come (Jer 17:6). Proposals for interpretation are varied, and there seems to be no agreement as to whether it is a tree, a shrub, a bush or a scrub (see e.g. Carroll 1986, 350). Starting from the analysis of the proposals made for the translation of this plant, the aim of the study is to formulate a valid interpretation that reconciles botanical and exegetical requirements.

2. Different Interpretations for the Plant Living in the Desert

2.1. Botanical Dictionaries on Bible Plants

The translation of the term עַרְעָר (Jer 17:6) has been widely debated by specialists, particularly which botanical species it refers to. One indication that has marked the research since the 18th century was that the Arabic term *ar-ar* referred to juniper (Celsius 1748, 77). In the following century, John Hutton Balfour (1885, 28–29) identified it with *Juniperus sabina* L., known as savin, a species of juniper growing on rocky areas of the desert. But according to George E. Post and John Edward Dinsmore (1933, 801–2), the plant referred to by various authors in the late 1800s and also called *ar'ar* by the Arabs (the transliteration of the Arabic term changes depending on the author quoted) was *Juniperus oxycedrus* L., suggesting that there had been a misidentification. Harold N. Moldenke and Alma L. Moldenke (1952, 121–22) confirmed the observation of Post and Dinsmore: the plant of Jer 17:6 was cade juniper (*J. oxycedrus*), and in recent years other researchers have also endorsed this proposal (see e.g. Duke, Duke, and duCellier 2008, 226). In general *Juniperus oxycedrus* is a shrub or a small tree, growing in forests, shrub lands and coastal marine environments, at altitudes ranging from sea level to around 2200 m (Farjon 2013). Its current range includes the Mediterranean basin, with the coastal part of Syria, Lebanon, and northern Israel, but it is also present around the Black Sea, in the Caucasus area and in a few scattered populations in the Middle East (Caudullo, Welk, and San-Miguel-Ayanz 2017, 663–64). In Israel it is only reported in *Pinus* and *Arbutus* woodlands of the Upper Galilee (Danin 1992, 24), and it can reach 7 m in height (Maillat and Maillat 1999, 108). According to some authors, it can also be found in deserts and in impervious places promoting the idea of an isolated tree in the desert (Moldenke and Moldenke 1952, 122; Maillat and Maillat 1999, 108). But F. Nigel Hepper (1992, 64) disagrees with the cade juniper hypothesis due to its Mediterranean-type distribution.

The second proposal that has met with success among botanists is the Phoenician juniper (*Juniperus phoenicea* complex). The main representative who proposed this plant species was Zohary (1982, 117), but the identification was based solely on the Arabic name given to various juniper species, including Phoenician juniper. Furthermore, the author recognised that this species was not found in the desert of Israel, as it was required by the biblical text. Therefore, the hypothesis was that in the past the Phoenician juniper was present in the Negev, and single stands or solitary plants had survived in dispersed areas of the desert. The hypothesis that Phoenician juniper had a wider distribution than it does today was confirmed by the study of Montserrat Salvà-Catarineu et al. (2021, 5081–87). The research on fossil charcoal by Uri Baruch and Nigel Goring-Morris (1997, 257–58) also confirms the past occurrence of *Juniperus phoenicea* in the Negev Highlands. Other authors also point to Phoenician juniper (United Bible Societies 1980, 131–32; Hepper 1992, 64). In general, the Phoenician juniper is a large shrub or a small tree, up to 7–8 m high; growing on rocky and sandy shores, mainly below an altitude of 400 m, but it also reaches above 2200 m in the mountains. Its current range includes the Mediterranean basin and the mountains of the Arabian Peninsula at the southern limit of its distribution (Salvà-Catarineu et al. 2021, 5076–81). According to Hepper (1992, 64), Phoenician juniper looks more like a cypress tree than a juniper. It is reported in northern Sinai, where trees grow in the crevices of limestone outcrops and in wadis, in woodlands of Edom and Jordan, and in the western ridge of the Jordanian plateau, associated with other plant species (Danin 1999, 112–13). The botanical nomenclature of *Juniperus phoenicea* is currently under revision: botanists have recently considered Phoenician juniper as a complex of species, and the study by Małgorzata Mazur et al. (2018, 469–79) confirms that they are separate taxonomic positions. The Phoenician juniper growing in the Holy Land is now also identified as *Juniperus turbinata* Guss., one of the three species of the *Juniperus phoenicea* complex (the others are *J. phoenicea sensu stricto*, and *J. canariensis*).

Two other proposals for translation have been made, but they have remained in the minority, without finding favour with specialists. The first one is based on the translation of the Greek from the Septuagint and indicates a tamarisk (see e.g. Walser 2012, 78–79). This plant is identified as *Tamarix aphylla* (L.) Karst., an evergreen tree of arid environments up to 10 m high: it grows in wadis in desert areas of the Negev and the Dead Sea, and thanks to the depth of its root system it is able to survive in places with low rainfall and high salt content of soils (Grilli Caiola, Guarrera, and Travaglini 2013, 134). But according to Moldenke and Moldenke (1952, 122), tamarisks can be discarded among the translation possibilities for this verse of Jeremiah.

The final proposal was formulated by Hareuveni (1991, 67–72) who pointed to the apple of Sodom (*Calotropis procera* (Ait) R. Br.), and revisiting researches conducted in 1938 by his botanist parents. This indication is based on the biblical role of the plant according to the Bedouin tribes of the wilderness of Jericho and the position of the leaves on the tree that resemble the palms of hands raised in prayer: this analogy is based on Ps 102 where the Hebrew term is used with the meaning of a derelict, helpless, destitute person (Ps 102:18). The plant is a small tree up to 3 to 5 m high, growing in oases with high temperatures, common in the Dead Sea areas and the lower Jordan Valley (Zohary 1982, 122; see also Danin 1999, 114–15). However, according to specialists this proposal encounters some problems. Solange Maillat and Jean Maillat (1999, 108) note that if one understands the Hebrew term in the sense of an isolated tree, then any tree or shrub growing in isolation could be appropriate. According to Zohary, the apple of Sodom is only mentioned in the Jewish War and not in the Bible and it would be a symbolic concept (Zohary 1982, 122).

In conclusion, most authors consider the plant of Jer 17:6 to be a juniper. The resulting image is that of a small tree growing isolated in inaccessible desert locations. However, the translation with juniper does not seem to be so safe among insiders: there are indeed a few discrepancies. Some authors, while indicating juniper as the main choice, express doubts about the identification of the plant species (United Bible Societies 1980, 131; Segura Munguía and Torres Ripa 2011, 69–71), pointing out the difficulties of interpretation. The Arabic term referring to junipers seems more generic: some authors (Maillat and Maillat 1999, 114; Musselman 2007, 280) report that in Morocco it also refers to tree thyine (*Tetraclinis articulata* (Vahl) Masters). Recently, other authors have not mentioned Jer 17:6 among biblical passages containing references to plants, and they prefer to treat junipers in a general way, either as a genus or as a hypothesis of translation for other Hebrew terms (Jensen 2020, 32, 37–41; Musselman 2012, 78–79). Furthermore, in antiquity, juniper may have been confused with other plant species (see e.g. Meiggs 1982, 410–20). The systematic of the genus *Juniperus* is actually controversial and still subject to verification (Grossoni et al. 2018, 314). Moreover, Zohary, as well as indicating juniper, also quotes Jer 17:6 for salt deserts in relation to *Suaeda* spp., known as sea blite, a plant growing in the desert, especially with saline ground (Zohary 1982, 150).

2.2. Exegetical Interpretations

The exegetical interpretations of certain Hebrew terms referring to the plant world, especially in the past, may have been misleading in the search for the botanical species (Musselman 2012, 2), but the information that can be gleaned from them is useful. In fact, the translation indicated by scholars can be considered a symbolic interpretation of a plant image: this allows one to understand the general idea that the scholar had, despite not having the necessary expertise in botany.

For the term of Jer 17:6 lexicons have generally accepted indications from botanists, albeit with some exceptions and for this reason the prevailing translation is juniper. William McKane's (1986, 388–94) proposal to interpret Jer 17:6 in a different way from the vegetal sphere has not found favour among scholars. This translation, referring to a destitute man (Ps 102:18), was already assumed in the past (Keil 1880, 281–82). In general Hebrew dictionaries point out the two meanings for the term עַרְעָר based on the biblical reference: juniper referring to Jer 17:6 and helpless for Ps 102:18. Sometimes the meaning was combined with that of the term עֲרוֹעֵר (Jer 48:6), which, however, has textual criticism problems. Some lexicons also mention the translation with tamarisk (Koehler et al., 1994, 887; Reymond 1995, 323), while other dictionaries propose alternative translations, such as thistle (Alonso Schökel 2013, 656) and broom (Chávez 1997, 334): these last two proposals are an attempt to make the image of a plant understood using plant categories familiar to readers. In this sense they can be considered symbolic images and not botanically correct.

Despite dictionary entries, commentaries generally prefer to remain generic, and in this case the prevailing translation is shrub or bush. John Goldingay (2021, 408–9) reports that tamarisk and juniper are unlikely because they are well adapted to the environmental conditions of the desert. In recent years, the translation proposed by botanists with juniper has also become established, but scholars often mean a bush or a low shrub (see e.g. Holladay 1986, 492; Kaiser and Rata 2019, 127, 129–30), and not a small tree. Septuagint and Vulgate point to the tamarisk. Because of the doubts of translation, some scholars report a few hypotheses among those proposed by botanists, but the best proposal seems to be the one formulated by Lundbom: after presenting all the different translation possibilities, albeit without a critical comment, the scholar prefers to translate with juniper and concludes that it is "a scrubby tree in the wilderness." (Lundbom 1999, 783). This translation allows a synthesis of the different hypotheses, in particular by combining the image of the tree with that of the shrub.

The image derived from exegetical studies is therefore that of a shrub or bush growing in the desert, different, however, from the image proposed by botanists compatible instead with a small tree. The plant adopted seems to be the juniper, but without going so far as to indicate the species, while the hypothesis of the tamarisk is also less frequently accepted. In any case, caution prevails among the exegetes, as they do not go as far as a specific translation, preferring instead a generic botanical term. The different interpretations between botanists and exegetes raise doubts, as the metaphorical image varies depending on the translation: is the man cursed by God compared to a shrub or to a tree? Is the comparison with the man blessed by God between two trees or between a tree and a shrub? The study of the biblical context helps to answer these questions.

3. Biblical Context

The passage in Jer 17:5–8 describes a wisdom-type image that contrasts the fate of the wicked who trusts in man with that of the righteous who, on the contrary, trusts in God; in reality, blessing and curse are covenant categories and not sapiential: according to Gianni Barbiero (2012, 79), the two categories are used here in a covenant context. This passage is often related to Ps 1:3 where the righteous is compared to a tree planted along waterways, while its proximity to Ps 92 is less frequently reported. Other passages with which Jer 17:5–8 has been associated are Ps 107:33–43, the allegories of the prophet Ezekiel in Ezek 17:5–10; 17:22–24; 19:10–14 (for these and further suggestions see Carroll 1986, 351–53; for other formal antitheses see Allen 2008, 199). The structure of Jer 17:5–8 is constructed as an antithesis between the cursed man and the man who is blessed, giving rise to two opposing metaphorical images based on the similarity between man and trees. This type of structure, reported by various scholars, was made explicit by Lundbom (1999, 781–82): the passage is divided into four stanzas, two describing the cursed man, while the other two identify the blessed man. The division into stanzas is based on the repetition of the following expressions: "Cursed / Blessed is the man who trusts in […]"; "For he shall become like […]"; "It will not see / fear when […]" (Lundbom 1999, 782). The two parts become equal if a colon is assumed to be missing in v. 6b.

On the basis of this oppositional structure, it is possible to derive some information by comparing v. 8 with v. 6. If the blessed man is characterised by an abundance of water, the cursed man on the contrary lives in arid places with an absence of water. If the man who trusts in God is not afraid of the dry season, because the water reserves enable him to overcome difficulties, the other has drought as a fearful habitual friend. If the blessed man continues to bear fruit without ceasing, the cursed man will live in a saline environment characterised by the difficulty of development and a consequent strong reduction or absence of fruit production. Similarly, if the blessed man is compared to a tree, it can be inferred that the cursed man is generically compared to a non-tree. Therefore, the non-tree category can be interpreted in four ways:

1. The definition is taken in a narrow sense to mean a plant with a non-arboreal habit, such as a shrub, bush or herbaceous plant.
2. Another interpretation considers the developmental capacity of the plant: it is a tree that cannot fully develop under difficult environmental conditions and therefore assumes a reduced size or a different shape. A common example is the vegetation growing on the coast, which due to wind and sea aerosol takes on prostrate forms.
3. The comparative term עֵץ (v. 8) is not to be considered as a tree, but as a generic plant; therefore, the translation would not indicate a plant. But this interpretation had already been discarded earlier, because it did not find favour with scholars.

4. Non-plant should be understood as the loss of some of the plant characteristics that keep the plant alive. Based on external appearance, one of these characteristics is the loss of leaves, but also a pronounced form of decay evidenced by dryness of plant tissue. This interpretation has been proposed by some scholars when they mean a bare or naked shrub (Carroll 1986, 350; Barbiero 2012, 77, 81; Rossi 2022, 902), hence leafless or decaying.

Therefore, the interpretation of the non-tree category has three possible solutions, looking at the external form of the plant, but based on three different conditions: the first hypothesis is based on the plant species, which is not a tree; the second hypothesis is based on the possibilities of development and growth, it is a tree, but fails to establish itself as such; the fourth hypothesis is based on the physiological state of the plant, which shows a state of decay, typical of diseased plants. By analysing the two plant metaphors, the most suitable solution can be derived.

The man who trusts in God (v. 8) is compared to a tree through three elements: roots, leaves and fruits. The order in which the plant elements are mentioned indicates a process of development and growth: first the roots stretch out towards the water, thanks to this the leaves of the foliage are green, hence indicating full plant activity, which in turn allows the fruit to be produced without interruption. On the contrary, the man who trusts in himself (v. 6) is compared to a plant, but without mentioning the plant elements: the text cites neither the situation of the root system, nor the foliage, nor the fruits, and remains silent on any other plant element that might characterise the metaphor. In this case, the biblical text has a gap and the only information given concerns the place and environmental conditions where the plant lives (in the plant metaphor, the fate of the wicked can be linked to the place where they live, see e.g. Job 8:18; Ps 37:35–36; Ezek 17:3–10; Zech 11:1–2). Therefore, the man cursed by God does not grow, does not develop and does not bear fruit. It follows that the interpretation of the non-tree category for the plant living in the desert is based on its capacity of development and growth: it is a tree that, due to the adverse environmental conditions, is unable to develop as such, appearing smaller in size or as a shrub. The fourth hypothesis, which involves the translation with a bare or naked shrub, is valid if the plant elements are considered in isolation and not all together. In this case, it could be applied to both leaves and fruits, but it is difficult to image a plant without a root system living in those environmental conditions. Moreover, studies on halophytic (salt-tolerant) plants tend to consider the plant as a whole (Poljakoff-Mayber and Lerner 1999, 125–52).

The location of the plant living in the desert is identified by various scholars as the area around the Dead Sea (see e.g. Voth 2009, 274; Goldingay 2021, 413), also due to the presence of generic expressions such as salt land and scorched places. The term חֲרֵרִים, parched places, is a *hapax legomenon*, but the root חרר, to burn, could mean a place burning for the sun (Holladay 1986, 492). The Septuagint uses ἁλίμοις, seaside (Muraoka 2009, 26), favouring the indication of the Dead Sea (see also McKane 1986, 390). The term עֲרָבָה is generally translated as steppe: although in Hebrew the article accompanying the name may indicate a wider area, from the Jordan valley to the Gulf of Aqaba, the Hebrew term takes on a generic meaning when combined with other terms such as desert (Seely 1992, 321–24). Other scholars prefer not to comment on the location, maintaining a generic profile, while other proposals were not followed up (for other location proposals see Holladay 1986, 492). The described environment requires an ecological adaptation of plants to survive in such high salinity locations, typical of halophytic vegetation. However, the interpretation of the category "non-trees" leads to the exclusion of this type of plant, in favour of plant species that seek to survive outside their optimal range, under adverse environmental conditions. Furthermore, laboratory studies show that salinity inhibits plant growth, in particular affecting shoots more than roots (Poljakoff-Mayber and Lerner 1999, 129–31), and confirming that plants develop and grow less under these difficult environmental conditions.

The oppositional comparison between the two arboreal metaphors reveals another detail: the root שׁתל describes the tree planted by the water (v. 8), while no indication is given for the plant in the steppe (v. 6), keeping silent about any kind of action. Various scholars understand this verb with the sense of transplanting (see e.g. Holladay 1986, 492; Miller 2001, 708; Goldingay 2021, 408), particularly in relation to Ps 1 (see also Ezek 17:22–23; 19:10–13), emphasising a nuance of meaning: transplanting indicates a displacement, a change due to a different initial place of growth, the starting growth period of the tree took place in another location (Barbiero 2012, 83–84; Lamonaca 2023, 251–52). Applying the meaning to the metaphor, it follows that the blessed man is open to change; he is thus willing to be transplanted into better soil. The change of soil from which nourishment is absorbed refers to man's inner conversion, hence the decision to walk in God's ways. In contrast, the man cursed by God does not move, besides not growing, he is not open to change, perhaps convinced that what he has is the best place for him. This antithesis between the blessed man and the cursed man can also be understood as the opposition between life and death (Brueggemann 2015, 161). The result is a refusal to follow God's ways and to rely on the arm of man. Therefore, the absence of movement in the cursed man is not only a lack of development and growth over time, but also a refusal to move: if the righteous man stretches out his roots towards the water, the cursed man is still. According to Allen (2008, 200), "the antithesis has the force of a missed opportunity" (Jer 3:19–4:4). The biblical context emphasises that the cursed man is dependent on the environment in which he lives: in the metaphor, the severely limiting environmental context is predominant over the plant, which is forced to adapt to the difficult conditions. In other words, man chooses to be a slave to his environment, unable to free himself: relying on his own strength, man also becomes a slave to it because he does not recognise the good (Isa 30:1; Jer 4:22; Ps 146:3).

Therefore, the metaphor focuses attention on the comparison between the two vegetation dynamics. The biblical text emphasises the development of the plant that represents man blessed by God, while it shows the absence of development for man who, rejecting God, trusts only in himself. The difference lies in the soil in which the plant decides to grow: abundant water on the one hand, heat, salt and drought on the other. The discriminating factor between the two plants is therefore the place, the type of soil in which they sink their roots to absorb the nourishment for their life (Ezek 17:23; 19:13; Ps 80:10; 92:13–14): God blesses those who rely on him, but those who reject him live in hardship, a life far from God, a life without that life-giving water, a non-life. The plant species describing the accursed man is therefore of secondary value, because the important thing is to preserve the sense of the antithesis between the two places to live. In this respect, the text favours a generic interpretation of the plant living in the desert. Also the remark on the wordplay (Carroll 1986, 350), linking the plant name עַרְעָר with אָרוּר, cursed (v. 5), goes in the direction of a generic and non-specific translation. In favour of this interpretation is also the fact that in the biblical passages that have been juxtaposed with Jer 17:5–8, the tree metaphors used for comparing the fate of the righteous and the wicked specify the plant species of the negative term when the positive term is also specified; in other cases the negative plant term of comparison remains generic. For instance, in Ps 1, the righteous is likened to a tree planted along streams, while the wicked are like chaff, one of the products of grain processing. In Ps 92 the righteous is compared to the cedar of Lebanon and the palm tree, while the wicked are like grass. In Ezek 17, both the vine that will dry up and the cedar of Lebanon that will become a magnificent tree are mentioned. Even in other biblical passages, which cannot be directly connected with Jer 17:5–8, the botanical part with a negative value is specified when the positive part is also specified: in 2 Kgs 14:9, both the cedar of Lebanon and the thistle, crushed by a wild beast, are mentioned; in Jdg 9:8–15 the horticultural plants of olive, fig and vine are mentioned together with the bramble (*Ziziphus* tree) and cedars of Lebanon, burnt by fire. Therefore, since the positive term is generic, the negative term will also be generic. Consequently, the best translation for the plant living in the desert is "shrub," which maintains the antithesis relationship with the tree representing the blessed man. The term "shrub" indicates a generic tree species that, in the difficult environmental conditions described in the text, fails to develop as a tree and remains in a small and stunted condition. This interpretation also allows the hypotheses of botanists and exegetes to be reconciled.

4. Plant Species Hypothesis

A further requirement to enable a better understanding of the metaphor, however, is to attempt to identify some plant species that may fit the biblical text of Jeremiah: these are evidently hypotheses that can explain the generic term “shrub,” based on the biblical and botanical characteristics highlighted. The main difficulty lies in the fact that the Dead Sea area has undergone changes in vegetation over time due to various causes, such as human action, climatic fluctuations and earthquakes (for further details, see Neumann et al. 2009; Neumann et al. 2010; Litt et al. 2012). Therefore, the environmental situation today may not correspond to that of the past.

The plant species that seems to best fit the description of the biblical text is the tamarisk, also based on its current distribution. Trees of *Tamarix aphylla* are occasionally reported in sandy areas and in the wadis that cross them, covered by sand mounds, with a maximum height of 5 m (Danin 1999, 114), about half their potential. In reality, there are also other tamarisk species with a distribution compatible with the Dead Sea area and reported by other authors (Grilli Caiola, Guarrera, and Travaglini 2013, 134), such as *T. nilotica*, common in southern Israel, *T. palaestina* and *T. tetragyna*. Other low frequency tamarisks, such as e.g. *T. amplexicaulis*, on the other hand, seem too well adapted to saline soils, even in hot desert areas (Danin 2004, 214–16), to be considered for the text of Jeremiah. In favour of the interpretation of *Tamarix aphylla* are the numerous finds of charred wood in the Northern and Eastern Negev, confirming its presence as early as the 10th–8th centuries BCE (Liphschitz and Waisel 1973, 31–34).

The other proposed plant species is the Phoenician juniper; unfortunately its current absence in the Dead Sea area (Danin 2004, 21) compromises its evaluation. According to the study of Baruch and Goring-Morris (1997, 253), the region of the Central Negev Highlands is very similar to two areas where this juniper is present today: the neighbouring regions of Edom and northern Sinai. A recent study on Sinai measured the mean height for Phoenician juniper trees much lower than its general tree heights (El-Bana et al. 2010, 172–73). Together with findings in the past, this could be a confirmation that Phoenician juniper is also potentially a plant species compatible with the biblical context. In contrast, *Juniperus oxycedrus* seems unsuitable due to its greater moisture requirements (Baruch and Goring-Morris 1997, 256; Farjon 2013).

Tamarix aphylla and *Juniperus phoenicea* are also plant species that are not specialised for the saline and desert environment (for a descriptive ecological record of the environments in which they vegetate, see Danin 2004, 21, 215); therefore they are two trees that can survive in border environments. Moreover, the leaves of tamarisk and juniper are filiform and resemble the image of a bare shrub, but the plant is alive and retains its peculiarities.

Conclusion

The study is a model for analysing doubtful cases of the translation of plants in the Bible, integrating botanists' proposals with the analysis of the biblical context. Starting with translation suggestions that arose in the botanical field, the study analyses how they were received by exegetes. In-depth exegetical study is essential to understand the best translation among those proposed.

In the case study (Jer 17:6), the interpretation of the exegetes differs from that of the botanists: the scholars mainly consider it to be a shrub or a bush, while the botanists understand it to be a small tree. The analysis of the biblical context indicates a generic translation as "shrub" for the plant living in the desert: it is a plant that potentially is a tree but due to adverse environmental conditions cannot develop as such. This interpretation allows the two points of view to be reconciled. In any case, lately there seems to be a tendency in botanical studies of biblical plants not to indicate the botanical species of Jer 17:6 and consequently to accept a generic translation. The hypotheses formulated by botanists (tamarisk and juniper) are both possible, although tamarisk seems more likely on the basis of currently available data. The two species compatible with the biblical text are *Tamarix aphylla* and *Juniperus phoenicea*.

The comparison of the two metaphors describing the cursed man and the man blessed by God helps to shift the focus from the species of the plant living in the desert to the place where the two trees live: a fertile soil irrigated by water against a sunburnt salt land. The type of natural environment expresses man's ability to trust in the Lord or his reticence: in this case, man trusts in himself, rejecting God's abundance and fertility. The soil from which trees get nourishment through their roots expresses the presence or absence of God in man's life. But the soil is closely linked to climatic aspects; therefore God can also intervene in human life through wind, sun and other atmospheric phenomena and change the human situation (Isa 40:24; Ezek 17:10; Job 8:16–18). The two different natural environments of Jer 17:5–8 show how man's choice to trust or not to trust God has consequences not only on the fertility of the soil from which to take nourishment, but also on the environmental and climatic conditions that enable development. In other words, man's choice has consequences for the living environment: fertile or sterile, able to bear fruit or unable to generate.

The multidisciplinary approach to the biblical text also makes it possible to highlight how man who trusts in himself is blocked in his development, static and firm in his position, clinging to what he has because he is incapable of recognising the good. The results obtained from comparing the two different development models of man who relies on God and man who relies on himself, together with botanical data, show the usefulness of this approach, in which exegetical analysis is combined with data from environmental disciplines.

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VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 471–491
Received: Nov 17, 2023 | Accepted: May 28, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

Divinity of Christ in the Light of the Quest for the Historical Jesus

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Abstract: The flourishing research on the historical Jesus, which has been growing for several centuries, cannot stay without influence on systematic theology. One of the fundamental problems remains whether and to what extent it is possible to reconcile the image of Jesus emerging from historical research with the Christian dogma of the incarnation. This article attempts to answer the question of how belief in the deity of Jesus can be reconciled with the historical approach to him and to his life. The deity of Christ will be presented as a theme not independent of, but closely related to, the historical picture of Jesus. The first part will examine three approaches to the question of the relationship between the historical reconstruction of the person of Jesus and the belief in his deity. The second part will show what kind of belief in the divinity of Jesus is incompatible with the historical-critical approach to the Gospel texts and the life of Jesus. Finally, the third part will attempt to show which understanding of the divinity of Christ is compatible with the historical-critical approach. Belief in the incarnation of God in Jesus seems always possible, even in times of critical historical consciousness. The results of historical research on the person of Jesus not only do not refute such a belief, but also help to find its proper meaning.

Keywords: historical Jesus, Christ of faith, Incarnation, Biblical Christology, divinity of Christ

The figure of Jesus of Nazareth played a great role not only within Christianity, which is obvious, but also in the history of the European culture as such. Through centuries it has become a symbol of values and attitudes relevant to the entire Western world. No one disputes that Jesus became a key figure for the spiritual and moral inquiry of people throughout the Euro-Atlantic cultural circle. However, the interpretation of Jesus – his life, his teachings and also him as a person, is no longer so obvious. This is due to the fundamental difficulty of the presence of two distinct levels, often mixed and confused. Firstly, Jesus was a historical figure, living two thousand years ago in Israel. Secondly, Jesus is the object of a Christian dogma, a theological construct built on historical events. It is never easy to separate historical facts from interpretation. It is even more difficult with regards to what happened in antiquity. And it is especially difficult when we are talking about Jesus – a figure who has been interpreted both religiously and theologically from the very beginning. The only written sources that tell more broadly about Jesus' life are the Gospels, which are, after all, testimonies to the faith of the early Christians rather than meticulous accounts of historical events.

Historical research on the person of Jesus and the historicity of the Gospels cannot remain without influence on systematic theology. One of the basic questions in

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16812

this regard is the following: Can the picture of Jesus that emerges from historical research be reconciled with a dogmatic account of his person? Is it still possible to believe in the deity of Jesus in light of the search for the historical Jesus? This paper is an attempt to answer that question. In the first part, I will discuss various views on the possibility of believing in the deity of Christ in the light of the historical-critical approach. In the second part, I will try to show what kind of belief in the divinity of Christ is no longer possible today, precisely because of the discoveries of historical Jesus scholars. Finally, the third part will show which interpretation and which way of thinking about the deity of Jesus is compatible with the historical discoveries.

1. Theological Meaning of the Quest for Historical Jesus

The question of how the historical reconstruction of the person of Jesus of Nazareth relates to belief in his deity is part of a broader question of the relationship between the Jesus Quest and theology or Christian faith in general.[1] Many historical Jesus scholars, as well as many theologians, have commented on the subject and developed various theories that capture this relationship.[2] Although historians studying Jesus often explicitly state their lack of interest in theology as part of their research, they do acknowledge the significance of their research for theology and Christianity, typically in the introductions or summaries of their works. While there are a variety of positions on this topic, three primary perspectives can be identified. First, it is asserted that a historical exploration of the person of Jesus and the findings of research in this field are incompatible with Christian faith, including any belief in Jesus' divinity. Second, it can be argued that research into the historical Jesus does not preclude belief in the deity of Christ, although the two realms remain wholly separate with no overlap. Jesus Quest has no impact on faith – it neither encourages nor inhibits it, nor does it shape it. The third option is that a historical research on Jesus as a person not only does not rule out the possibility of believing in his divine nature but further assists in appropriately framing this belief. In other words, Jesus Quest is theologically significant because it directs towards an appropriate and intelligible comprehension of Christ's divinity.

1 On the relationship between Christian theology and Jesus Quest, see: Allison 2009; Ormerod 2020, 389–404; Rowlingson 1965, 329–36; Bradley 1963, 35–48; Weber 1964, 350–54; Fuller 1966, 18–24; Enslin 1962, 219–23; Giambrone 2022, 461–76; Boring 1996, 341–54; Holmén 2001, 175–97; Dunn 2005; Stevenson 2019, 291–307; Meier 2017, 461–76.

2 Many systematic theologians, especially those dealing directly with Christology, assimilate in their reflection the discoveries related to the quest for the historical Jesus. One of the first theologians of the Catholic denomination who gave due place to the theme of the historical Jesus in his Christology was Edward Schillebeeckx (cf. Schillebeeckx 2014). Another example is the work of Hans Küng: *On being a Christian* (1976). See also: O'Collins 2009.

1.1. The Jesus of History versus the Christ of Faith

There are numerous researchers of historical Jesus who assert that their discoveries contradict the image of Jesus derived from Christian beliefs. This indicates that a reliable historical approach does not support the notion of Christ's divinity. Therefore, Jesus Quest seems to be a means of scientifically rejecting Christian faith. Reliable historical knowledge and the early development of Christian doctrine suggest that belief in the divinity of Christ is implausible.

This approach is championed by Hermann Samuel Reimarus, the pioneer of the quest for the historical Jesus. His central thesis, which was made public by Lessing, is that the Christian faith, which includes the belief in Jesus' divinity, is the result of deception by apostles who were disappointed by their master's tragic end. According to Reimarus, Jesus was actually a pretender who sought political power in Israel and was, in fact, a *de facto* Zealot, seeking to overthrow the Roman occupation.[3] "He knew that if the people believed his messengers, they would look for a worldly king, and would attach themselves to him with the conviction that he was this king." (Reimarus 1879, 10–11) Jesus' mission was thus political, and ultimately resulted in complete defeat through crucifixion (Reimarus 1879, 27).

Jesus' hopes were dashed, but this did not mean the end of the Christian movement. The disciples could not accept Jesus' defeat after his death, nor could they give up their dreams of power. So they came up with a resurrection message to affirm that Jesus' cause was still somehow valid (Reimarus 1879, 29).

The disciples then created the church over which they exercised authority. So the goals of the apostles who created Christian doctrine, including the doctrine of the deity of Christ, were very earthly and pragmatic. They wanted to have an important position in society. From the beginning, Christianity was a fraud propagated by those who simply wanted to rule over people (Reimarus 1879, 85–86). In this view, it is clear that the historical deconstruction of the life of Jesus, but also of the origins of the Church, makes it impossible to maintain belief in the divinity of Christ. When belief in this divinity is exposed as the result of deception, it seems impossible to maintain it.

However, not all scholars who deny the credibility of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ on the basis of their historical research consider the emergence of this doctrine to be the result of fraud. Other explanations are also possible. One of them is that the emerging doctrine of the divinity of Jesus in the early Church is a certain blemish on the original content of the Christian message. This blemish stems from a number of linguistic and cultural misunderstandings that arose as the gospel began

3 The theory of Jesus as a zealot has survived to this day, although it occupies a rather marginal place in the contemporary debate. It is represented, for example, by religious studies scholar Reza Aslan, author of the book with the telling title *Zealot* (Aslan 2013). For Aslan (2013, 11), Jesus is above all "Jewish peasant and revolutionary who challenged the rule of the most powerful empire the world had ever known and lost."

to reach Hellenistic circles and leave its Jewish homeland. Many terms, such as “Son of God” or “Lord,” ceased to be understood in Jewish and biblical terms and began to be read in the spirit of the Hellenistic vision of reality (see: Vermès 2013, 237; Fredriksen 2000, 139). It is believed that the direct discussion of Jesus’ deity was a development that would not have been considered by Jesus himself or his first followers (Vermès 1981, 213). “To sum up, the systematizing efforts of contemporary New Testament scholarship appear to agree on two points: (I) The title, ‘lord’, postdates the historical Jesus; (II) its use as an acknowledgement of divinity arises from a Hellenistic milieu.” (Vermès 1981, 111)

In short, Jesus was idolized as a result of the transfer of stories about him to the Hellenistic universe. One scholar who strongly insists on such a theory is Géza Vermès, quoted above. His words capture the essence of this view well: “By the end of the first century Christianity had lost sight of the real Jesus and of the original meaning of his message. Paul, John and their churches replaced him by the otherworldly Christ of faith, and his insistence on personal effort, concentration and trust in God by a reliance on the saving merits of an eternal, divine Redeemer.” (Vermès 2001, 263)

If the belief in the deity of Jesus there is a certain imprint of the original Christian faith, and if this can be deconstructed historically, then the doctrine of the divinity of Christ can be seen as the result of a certain misunderstanding. It was not born out of deception, but out of a certain error, or rather a series of errors, related to the translation of the Jewish concepts of the Gospels into the Greek language and culture, with all its religious and philosophical context. The original Christian faith, untainted by the imprint of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, is simply the Jewish faith. It is significant that two of the great proponents of this theory, namely Géza Vermès and Paula Fredriksen, converted from Christianity to Judaism. Historical Jesus is, from this point of view, quite different from the Christ of faith. The Christian image of Jesus is completely incompatible with historical truth (Vermès 1981, 17).

There is a third potential explanation of the origin of the belief in the divinity of Christ, which is viewed as incompatible with the image of Jesus resulting from historical research. If this belief did not arise from deception or theological errors, it might have resulted from a hallucination or delusion. From this point of view, it was the first generation of Christians who created the concept of Jesus' divinity. It was created with completely sincere intentions. And the reason why this orientation appeared in it was because of the Paschal events. This appearance of the risen Jesus became the basis for Christians’ increasingly bold claims about his person.

Gerd Lüdemann is a leading representative of this view. Similar to Vermès, he believes that the post-Easter Church and its doctrines deny the original message of Jesus (Lüdemann 1999, XII).

Where did these doctrines and the Church that proclaims them come from? According to Lüdemann, the development of Christian dogmatics, including the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, began with the events of Easter. The fundamental thesis of the German exegete is that: "Jesus did not understand himself as Son of God but was regarded as such by his adherents only as a consequence of the resurrection visions." (Lüdemann 2000, 506)

The disciples reportedly saw visions of Jesus living after his death. They were mostly caused by the psychological states of Peter and Paul, with the former feeling remorse for denying his master, and the latter struggling with internal conflicts related to adherence to Jewish law. The widespread nature of these visions was likely due to their contagious nature. Still others did not personally witness them, but granted credibility to those who had sightings of Jesus. It was these encounters that were so impactful that they prompted reflection on the true identity of Jesus. The culmination of this reflection resulted in the definitive acknowledgment of his divinity (Lüdemann 2000, 692).

If the belief in the divinity of Christ was born of hallucinations, then the discovery of these historical conditions makes this belief doubtful or impossible. Thus, in Lüdemann's view, too, the discovery of the historical image of Jesus and the origins of the Church makes the doctrine of Christ's divinity untenable.

Theories of deception, error, and hallucination have been proposed as ways to dispute the validity of the doctrine of Jesus' divinity based on historical research. However, the prevailing belief among researchers is that faith in Jesus' divinity cannot be shaken by historical research. Faith and historical research operate on separate planes and do not directly impact each other.

1.2. The Jesus of History Separate from the Christ of Faith

One can argue that there is no direct correlation between the image of the historical Jesus as discovered through research and the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. According to this perspective, the belief in Jesus' divinity is unrelated to historical conclusions about him. The belief cannot be disproven by the results of historical research, but nor can it be proven. It exists on a different level, not requiring confirmation from Jesus Quest nor facing denial by it.

This perspective appears to be prevalent among both historical Jesus scholars and Christian theologians. A significant figure who represented this perspective was John P. Meier, an author of the substantial work on the historical Jesus, *A Marginal Jew*. Meier states in the first volume of his work: "For the believer, the object of Christian faith is a living person, Jesus Christ, who fully entered into a true human existence on earth in the 1st century A.D., but who now lives, risen and glorified, forever in the Father's presence." (Meier 1991, 198)

Representatives of this view sometimes argue that the Jesus Quest does have relevance in theology. Nonetheless, it cannot serve as its foundation or disprove it. Studying the historical Jesus alone is insufficient to challenge one's belief in his divinity. As Dale C. Allison Jr. (2010, 462) points out: "To do history is not to do theology."

However, historical research can inspire theology to reconsider certain themes, such as the connection between the actions of Jesus and later actions of the Church. In terms of Christology, the search for the historical Jesus is particularly helpful in revealing the humanity of Christ, thereby serving as a means to combating monophysitic tendencies. According to Meier (1991, 199), investigating the historical Jesus enables theology to avoid the pitfall of depicting Jesus solely as a symbol, entirely divorced from actual historical events.

Did Jesus himself have a Christology, or did he somehow understand himself to be divine? For many scholars this does not matter much. Rudolf Bultmann (1958, 16) has already written that Christian dogma is a mythology that cannot be taken literally today, regardless of whether Jesus himself thought of himself in such a mythological way. Other scholars flatly state that the doctrine of the deity of Jesus is in no way embedded in the teaching of the historical Nazarene. This does not make it false by definition, but it certainly favors treating it as something completely separate from the historical truth about Jesus of Nazareth. One of the proponents of this view is Bart D. Ehrman (1998, 243).

Another proponent of the view that belief in the historical Jesus is something separate and distinct from belief in his deity is E. P. Sanders. In the famous conclusion of his most important book on Jesus, the American exegete insists that his historical views do not affect his theological views (Sanders 1985, 334).

To sum up, the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus appears in this light as something additional, which may or may not have some seed in the truth about Jesus of Nazareth. It is simply a separate subject. The explanation of the origins of the belief in the deity of Christ already lies with the historians of Christian doctrine, not with the scholars of the historical Jesus.

1.3. The Historical Jesus as the Christ of Faith

The third direction that can be taken in establishing the relationship between the historical Jesus and belief in the divinity of Christ in some close relationship. Here, too, a certain independence of the one from the other is pointed out. The results of the study of the historical Jesus certainly cannot build Christian faith, nor can they as such refute it. But the independence of the two spheres is incomplete. The historical view of Jesus is relevant to the doctrine of his divinity in the sense that it points the doctrine toward a certain interpretation. There is a certain continuity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. But it also goes to the point that if one wants to accept faith in the divinity of Christ today, one cannot ignore the results of the study of the historical Jesus. A historical-critical view of Jesus and the Gospels helps to reject certain lines of interpretation of Christian doctrine as no longer acceptable today. On the other hand, it helps to discover the correct and intelligible sense of the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus. This does not mean, of course, that the historical picture of Jesus leads to belief in the doctrine of his divinity. The point is that it can help purify and properly understand the meaning of that doctrine.

An important figure who, on the one hand, identified with the Christian faith and, on the other hand, uncompromisingly accepted the challenge of a historical analysis of the person and work of Jesus was Albert Schweitzer. His main contribution was to point out the eschatological nature of Jesus' message. According to Schweitzer, Christ anticipated the imminent end of history, a cosmic catastrophe that would end the temporal world (Schweitzer 1910, 388). Nothing of the sort happened, and so, by extension, Jesus must be regarded as someone who made a mistake on a key point. Belief in the divinity of Christ in such a case would therefore have to accept the possibility that he erred as a human being. The apocalyptic current in the interpretation of the historical Jesus is the dominant one in Jesus Quest research today, and even if its proponents do not precisely accept Schweitzer's assumptions, he remains a patron of this theory. Understanding Jesus as an apocalyptic prophet changes the perspective from which we view his divinity. One question that arises is whether it is possible to consider as divine someone who was mistaken about the imminent end of a certain epoch of history and the coming of the visible kingdom of God.

According to Schweitzer, such an apocalyptic picture of the historical Jesus makes his figure difficult for modern man to accept. It is impossible to separate the historical approach from the Christian faith. Influenced by historical and exegetical research, a new image of Jesus comes into view that poses no small challenge to the established patterns of Christological thought (Schweitzer 1910, 403).

One figure who made a strong statement in his work on the relationship between the historical study of Jesus, theology and belief in the deity of Christ was James D. G. Dunn. He wrote about hermeneutics, which allows a bridge to be built between historical and theological approaches. The historical study of Jesus is related to the belief in the deity of Christ and helps to interpret that belief (Dunn 2003, 13).

According to Dunn, the post-Easter faith, which includes the assumption of the divinity of Jesus, cannot be explained without assuming that already during the lifetime of the historical Jesus there was a conviction of the special presence of God in his actions and teachings. There is thus an unbroken continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. Dunn concludes that it would be difficult to explain the origin of the later faith and teaching of the church if it were not directly inspired by an impulse from Jesus himself (Dunn 2003, 892).

Dunn is not the only contemporary researcher who has framed the relationship between historical research on the person of Jesus and belief in his divinity in this way. Two of the most prominent contemporary historical Jesus scholars who draw theological conclusions from their research and openly identify with some form of Christian faith (including belief in the divinity of Jesus) are John Dominic Crossan and N.T. Wright.

In his writings, Crossan draws attention primarily to the anti-imperial and social dimensions of Jesus' message. He emphasizes such elements of the Nazarene's teaching as the renunciation of violence and the abandonment of hierarchical socio-economic relations. He also reads in this context the emerging belief in his divinity soon after his death. Jesus was given titles similar to those previously used to describe Caesar Augustus and later, to a large extent, his successors (Crossan 2008, 28).

Belief in the divinity of Christ thus had a clear socio-political context and was a certain provocation. This is or may be the meaning of this belief today. In any case, it is possible, and historical research helps to better understand its meaning. Crossan understands the divinity of Christ metaphorically rather than in terms of some hard metaphysics. The belief in the divinity of Christ is mythical, it is based on a tradition that speaks of the embodiment of divine wisdom (Crossan 1991, 232). According to Crossan, Jesus should no longer be seen as a mediator between God and man, but rather as the initiator of the kingdom of God, in which there is no longer any mediation. At the same time, there is no contradiction between the vision of the historical Jesus and the belief in his divinity, since this belief presupposes that Jesus is fully human and also fully God. What is problematic is the context in which the original Christological dogma was formulated at the Council of Nicaea (Crossan 1991, 417–26). But the most important thing about believing in the Incarnation is not the Incarnation itself, but the fact that it happened in Jesus. It is that Jesus is the embodiment of God and not, for example, Caesar. For it is a question of who God is. What does it say about him that his incarnation is precisely Jesus of Nazareth? For Crossan (1998, 586), the most important question is ultimately this: "Is your God a God of justice or of revenge?"

Whether one agrees with Crossan's theories or not, one can find in his work an inspiring conviction that historical research on the person of Jesus not only does not exclude the possibility of believing in his deity, but can help to better understand and express that belief.

The same is true of the thought of N. T. Wright, whose views are otherwise radically different from those challenged by Crossan. Wright portrays Jesus primarily as a Jewish messiah whose mission was to renew and reunite the tribes of Israel for the coming reign of God. Jesus was God's anointed one who would rule a renewed Israel in Yahweh's name. The Nazarene embodied God's return to Zion not only in isolated prophetic gestures but in his entire life and actions. It is in this key that Wright understands the incarnation, which for him is primarily a biblical category that fits into the whole dynamic of salvation history, rather than a metaphysical claim. Wright thus leads his readers to a certain reinterpretation of the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, revealing its biblical and historical dimension. "What I have argued for elsewhere, not to diminish the full incarnation of Jesus but to explore its deepest dimension, is that Jesus was aware of a call, a vocation, to do and be what, according to the scriptures, only Israel's God gets to do and be." (Wright 2010, 118)

Belief in the divinity of Jesus doesn't contradict the results of historical research on his person, and what's more, as the British exegete shows, it is this contemporary research that helps to better understand the meaning of Christian doctrine. According to Wright (1996, 660), thanks to the historical approach, thinking about the incarnation is no longer an abstract consideration of a generic "God," but the culmination of the entire biblical tradition, a kind of crowning achievement of the Jewish faith.

2. What Kind of Faith in the Divinity of Jesus Is No Longer Possible

As can be seen, there are three basic approaches to framing the relationship between Jesus Quest and belief in the divinity of Christ. According to the first, the results of historical research prevent, ridicule, or deconstruct the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus. This approach seems wrong on the most basic methodological level. Even if someone succeeds in uncovering the roots of the belief in the deity of Jesus and determines that this belief is based on deception or error, by the same token that person has not proven that Jesus was not the incarnate Son of God. Historical methods obviously cannot prove the divinity of Christ, that much is obvious. Just as it would be impossible to prove by historical analysis that Jesus was divine, so it is impossible to prove that he was not divine. Historians, as historians, cannot judge the authenticity of the dogmas of faith.

According to the second approach, the historical approach to the person of Jesus and the belief in his divinity are two completely separate realities that do not correlate in any way. The advantage of this approach is a certain methodological clarity. In fact, no historical research can condition one to believe or not to believe in the divinity of Jesus. One can profess this belief completely independently of the results of historical research. Complete independence of these two spheres, however, is an exaggeration. Belief in Jesus as the incarnation of God presupposes a certain concreteness of his humanity and his history. This history is therefore not irrelevant to theology. Who Jesus of Nazareth actually was, what he did, and what he taught – these facts are relevant to belief in his divinity. Historical knowledge can neither create nor disprove this belief. It can, however, influence how it is understood and experienced. Jesus Quest is relevant to the doctrine of Jesus' divinity in the sense that it becomes a certain tool for believers to revise and deeper interpret that doctrine. Since it is Jesus and not someone else who Christians claim was God incarnate, knowing who this Jesus was cannot remain unimportant. To discover the truth about the historical Jesus is for a Christian to reflect on whether and why he believes in his divinity. It seems, then, that scholars like Schweitzer, Dunn, Wright, and Crossan are correct in showing that a historical approach to Jesus must inform the understanding and experiencing of the Christian faith.

The assimilation of the historical-critical approach to the Gospels and the reconstruction of the life of Jesus therefore has implications in the area of understanding the deity of Christ (Schillebeeckx 2014, 21). First, it is worth looking at which lines of understanding of the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus seem untenable in light of contemporary historical and exegetical knowledge. It is clear that there are no small differences between the theses of scholars that have been examined by the historical Jesus. As can be seen from the assessment of the analyzes so far, attention should also be paid to the topic of deity by researchers who have different comments. Among those that say that it is possible to point out the critical-historical address to Jesus with faith in his divinity, there are strong differences, as can be seen after the discussion of Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright (2007). All this, however, does not change the fact that one can try to determine certain directions in which the doctrine of the divinity of Christ better or worse harmonizes with the historical reconstruction, whatever its details. Some ways of approaching the dogma of the divinity of Jesus harmonize better with the critical-historical approach to the Gospel, others less so. It is worth considering what interpretations of this doctrine seem difficult to maintain in the face of a critical reading of the New Testament.

The first element that has traditionally often been associated with the doctrine of the divinity of Jesus and that seems untenable in the light of the historical-critical approach is supranaturalism. By supranaturalism we mean the view that there are two levels of reality, the natural and the supernatural. Supernatural beings intervene in the physical world, crossing the boundary between one dimension of reality and the other (Tillich 1967, 6–7). The supernaturalist interpretation of Jesus' divinity assumed that in his life there was such a transition of a supernatural being into the temporal world. The incarnation is understood here as the miraculous transition of a divine being into the natural world. In turn, the actions of Jesus, especially the so-called miracles, are seen as manifestations of supernatural power transcending the order of the temporal world. It is these miraculous acts that prove Jesus to be more than human. All the circumstances of Jesus' life are surrounded by a certain aura of supernaturalism, from his conception and birth to his death.

This whole supernaturalistic interpretation of the Gospels is in deep crisis today, even though there is no shortage of ardent adherents.[4] Historical-critical exegesis over the past few centuries has shown that all the miraculous descriptions found in the Bible, including the Gospels, can be deconstructed by uncovering the theological

4 These are especially analytical philosophers of religion who identify with Christianity, the most significant of whom are Richard Swinburne and Alvin Plantinga. See: Plantinga 2006, 495–504; Swinburne 1977. Regarding the supernaturalistic approach to the interpretation of the Gospel and the Bible as such, see: Plantinga 1998, 223–78. On miracles understood supranaturalistically, see: Swinburne 1989; Swinburne 1970; Larmer 2013.

motivations of their authors. It was not so much the extraordinary events that created the theology, but – at least very often – it was theology that created the descriptions of the extraordinary events (Ehrman 1998, 29).

This is also true of the miracles of Jesus described in the canonical gospels. Their descriptions are a kind of narrative theology, a legendary testimony of faith in the power of Jesus. They are all influenced by the faith of the post-Easter Church and the spiritual experience of faith in the Risen Lord who lives and acts in his community. It is hard to deny that the historical Jesus performed healings and exorcisms. But it is different with the so-called miracles over nature. It is difficult today to argue that such events as the multiplication of loaves or walking on water literally took place in reality. Rather, they are narrative expressions of the Church's post-Easter faith in Jesus Christ, Lord of heaven and earth, who gives himself in the Eucharist.[5]

All the extraordinary events that make up the supernatural interpretation of the Gospels are read differently today than they were in past centuries, as they are interpreted in the light of critical-historical exegesis. One of the pioneers of the Jesus Quest, David Strauss, has played a major role in this regard.[6] He pointed out three basic ways of reading the Gospel texts in which spectacular supernatural elements appear.[7] First, these texts can be read as a literal record of historical events, and therefore as a kind of supernatural history. Everything happened literally as described in the Gospels. A supernatural factor intervened in the story, and the evangelist described it. This is essentially how the Gospel texts were read for most of the history of Christianity until the 18th century. The second way is to still read the Gospels as a general record of historical events, but laced with some supernatural interpretation. One must patiently wade through this misinterpretation to get to the actual events, which can be explained in a perfectly rational way. In this view, the Gospels are read in the spirit of naturalistic history. For example, Jesus did not walk on a sheet of water, but on stones hidden in the water, and the multiplied loaves are actually sandwiches that the hearers brought with them and decided to share with others, influenced by Jesus' teachings. A third way of reading the miraculous accounts in the Gospels is to understand them as mythical stories. This is the reading proposed by Strauss, and it remains to his credit. In the mythic reading, the idea is to treat the supernatural descriptions of the gospels not as based on historical facts, but as created by the authors to convey some theological content. So, when we deal with episodes of this kind in the Gospels, we can assume that they are not a record of actual events, but are narratives that convey the theology of the authors or editors of the Gospels. Thus, there is no need to consider what the multiplication of the loaves

5 As writes Meier (1994, 970): "all these stories appear to have been created by the early church to serve various theological purposes."

6 For different view on the role of Strauss, see: Wright 1996, 49–50.

7 Strauss describes his approach compared to competing approaches in the introduction to his work (Strauss 1902, 39–92).

actually looked like – this episode is purely literary. What guided the Christian writers who told such stories about Jesus? It seems obvious that they wanted to present Christ in the light of their already advanced theology. But Strauss points to another specific source for these stories, the Old Testament (Strauss 1902, 83–84). Jesus is supposed to be the one in whom all the biblical prophecies were fulfilled. Therefore, the evangelists create episodes in which biblical predictions seem to be fulfilled in Jesus. For example, the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves is an analogous event from the life of Elisha applied to Jesus (Strauss 1902, 517–18).

Certainly not all of the spectacular episodes in the Gospels can be treated as mythical stories. Of course, the miraculous healings performed by Jesus are most likely rooted somehow in history. Most scholars of the historical Jesus agree that he performed exorcisms and healings that were considered miraculous in the eyes of his contemporaries.[8] Contrary to a fairly widespread belief, however, the miracles performed by Jesus did not serve as an argument for his divinity two thousand years ago, nor can they serve as such an argument today. In antiquity, miraculous deeds were attributed to a number of important people, which did not in itself make these individuals incarnate gods. Moreover, according to the New Testament, miracles were also performed by the apostles, whose divinity Christianity never spoke of. Undoubtedly, the miracles described in the Gospels are intended by the writers of these texts to point to Jesus' special role, but not directly to his divinity. As Sanders (1993, 132–33) has noted, the idea that Jesus' miracles are intended to prove his deity is both theologically and historically incorrect. Of course, even if, thanks to such exegesis, we can discover more or less precisely the theological motivations of the authors of miracle stories, it does not mean that the most important and frequently narrated extraordinary events (exorcisms, healings) are merely theological creations and not true sources of theology. However, critical awareness requires a certain reserve here. Yes, Jesus' miracles have theological significance, but it is not obvious to what extent their Gospel descriptions are of a historical nature. Therefore, it does not seem wise to attach too much importance to them on the theological level. And it certainly does not seem a good idea to see Jesus' miracles as supposed proof of his divinity.

It seems impossible, therefore, to present the divinity of Christ as consisting in his transcending human nature. Jesus was not called God or the Son of God by the early Christians because he transcended the possibilities of human nature by performing miraculous signs. Nor was he so called because his life was accompanied by extraordinary events that transcended the laws of created reality. It is enough to note that Paul, who was one of the first to begin to move toward a kind of belief in the deity of Jesus, wrote nothing at all about his miracles.

8 See for example: Meier 1994, 970; Lüdemann 1999, 103; Vermès 1981, 24–25; Allison 2010, 267; Fredriksen 2000, 99; Ehrman 1998, 199.

The popular vision, according to which some of Jesus' actions were purely divine while others were human, is not only untenable in the light of critical exegesis, but it is and always has been theologically incorrect. It is not an orthodox view, just the contrary, it is close to the heresies of docetism and monophysitism. In the orthodox view, Jesus, as the incarnate Son, has two natures that do not mix. He is not God in the form of a man, but an actual man in whose life God was fully revealed and incarnated. The inseparability and indivisibility of divinity and humanity in Jesus is indicated by the dogma of the Council of Chalcedon.

> [We confess] one and the same Christ only begotten Son, our Lord, acknowledged in two natures, without mingling, without change, indivisibly, undividedly, the distinction of the natures nowhere removed on account of the union but rather the peculiarity of each nature being kept, and uniting in one person and substance, not divided or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son only begotten God Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as from the beginning the prophets taught about Him and the Lord Jesus Himself taught us, and the creed of our fathers has handed down to us. (Denzinger 1955, 61)

Thus, the divinity of Jesus cannot be sought in what transcends or contradicts his humanity; on the contrary, it must be sought in and through that humanity. The search for the historical Jesus, combined with the deconstruction of the supernatural dimension of the Gospels, paradoxically helps to approach orthodoxy. The vision of Jesus as sometimes assuming humanity and acting as God in the world is not orthodox.

Another important element is the question of Jesus' consciousness. The traditional view emphasized that Jesus actually felt God and had divine consciousness.[9] In the light of modern exegesis, such a view seems untenable. Most of Jesus' statements that somehow indicate his divine character and could be seen as an expression of divine consciousness come from the Gospel of John. However, as is well known, this gospel was written significantly later than the other canonical gospels and expresses a theological consciousness that is already much more mature and developed. John's Jesus teaches very different things from the synoptic Jesus, not to mention the historical Jesus. It is widely believed that the words of the Jesus of John have little to do with the teachings of the historical Jesus.[10] Even if John's Gospel contains some authentic historical elements independent of the synoptics, most scholars agree that the high Christology found in the speeches of John's Jesus did not come from the historical Jesus. Thus, the statements indicating the divine character of the Master must

9 Thomas Aquinas did not even consider it necessary to argue that Jesus had divine knowledge; on the contrary, he argued that Jesus possessed human knowledge in addition to divine knowledge. *Summa theologiae* III, q. 9, a. 1 (Thomas Aquinas 1923, 763).

10 For the critique of this conviction, see: Anderson, Just, and Thatcher 2007.

be regarded as an expression of the faith of the community of the beloved disciple rather than a record of Jesus' actual consciousness.

Who did Jesus really think he was? Certainly a prophet, perhaps a kind of Messiah (Allison 2010, 286). But he certainly did not think of himself as God directly. Thus, the study of the historical Jesus forces us to abandon the image of a man who was in fact God in human flesh, looking at the world with God's eyes and God's knowledge, and demonstrating his divine power from time to time. However, as already mentioned, this image was never the orthodox theology of the incarnation. What cannot be maintained and what can no longer be believed in the light of the research on the historical Jesus is not Christian orthodoxy, but monophysitism, which sees in Christ essentially and directly God, for whom humanity is only a certain mask.

The search for the historical Jesus strongly exposes and explores the humanity of Jesus, showing the cultural and social conditions of his life and teaching. Instead, it strips Jesus of his supernatural robes, showing that they were largely imposed on him by later theology. But does this deconstruct the doctrine of Christ's deity or make it impossible to maintain? It does not seem to. It merely refutes a certain way of thinking about the deity of Jesus, a way that has never been orthodox.

3. What Kind of Faith in the Divinity of Jesus Is Still Possible

Faith in the divinity of Christ is also possible when one is aware that the Gospels are not historical reports, but texts filled with the theological perspective of the Church at the end of the 1st century. A critical-historical approach to the person of Jesus does not exclude belief in his deity. Moreover, it seems that we should agree with researchers such as Dunn, Wright and Crossan, who show that the very image of the historical Jesus can influence how the meaning of the doctrine of his deity is understood. In this part of the article, directions of thinking about the divinity of Christ will be proposed, which harmonize with the historical approach to his person.

Studies of the historical Jesus help to see more clearly the humanity of Jesus with all its conditions. They show Jesus simply as a historical figure, in contrast to the centuries-old tradition of seeing him in a theological key, relegating his real humanity and its historical conditions to the background. It was the humanity of Jesus and his real history that was the moment of human encounter with God incarnate (Schillebeeckx 2014, 630). If a faith in the divinity of Christ is still possible, it is certainly not faith that puts his human destiny into brackets, but one that goes through and accepts this human destiny completely.

Past centuries of theology have accustomed Christians to think about Jesus in a primarily dogmatic key. Thinking about the deity of Christ often meant simply the deity of a supernatural being once incarnated in a human being. In such a view, it didn't matter so much what kind of person he was incarnated in, or what that person was like. Modern historical research, on the other hand, shows and focuses on a living figure of Jesus, with specific goals, his specific historical context, and his specific actions. This creates an opportunity to better understand why it was Jesus who began to be called divine. It is in the life of Jesus, and not next to or above that life, that we look today for ways to believe in his divinity. Faith in the deity of Christ must contain re-lecture of the life of historical Jesus. We are aware that "without historical Jesus there will be no Christ of faith." (Rusecki 2006, 213)

Looking at Jesus as a story provides the proper perspective for thinking about the incarnation. The story of Jesus reveals God by becoming his embodiment.[11] Divinity of Christ, then, is not so much to about some metaphysical transformation of eternal being into temporal being as it is the full embodiment of God in human history. To believe in the divinity of Jesus is to perceive in the history of this particular person the manifestation of God himself. Thus, the historical study of the person of Jesus is of great importance for faith in his divinity. Although they cannot establish it (nor can they disprove it), they are important because they show the believer how God was revealed in the life of Jesus.

Therefore, thinking about the divinity of Jesus is still possible when placed in a historical and narrative key. Divinity is not something that mixes with the human story of Jesus and makes it extraordinary. Rather, it is what is revealed in the truly human, ordinary story of Jesus. Metaphysical categories are thus secondary to historical categories. To speak of the Logos incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth is already a conclusion and a kind of meta-reflection, not the essence of the matter. The essence of belief in the divinity of Jesus, on the other hand, is to see in his story the embodiment of God's plan for the world and for humanity.[12]

To seek the deity of Jesus not beyond his humanity, but precisely through this humanity and through his human history, is in line with Christian orthodoxy and at the same time fits better with all biblical theology than metaphysically centered considerations of the incarnation. Moreover, in such a view Christology simultaneously becomes a kind of safeguard for the primacy of negative theology.

The Council of Chalcedon, which for centuries became the norm for Christian Christological reflection, makes clear that Christ's divinity is not mixed with his humanity. Rather, he is the second ground, the message of that humanity. He appears through it, is united with it, but is not something separate to be pointed out and distinguished. Thus, Chalcedon encourages us to seek the divinity of Christ through

11 This is the basic idea of the popular book of Roger Haight: *Jesus: Symbol of God* (1999).

12 This direction of thinking about the incarnation was proposed by Paul Tillich in a famous article on the subject. He stated there that: "It follows that essential Godmanhood can manifest itself within existence only in a human being and as a personal life." (Tillich 1992, 313) The Incarnation is therefore a manifestation in the concrete life of Jesus of the ideal of Godmanhood, the final union of man with God, and thus the ideal of humanity.

his humanity. For it is through the human Jesus that we have access to the God revealed in him. The search for the historical Jesus can thus be a way of authentically discovering his divinity. It is not a matter of finding something inexplicable or supernatural in the story of Jesus, but of seeing God revealed in his humanity. It is not supranaturalism, but precisely the historical-critical approach that brings us closer to an authentic recognition of God in Jesus Christ.

The historical understanding of the divinity of Jesus, which takes precedence over metaphysical explanations, is also closer to the whole dynamic of biblical theology. The Bible is precisely about God's presence in the history of the world, and especially in the history of Israel. The incarnation of God in Jesus is a kind of culmination of the whole biblical dynamic. God no longer incarnates himself in his people, but specifically and finally in one man, the Messiah, who is Israel in his own person. The prophetic aspect of the incarnation is also important, as N. T. Wright points out. The notion of a prophetic act, that is, an act performed by a prophet in which God's purpose is revealed, is familiar. Precisely in this way the divinity of Jesus can be thought of. It is no longer a specific act that embodies God, but the whole life of the prophet becomes the story of God. More specifically, it is the story of God's return to Zion to save Israel and transform the whole world (Wright 1996, 657–60).

What is also important is the socio-political dimension of the doctrine on the divinity of Christ. The additional ten dimensions are very important to the Gospel and the Bible as such, while later developments in science became known. Crossan seems to be right in reopening it. Calling Jesus God, Lord or Son of God was from the beginning in opposition to calling these devices of the Roman Caesar. It can be said that even today the teachings about the divinity of Jesus are polemical in the face of the threat of the Caesars, to the world of power, money and violence. Recognizing that Jesus is Lord is admitting that God is (as Jesus was) on the side of love, humility and goodness, that he is on the side of people, not the structures of power, exploitation and violence.

Another thing is the connection between Christology and negative theology. The incarnation is strongly associated with positive theology. It is, after all, the moment of God's revelation, his appearance in the flesh. In fact, however, the incarnation is the culmination of apophatic theology. When we look at Jesus as a historical figure, we see that God always remains invisible and hidden. His presence in Jesus does not mean that God is defined and materially perceived. Rather, the incarnation teaches us that God remains forever a mystery that can never be accepted as a fact, but is revealed through facts. God reveals himself in the life of Jesus, and this is the fullest access we have to him. It is not that we know God beforehand, understand his qualities and nature, and then this already known God reveals himself in Christ. On the contrary, it is the story of Jesus that reveals what God can be. Believing in the divinity of Jesus means that we have no other access to God than through human life. God is most fully revealed in Jesus of Nazareth, and it is on this basis that Christians can say something about God. He remains an incomprehensible mystery, but as this mystery he gives himself to us in the life of Jesus.

The approach to the theology of the incarnation presented here may seem risky because it raises the question of what made Jesus different from other great saints and figures from salvation history. After all, God has revealed and continues to reveal his action and presence through the lives of many prophets throughout history. In fact, this is the advantage, not the disadvantage, of the optics proposed here. The incarnation is not some phenomenon taken out of the normal course of history, but the total fulfillment of creation and its purpose. Man's vocation is to embody God's plans. The incarnation of the Logos in Jesus Christ is the total, final fulfillment of what God intended for every person. Christology then appears as anthropology fulfilled. This way of thinking about the incarnation is consistent with the Christian tradition, especially with that trend that showed the very teleology of creation, and not only the need for redemption as the motive for the incarnation of the Word of God. The perception of Christology as fulfilled anthropology is consistent with the great achievements of 20th century theology, for example with the thought of Karl Rahner. He wrote that "Christology may by studied as self-transcendenting anthropology and anthropology as deficient Christology." (Rahner 1963, 164)

As for the question whether such a view does not relativize the importance of Jesus to other figures in salvation history, the answer is: No, because it was in the life of the Master from Nazareth that all fullness was revealed, in an unattainable and unique way. In Jesus, what was only partially revealed elsewhere was revealed in a final way (Tillich 1951, 137). Although the uniqueness of Christ does not consist in being someone completely different from other people, but in being a fully fulfilled man, perfectly embodying God's plan. In him it is clear that "God is the last word of man and man is the final sense of God's speech." (Bartnik 2012, 708)

Conclusion

Belief in the divinity of Jesus Christ is possible at any time, in any era, and in any context. Like any religious belief, it cannot be overturned by cultural progress or scientific discovery. It can only, and probably must, change and take on a different form. In every age it is possible to believe that God was revealed and incarnated in Jesus. In every age, however, this belief must seek a different interpretation and different means of expression, taking into account the current cultural, social, and intellectual context. The search for the historical Jesus is undoubtedly part of this context today. The historical-critical study of the person of Jesus and the texts of the New Testament cannot be without influence on the understanding of faith and its living in the modern world. Today, faith in on the divinity of Christ, as well as reflection on it, called Christology, today must take into account the achievements of critical-historical exegesis and the findings of historians who reconstruct the biography of Jesus of Nazareth.

It is not that modern scientific research makes belief in the divinity of Jesus impossible, but it is not that they are irrelevant to it either. The image of the historical Jesus that emerges from the research of scientists representing various views and differing in their analyzes is certainly primarily an image of a specific man. The humanity of Jesus ceases to be a theory and a slogan, and begins to be flesh and blood. Jesus quest shows Jesus as fully human, and thus helps to reject supernaturalism in the interpretation of him as a person, seeing him as someone who goes beyond the temporal order of the world. The quest of the historical Jesus helps to finally reject monophysitism, in which Jesus is *de facto* simply God in the guise of a man. Jesus is a man in whose life God fully revealed himself. However, this is not a half-god, some hero walking on earth straight from Greek mythology. Jesus quest helps us see Jesus as a man with his own struggles and development, his own context and conditions, his own life drama. It was in this human life that God revealed himself to man. When we talk about the incarnation, we do not think first of all about some metaphysical transformation, but about the revelation of God in the ordinary human life of Jesus. Thus, we think of God as also present in our lives. The religion of the incarnation does not alienate man and does not detach him from his existence, nor does it transport him to an alternative world or to some afterlife. It constantly refers him to his own life and it is in this life that it makes him look for God incarnate. A historical look at Jesus not only does not refute the faith, but actually helps it find its proper identity, exposing supernaturalistic monophysitism.

The quest of the historical Jesus shows not only Jesus as a man, but also as a very specific man, advocating specific values and a specific experience of relationship with God and people. Believing in the divinity of this Jesus is also recognizing that he was right in judging the human world and showing an alternative way of life. He was not wrong in preaching countercultural, shocking content like that contained in the Sermon on the Mount. The belief in the divinity of Christ is ultimately not so much a doctrinal theory as a complete adherence to Jesus and following him. It is a question of changing lives and changing the world, it is a thoroughly practical issue.

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SHORT STUDIES/PRZYCZYNKI

VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 493–502
Received: Oct 9, 2023 | Accepted: Apr 5, 2024 | Published: Jun 27, 2024

"Fire from Hell," or "You are the Salt of the Earth." On the Interpretation of Matthew 5:13

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Abstract: This essay is an attempt to explore different contexts of the phrase "you are the salt of the earth" found in Matt 5:13, one of the most confusing expressions used in the whole of the New Testament. The author deals with its original meaning, exposing in the process the earliest layers of transmission of Jesus' sayings. Versed in the Hebrew scriptures, Jesus combined the meanings of *MLḤ* in Exod 30:35 (incense salted is potent/good/pure/holy) with that in Isa 51:6 and Jer 38:11–12 (something *MLḤ* might vanish away/wax old/become rotten) and put it in a new context. Jesus' pun – loaded with multiple layers of meanings and shades of meanings – was lost in translation as simply "salt."

Keywords: Matthew 5:13, Gehenna, fire of Hell, Babylonian Talmud, Judeo-Aramaic and Palestinian Arabic, Dead Sea, Salt Sea, Trito-Isaiah, Sermon on the Mount

1. The Problem

"You are the salt of the earth" is an expression that resonated within almost any culture – regardless of language – where people have had significant exposure to Christianity and the text of the New Testament. By the late 19th century, the expression even entered modern Hebrew, via the Christian usage, and now people in Israel quarrel over who is "the salt of the earth" and who isn't! Actually, "salt of the earth" sounds decidedly awkward in Hebrew, just as it does in other languages, if one thinks about it for a second. Salt, in fact, is generally *not* good for the earth, and ancient, destroyed cities were sometimes punished unto eternal damnation by pouring salt, at least symbolically, over their ruins (cf. Judg 9:45).[1] Nevertheless, it is obvious that the ultimate source of this phrase was in a Semitic language, and that the expression is a typical case of an original meaning being "lost in translation."

1 As Barry G. Webb (2012, 289) noted, Abimelech's act of "sowing the site with salt" in Judges 9:45 is "unparalleled in the Old Testament, and its significance is not clear. Traditionally it has been viewed as an act intended to render a site infertile, or place it under the ban (*ḥērem*) of total destruction, or to purge it of the spirits of the dead." See also Honeyman (1953, 192–95) who prefers the last of these three options.

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16712

2. The Goal

The cases of such expressions, those that make little literal sense today, are valuable, since they can lead us, more or less directly, back to the times when these words were first uttered, sometimes completely outside of what we might perceive as their "context." Here my intention is to explore in some depth the archaeology of the expression "salt of the earth." It is not my intention to deal with theological aspects of "the salt of the earth," especially since a recent Pope wrote a book on the topic (Ratzinger 1997) and Carl G. Vaught's work, *The Sermon on the Mount* (2001), has become a modern classic. And I must admit that a small article by George Shillington, "Salt of the Earth?" (2001), gave me a clue as to my own solution. As Shillington did, I was thinking about this illogical "salt of the earth" for decades.

3. A Talmudic View about Hell under Jerusalem

It is relatively rarely that we find genuine Second Temple traditions in the Babylonian Talmud, but one such case will be discussed below. First, however, we must stress that this tradition is quoted in the context of discussing an arcane ritual matter, the question of whether the branches of a certain sort of palm tree (ציני הר הברזל, the stone-palm from the Iron Mountain in Moab) are *kosher* for purposes of being used as a *lulab*. Our real purpose, however, is to examine the underlying language, as a window into ancient Judaic thought and imagery. We read in the Babylonian Talmud, treatise *Erubin* 19a:[2]

And Rabbi Yirmeya ben Elazar also said: There are three entrances to Gehenna,	ואמר רבי ירמיה בר אלעזר שלשה פתחים יש לגיהנם
one in the wilderness, one in the sea, and **one in Jerusalem**.	אחד במדבר ואחד בים **ואחד בירושלים**
There is one entrance in the wilderness, as it is written with regard to Korah and his company:	במדבר דכתיב
"And they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit [*She'o*l], and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation" (Num 16:33).	וירדו הם וכל אשר להם חיים שאולה
In the sea there is a second entrance to Gehenna, as it is written about Jonah in the fish's belly: "Out of the belly of the netherworld [*She'ol*] I cried, and You did hear my voice" (Jonah 2:3).	בים דכתיב, מבטן שאול שועתי שמעת קולי

2 The translation after Weinreb 2012–2019. In smaller font are explanatory additions by the English editors.

And **there is a third entrance to Gehenna in Jerusalem, as it is written**:	בירושלים דכתיב
"Says the Lord, **Whose fire is in Zion, and Whose furnace is in Jerusalem**" (Isa 31:9).	נאם ה׳ אֲשֶׁר אוּר לוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן וְתַנּוּר לוֹ בִּירוּשָׁלָֽם
And it was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael:	ותנא דבי רבי ישמעאל
"**Whose light/fire is in Zion**,"	אשר אור לו בציון
this is Gehenna;	זו גיהנם
and "**Whose furnace is in Jerusalem**,"	ותנור לו בירושלים
this is an entrance to Gehenna.	זו פתחה של גיהנם
The Gemara asks: Are there no more entrances?	ותו ליכא
Didn't Rabbi Maryon say in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi,	והאמר ר׳ מריון אמר ר׳ יהושע בן לוי
and some say it was Rabba bar Maryon who taught in the name of the school of Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai:	ואמרי לה תנא רבה בר מריון בדבי רבי יוחנן בן זכאי
There are two date trees in the valley of ben Hinnom, and smoke rises from between them, and with regard to this statement about date trees that differ from other palms we learned:	שתי תמרות יש בגי בן הנום ועולה עשן מביניהן וזו היא ששנינו
The palms of Har HaBarzel are fit for the *mitzva* of palm branches [*lulav*] (*b. Sukkah* 32b),	ציני הר הברזל כשירות
and this is the entrance to Gehenna.	וזו היא פתחה של גיהנם
The Gemara answers:	
This is not difficult, for perhaps this is the entrance in Jerusalem.	דילמא היינו דירושלים

So, Hell is localized as being under Jerusalem, as might be suggested to anyone living in that city, since the Valley of Gehinnom lies immediately southward from Jerusalem in a deep gorge. Thus the word אור in the verse of Isa 31:9 (אֲשֶׁר אוּר לוֹ בְּצִיּוֹן וְתַנּוּר לוֹ בִּירוּשָׁלָֽם, "whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem"), as quoted in the Talmud, was understood as "fire" (אוּר) by the Sages. The same word or root, however, carries the meaning of "light" (אוֹר) in Matt 5:14, אתם* אור העולם, "You are the light of the world."

4. Isaiah 31 > Isaiah 66 > the Sermon on the Mountain

This ancient *midrash* survived in both the Babylonian Talmud (*Erubin*) and in the Sermon on the Mountain in the Gospel of Matthew. The Sermon on the Mountain itself is based on [Trito-]Isaiah 66, which was composed as a *responsum* to

Isaiah 31 (but cf. Russell 2017). With these linkages in mind, we propose the following: Isa 66:1 was understood by the Second Temple sectarians, as well as in the Primitive Church, in an anti-Temple sense; Isa 66:2 was the model for "Blessed are the meek…"; Isa 66:19 can be seen as referring to the missionary activities of the Primitive Church; and Isa 66:24 stands as a reference back to Isa 31:9 (which appears in the Talmudic section quoted above).[3]

Isa 66:1 Thus saith the Lord, The heaven *is* my throne, and the earth *is* my footstool: where *is* the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?	א כֹּה אָמַר ה׳ הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּסְאִי וְהָאָרֶץ הֲדֹם רַגְלָי אֵי זֶה בַיִת אֲשֶׁר תִּבְנוּ לִי וְאֵי זֶה מָקוֹם מְנוּחָתִי
Isa 66:2 For all those *things* hath mine hand made, and all those *things* have been, saith the Lord: but to this *man* will I look, *even* **to *him that is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word**.	ב וְאֶת כָּל אֵלֶּה יָדִי עָשָׂתָה וַיִּהְיוּ כָל אֵלֶּה נְאֻם ה' וְאֶל זֶה **אַבִּיט אֶל עָנִי וּנְכֵה רוּחַ וְחָרֵד עַל דְּבָרִי**
Isa 66:19 And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, *to* Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, that draw the bow, *to* Tubal, and Javan, *to* the isles afar off, that have not heard my fame, neither have seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles.	יט וְשַׂמְתִּי בָהֶם אוֹת וְשִׁלַּחְתִּי מֵהֶם פְּלֵיטִים אֶל הַגּוֹיִם תַּרְשִׁישׁ פּוּל וְלוּד מֹשְׁכֵי קֶשֶׁת תֻּבַל וְיָוָן הָאִיִּים הָרְחֹקִים אֲשֶׁר לֹא שָׁמְעוּ אֶת שִׁמְעִי וְלֹא רָאוּ אֶת כְּבוֹדִי וְהִגִּידוּ אֶת כְּבוֹדִי בַּגּוֹיִם
Isa 66:24 And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: **for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched**; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.[4]	כד וְיָצְאוּ וְרָאוּ בְּפִגְרֵי הָאֲנָשִׁים הַפֹּשְׁעִים בִּי **כִּי תוֹלַעְתָּם לֹא תָמוּת וְאִשָּׁם לֹא תִכְבֶּה** וְהָיוּ דֵרָאוֹן לְכָל בָּשָׂר

It is worth noting that the language of Isa 66:24, "for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched," is quoted in Mark 9:45–50:

> And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet **to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched** (βληθῆναι εἰς τὴν γέενναν εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον): **Where their worm dieth not**, **and the fire is not quenched**. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes **to be cast into hell fire**: **Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched**. **For every one shall be salted with fire** (πᾶς γὰρ πυρὶ ἁλισθήσεται / ܟܠ ܓܝܪ ܒܢܘܪܐ ܢܬܡܠܚ), and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. **Salt** *is* **good**: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.

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3 All the biblical texts after KJV translation.
4 Cf. *As. Mos.* 10: "and thou shalt look from on high and shalt see the enemies in Gehenna."

As one can see, the context speaks of the fire of hell, by which “**every one shall be salted**” as in a sacrifice, and this “**salt is good**,” but the good salt also carries some “devilish” or “hellish” element in it.

5. *MLḤ* 1,2,3

The link between smoke, the verbal root *MLḤ* (though it is another *MLḤ* root), and the theme of destruction can be seen in Isa 51:6:

Lift up your eyes to the heavens,	שְׂאוּ לַשָּׁמַיִם עֵינֵיכֶם
and look **upon the earth beneath**:	וְהַבִּיטוּ אֶל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת
for the heavens shall **vanish away like smoke** (*kā ʿāšān nimlāḥū*),	כִּי שָׁמַיִם **כֶּעָשָׁן נִמְלָחוּ**
and the earth **shall wax** (*tibleh*) **old like a garment**,	וְהָאָרֶץ **כַּבֶּגֶד תִּבְלֶה**
and they that dwell **therein shall die** in like manner:	וְיֹשְׁבֶיהָ כְּמוֹ כֵן **יְמוּתוּן**
but my salvation[5] shall be for ever,	וִישׁוּעָתִי לְעוֹלָם תִּהְיֶה
and my righteousness shall not be abolished.	וְצִדְקָתִי לֹא תֵחָת

The same root *MLḤ* (again, etymologically unrelated) and vestments appear in Jer 38:11–12:

So Ebed-melech took the men with him,	וַיִּקַּח עֶבֶד מֶלֶךְ אֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים בְּיָדוֹ
and went into the house of the king under the treasury,	וַיָּבֹא בֵית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל תַּחַת הָאוֹצָר
and took thence old cast clouts and old **rotten rags** (*u-bloyē məlāḥīm*),[6]	וַיִּקַּח מִשָּׁם בְּלוֹיֵ הסחבות סְחָבוֹת **וּבְלוֹיֵ מְלָחִים**
and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.	וַיְשַׁלְּחֵם אֶל יִרְמְיָהוּ אֶל הַבּוֹר בַּחֲבָלִים
And Ebed-melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah,	וַיֹּאמֶר עֶבֶד מֶלֶךְ הַכּוּשִׁי אֶל יִרְמְיָהוּ
Put now these old cast clouts and **rotten rags** (*ham-məlāḥīm*) under thine armholes	שִׂים נָא בְּלוֹאֵי הַסְּחָבוֹת **וְהַמְּלָחִים** תַּחַת אַצִּלוֹת יָדֶיךָ
under the cords.	מִתַּחַת לַחֲבָלִים
And Jeremiah did so.	וַיַּעַשׂ יִרְמְיָהוּ כֵּן

5 Apparently, understood by Christians as referring to Jesus.

6 Two roots used are the same as in Isaiah 51:6, *kā ʿāšān nimlāḥū* + *kab-beged tibleh*. The idea in Mt 5:13–14 that salt can have lost its savour / saltiness is derived from the (non-exact) understanding of ***MLḤ*** in these two verses from Jeremiah and Isaiah.

6. *Erubin* 19a versus Matt 5:13–14

The parallel in Matt 5:13–14 has no "hellish" elements, but refers to that city set over the Hell of the Valley of Gehinnom:[7]

> Ye are **the salt of the earth** (Υμεῖς ἐστε τὸ ἅλας τῆς γῆς / ܐܢܬܘܢ ܐܢܘܢ ܡܠܚܗ ܕܐܪܥܐ): but if the salt have lost his savour (ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ / ܐܢܗܘ ܕܝܢ ܕܡܠܚܐ ܬܦܟܗ[8]), wherewith shall it be salted (ἐν τίνι ἁλισθήσεται / ܒܡܢܐ ܬܬܡܠܚ)? it is thenceforth **good for nothing** (εἰς οὐδὲν ἰσχύει ἔτι / ܠܡܕܡ ܠܐ ܚܫܚܐ), but to be cast out (εἰ μὴ βληθὲν ἔξω / ܐܠܐ ܕܬܫܬܕܐ ܠܒܪ), and to be trodden under foot of men (καταπατεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων / ܘܬܬܕܝܫ ܡܢ ܐܢܫܐ). Ye are **the light of the world** (Υμεῖς ἐστε τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου / ܐܢܬܘܢ ܐܢܘܢ ܢܘܗܪܗ ܕܥܠܡܐ). A city **that is set on an hill** cannot be hid (οὐ δύναται πόλις κρυβῆναι ἐπάνω ὄρους κειμένη / ܠܐ ܡܫܟܚܐ ܕܬܬܛܫܐ ܡܕܝܢܬܐ ܕܥܠ ܛܘܪܐ ܒܢܝܐ).

This text is notoriously difficult. First, the salt of the earth can be good, under certain conditions, and is, more or less, the same as the light (but we remember that this "light" comes from "fire" of Isa 31:9).

7 Cf. Berger 1980; Betz 1995, 161 ("The observation that cities often are situated on the top of mountains is true of many ancient cities, but one can hardly have any doubt that here it refers to Jerusalem."); Shapira 2013. The reference to the city of Jerusalem is only one of several possibilities. For instance, Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck (1956, 238) proposes Sepphoris referring to *Pesiq. Rab.* 8 (29A) and *b. Meg.* 6A: "Zeira has said, 'Qitron (Judg 1:30) is Sepphoris; and why was the name of the city called 'Sepphoris'? Because it lies on top of a mountain like a bird (שיושבת בראש ההר כציפור)." Ulrich Luz (2007, 207) argued: "The absence of the article shows that the thought is hardly of *the* city of God, Jerusalem on Mount Zion, but simply of a city located on a mountain. All metaphorical or allegorical interpretations of the city are to be avoided; the issue is only that the city is visible from a distance." As an example of an allegorical exposition, one should refer to Gerhard von Rad's proposal (1966, 242): "The saying about the city which is visible to all is closely bound up with that concerning the light of the world: the eschatological congregation of the faithful is the city set on a hill, and their light will be visible to the whole world. The saying thus takes up an ancient eschatological theme, re-echoing that already sounded by Isaiah in the Old Testament." For the discussion on the identification of the city see also Campbell 1978.

8 Greek μωρανθῇ is formed from μωρός, "dull, moron." The Syriac verb *tpkh* ܬܦܟܗ translates Hebrew תפל in Job 6:6 (הֲיֵאָכֵל תָּפֵל מִבְּלִי מֶלַח אִם יֶשׁ טַעַם בְּרִיר חַלָּמוּת / "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?") and is related to Mandaic "to turn stupid" (cf. Drower and Macuch 1963, 367b; compare Häberl 2023), Hebrew פכה "fade, evaporate"; Arabic فكه "to be tasty."

7. Salt is Good

One may think that καλὸν τὸ ἅλας, "salt is good" (Luke 14:34[9] and Mark 9:50[10]), is a pun on the root *MLḤ*, "be good, be beautiful." This homonymous root is badly preserved in Hebrew (but cf. *b. Qiddushin* 29b, זריז וממולח), with *malāḥa-t*, *malīḥ* surviving in Arabic (in Palestinian Arabic, as well as in some other varieties, **malīḥ* > *mnīḥ* is ***the*** word for "good," possibly, due to contamination with **m*[*ē*]*nīḥ*, "providing rest / peace of mind"). So, **melaḥ malīḥ* or **milḥā məlīḥ*![11] The expression used in Matt 5:13 *might* go back to a lost understanding of Exod 30:35:

and make an incense blended	וְעָשִׂיתָ אֹתָהּ קְטֹרֶת
as by the perfumer,	רֹקַח מַעֲשֵׂה רוֹקֵחַ
seasoned with salt / good / potent,	מְמֻלָּח
pure	טָהוֹר
and holy	קֹדֶשׁ

In this text the last three words are used as synonymous, not through commas. Something with salt is pure, potent, and holy. The idea that salt can become not salted (*un*-potent, "if the salt have lost his savour") is strange, for salt never loses its chemical qualities.

9 Remember the context in Luke 14:33–35: "So likewise, **whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple**. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. **He that hath ears to hear, let him hear**."

10 Set in the context of transfiguration on Mount Tabor, with its light identified by some Eastern Christians with the Fire of Hell. The Polish Pope, John Paull II, was somehow sympathetic of this view; I was both amazed and happy to learn about this fact in the course of writing this small essay.

11 The expression was not understood even by the first-generation Christians and was thus mis-translated by all the following generations (in passing, this is the proof that *this* passage was translated into Syriac from Greek, while there are multiple examples of keeping the original text better in Syriac; cf. Weitzman 1999), which reminds me how some thirty years ago, on the first class of his university course "Jewish Origins of the New Testament," the late Professor David Flusser asked us: "Who can tell me, what language Jesus spoke?" First there fell silence, then some voices saying "Hebrew" or "Aramaic," and then I said: "Yiddish." Flusser gave me a deep look, paused for a while, and then he said firmly: "Correct. Jesus spoke Yiddish."

8. Salt is Good?

As George Shillington (2001, 120–121) noted, "The Greek word (*mōranthē*), translated 'lost its taste,' is not usually related to taste at all.[12] The basic idea *of mōranthē* is to make foolish, as in Rom 1:22 (cf. the English derivative 'moron')."

Shillington (2001, 121) continues:

> the parallel metaphor in Luke 14:34, which reads in the NRSV: 'Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; they throw it away.'[13] The translators of this text become even more absurd in their translation of *halas* in Luke's context. The substance *halas* is still, according to the translators, tasteful table salt that can lose its taste, even though the rest of the text boldly contradicts this notion: the *halas* substance is good for 'soil' (*gē*) and a 'manure pile' (*kopria*), but can lose its potency (*mōranthē*), not its taste as the NRSV states.

Shillington tended to believe that "the salt **of the earth**" was some kind of fertilizer, like potash, phosphate or ammonium, abundant in the Salt Sea (Dead Sea) area.

Note that mixtures of some geological elements, including those mentioned above, are called "salts," while not being "table salt," i.e. sodium chloride (NaCl) chemically. Phosphorus (whose name is the same as that of Lucifer in Isa 14:12[14]) occurs in phosphates, or in bone ash, and was called "the Devil's element." Basically, what Jesus is intending to say in Matt 5:13–14 is "you are the fuel of my revolution, you are the fuel of my punishment of the wicked in Hell."[15]

It seems to me that the author of Mark 9:45–50 was thinking that the destruction of Sodom by burning phosphorus ("salt of the earth") was a good idea, that everyone would deserve it, and that hearers of this passage ("you") would be the agents of this fire. "Watch out, thou city set on the hill above the Valley of Gehinnom, the new Sodom of Jerusalem, this time thou canst not be hid," thought the Author of Matt 5:14.

Jesus was never a Gesenius, that German Professor of Semitology, but he was thoroughly versed in the Hebrew scriptures. He could not have known that Hebrew lexicographers now identify two or more distinct *MLḤ* roots. Nevertheless, Jesus seemingly combined the meanings of *MLḤ* in Exod 30:35 (incense salted is potent

12 But remember Job 6:6; see note 8 above.

13 KJV has "Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (Luke 14:34–35) [note by D.S.].

14 Cf. 2 Peter 1:19: "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

15 Ascribed to Lenin or to Trotsky: "Jews are the fuel for the revolution"; Hannah Szenes' saying: "Blessed is the Match (אשרי הגפרור)."

/ good / pure / holy) with that in Isa 51:6 and Jer 38:11–12 (something *MLḤ* might vanish away / wax old / become rotten) and placed it withing the context of his world revolution.

The misunderstood, and then mistranslated, expression used by a Galilean messiah was, first, remembered by his followers, and was then mis-placed into different contexts and hagiographical settings by the later generation[s]. But it *was* remembered, and, in this author's opinion, there is no doubt that Jesus *did* pronounce something like that.

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REVIEWS/RECENZJE

VERBUM VITAE • 42/2 (2024) 503–510

Anna Kuśmirek, and Marek Parchem, eds. and trans.
Prorocy wcześniejsi*. Vol. 1 of *Targum Jonatana. Edycja tekstu aramejskiego, przekład na język polski z wprowadzeniem i notami.
(Warszawa: Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie, 2022). Pp. 935. ISBN 9788382811889

Anna Kuśmirek, and Marek Parchem, eds. and trans.
Prorocy późniejsi*. Vol. 2, bk. 1 of *Targum Jonatana. Edycja tekstu aramejskiego, przekład na język polski z wprowadzeniem i notami.
(Warszawa: Uniwersytet Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie, 2023). Pp. 735. ISBN 9788382812206

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Na polskim rynku wydawniczym pośród prac poświęconych badaniom nad tekstem, przekładem i interpretacją Biblii pojawiła się kolejna ważna pozycja – przekład i opracowanie Targumu Jonatana – będąca owocem wieloletniej pracy dwojga biblistów: dr hab. Anny Kuśmirek oraz ks. prof. dr. hab. Marka Parchema. Ukazała się nakładem Wydawnictwa Naukowego UKSW w dwóch tomach. Pierwszy, poświęcony prorokom wcześniejszym, został wydany w 2022 roku, drugi – prorokom późniejszym – ukazał się w 2023 roku. Drugi tom, ze względu na obszerność zawartego w nim materiału, został podzielony na dwie części, co stanowi praktyczne rozwiązanie dla czytelnika.

Każdy tom został zaopatrzony w krótkie informacje o autorach. Już na ich podstawie można powiedzieć, że są to osoby kompetentne i dobrze przygotowane merytorycznie. Świadczą o tym odbyte przez nich studia w zakresie egzegezy i teologii biblijnej, historii tekstu Starego Testamentu oraz języków biblijnych w renomowanych ośrodkach w Polsce i za granicą. Adnotacje o dalszej działalności naukowej autorów wskazują zaś, że dokonany przekład poprzedzały rozliczne badania związane

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16839

z kwestią targumizmu, które zaowocowały prowadzonymi wykładami, działalnością translatorską, publikacjami naukowymi i popularnonaukowymi. Wystarczy wspomnieć o pracach Kuśmirek związanych z przekładem i opracowaniem interlinearnego wydania Pięcioksięgu (Kuśmirek 2003), redakcją interlinearnego wydania Ksiąg Prorockich (Kuśmirek 2008) i Pism (Kuśmirek 2009), a także przekładu i opracowania tekstu Targum Neofiti 1 do Księgi Liczb w ramach serii Biblia Aramejska (Kuśmirek, forthcoming) Z kolei Parchem, poza rozlicznymi publikacjami dotyczącymi literatury międzytestamentowej, wydał podręcznik do biblijnego języka aramejskiego (Parchem 2016) oraz dokonał przekładu i opracowania tekstu Targum Neofiti 1 do Księgi Powtórzonego Prawa w ramach serii Biblia Aramejska (Parchem 2021). Te, choć z konieczności lakoniczne opisy osiągnięć naukowych autorów prowadzą do wniosku, że czytelnik, biorąc do ręki ich kolejną pracę, otrzymuje rzetelne opracowanie przygotowane przez ekspertów.

Po spisie treści zamieszczony został ogólny wstęp do Targumu Jonatana, a następnie wstępy do kolejnych ksiąg, ich aramejskie teksty wraz z aparatem krytycznym, a także polski przekład zasadniczego tekstu z uwagami translatorskimi. Tu można postawić pytanie, czy w przyszłych wydaniach nie warto by pomyśleć o przekładzie aramejskich tekstów zawartych w aparacie krytycznym. To znacznie ubogaciłoby pracę, a dla czytelników mniej obeznanych z językiem aramejskim lub nieznających go wcale dałoby szansę wniknięcia w odmienne warianty tekstualne prezentowanego targumu.

Zgodnie z przyjętą koncepcją graficzną, na prawej stronie znajduje się tekst w języku aramejskim z aparatem krytycznym, a na lewej odpowiadający mu przekład na język polski z notami translatorskimi, wskazujący na podstawowe różnice w odniesieniu do tekstu masoreckiego Biblii Hebrajskiej. Każda strona pod względem zakresu tekstu polskiego odpowiada zakresowi tłumaczonego tekstu aramejskiego. Jest tak nawet w sytuacji, gdy tekst aramejski jest mniej obszerny niż polski przekład. Takie rozwiązanie z jednej strony kieruje uwagę czytającego na przekład, z drugiej ułatwia lekturę tekstu aramejskiego, biorąc pod uwagę kierunek jego odczytywania; pomaga również w porównywaniu obu tekstów, uwag translatorskich i informacji zawartych w aparacie krytycznym. Dodatkowa wolna przestrzeń na rozkładówkach książki pozwala czytającym i pracującym z tekstami na ewentualne własne notatki i uwagi. Ponadto każda karta zawiera żywą paginę z informacją o księdze i fragmencie podanym na stronie. Paginacja została umieszczona w stopce. To również bardzo dobre i praktyczne rozwiązanie pomagające w szybkim odnajdywaniu konkretnego fragmentu księgi biblijnej.

Wstępy ogólne w tomie pierwszym (t. 1, s. 8–16) oraz w drugim (t. 2, cz. 1, s. 8–16) zostały opracowane przez Kuśmirek. Pierwszy z nich otwiera ogólna charakterystyka zbioru Proroków w Biblii Hebrajskiej. Autorka przypomina nie tylko odmienny układ kanoniczny tych ksiąg w zbiorze żydowskim, ale podaje również ich zasadnicze cechy; wskazuje także na perspektywę czasową akcji poszczególnych ksiąg i zasadnicze elementy treści. Jest to pomocne zwłaszcza dla czytelników niebędących biblistami. Kuśmirek zwraca uwagę na specyfikę misji proroków niosących Izraelowi przestrogę przed zagrożeniami związanymi z odejściem od Boga, pouczenia moralne (t. 1), funkcję proroków jako głosicieli słowa Boga i interpretatorów rzeczywistości otaczającej Izraela. Przypomina również, że w tradycji żydowskiej zbiór proroków mniejszych traktowano jako jedną księgę (t. 1). Podane informacje mają charakter sygnalny, co jest zrozumiałe z racji na specyfikę pracy. Niewątpliwie autorka zakłada, że czytelnik jest obeznany z introdukcją do Starego Testamentu. Może jednak w pierwszym wstępie warto by choć jednym zdaniem wyjaśnić, dlaczego księgi, które opowiadają o dziejach Izraela, są określane w zbiorze żydowskim jako prorockie?

Kolejne informacje we wstępie (t. 1) dotyczą nazwy, pochodzenia i datacji Targumu Jonatana. Kuśmirek wskazała na złożoność kwestii autorstwa oraz na dwa najbardziej prawdopodobne etapy powstania tekstu targumu. Pierwszy obejmuje prace dokonane na terenie Judy w okresie rzymskim, drugi miał miejsce w Babilonii w okresie od III do V wieku. Autorka zaznacza jednocześnie bardzo istotne cechy tego przekładu: jego znaczenie dla judaizmu, funkcję interpretacyjną oraz rolę pośrednika pomiędzy językiem potocznym, jakim był język aramejski, a hebrajskim, w którym pierwotnie spisano księgi prorockie.

Po tym ogólnym wprowadzeniu zamieszczony został wstęp zawierający zasadnicze informacje o specyfice Targumu Jonatana do proroków wcześniejszych. Kuśmirek wskazuje w nim na technikę translacji aramejskiej, zwraca uwagę na obecne w niej tendencje do wiernego oddawania tekstu hebrajskiego przekazywanego przez tradycję masorecką. Następnie podkreśla wielość stosowanych przez tłumaczy technik pozwalających na pogodzenie zasadniczego założenia, czyli połączenia wierności wobec przekładanego tekstu z wprowadzanymi do tekstu interpretacjami proponowanymi przez tłumaczy. Autorka wstępu wskazuje, iż w tym celu stosowano słowa o innym znaczeniu niż ich pierwowzór hebrajski oraz dodawano nowe informacje do przekładanego tekstu. Są to główne strategie przekładowe, choć nie jedyne.

Po podaniu krótkiej listy zasadniczych kategorii zmian o charakterze interpretacyjnym, z zastrzeżeniem, że stanowią one jedynie próbę przybliżenia istotnych cech pracy targumistów, autorka wstępu podkreśla, iż nie są to fundamentalne zasady, i odsyła do wstępów do poszczególnych ksiąg, gdzie na przykładach ukazano specyficzne tendencje przekładowe w nich obecne. Faktycznie wstępy do tych ksiąg opracowane przez Kuśmirek i Parchema potwierdzają, że zapowiedź przedstawienia szczegółów strategii translatorskich charakterystycznych dla kolejnych ksiąg została konsekwentnie zrealizowana. Przykładem tego są choćby uwagi o technikach translatorskich w Księdze Samuela (t. 1, s. 288–95) ukazujące podkreślenia transcendencji Boga (taką rolę pełni skrót Tetragramu JWJ; t. 1, s. 289) czy monoteizmu (np. w przypadku mówienia o obcych bogach zastępowanie słowa „bóg” terminem „bożek”; t. 1, s. 291). Tym samym przystępujący do lektury tekstu targumicznego i jego przekładu otrzymuje we wstępie ogólnym zasadnicze i zwięzłe wprowadzenie ukazujące jego specyfikę, a następnie w kolejnych wstępach zostaje wprowadzony w szczegóły. Dzięki temu może się podjąć samodzielnej analizy prowadzącej do odkrywania przekazu zawartego przez aramejskich tłumaczy w ich pracy oraz odkrywać i poznawać zawarte w targumie rozumienie tekstu ksiąg proroków wcześniejszych obecne w judaizmie z epoki tego przekładu.

Wstęp zawiera także informacje dotyczące wydań, przekładów i opracowań służących jako pomoc w dokonaniu translacji targumu oraz uwagi odnoszące się do specyfiki przekładu polskiego, dla którego jako podstawa została wybrana edycja autorstwa Alexandra Sperbera (Sperber 1959; 1962). Edycja ta zawiera tekst aramejski z babilońską supralinearną wokalizacją, która odbiega od stosowanej w Biblii Hebrajskiej wokalizacji tyberiadzkiej. Kuśmirek i Parchem w swoim opracowaniu zdecydowali się wprowadzić tylko tekst spółgłoskowy. Prawdopodobnie chcieli w ten sposób uniknąć ewentualnych błędów wynikających z przesunięcia znaków samogłoskowych podczas składu czy druku tekstu. Jednak to rozwiązanie może utrudniać czytelnikowi lekturę oryginalnego tekstu targumu oraz budzić wątpliwości w kwestii wymowy, a w konsekwencji – znaczenia danych słów. Czy zatem w kolejnych wydaniach nie byłoby korzystniej podać tekstu wokalizowanego wskazującego na jednoznaczne odczytanie tekstu przyjętego za podstawę przekładu? Trzeba też zauważyć, że edycja Sperbera nie jest pozbawiona błędów, na co zwracali uwagę Martinez Borobio i Alejandro Diez Macho, późniejsi wydawcy manuskryptów Targumu Jonatana. W pracy Sperbera brakowało ważnych rękopisów pochodzących z kręgów sefardyjskich i aszkenazyjskich. Autorzy polskiego wydania zwrócili uwagę na tę kwestię i dokonali niezbędnych korekt. Natomiast jeśli chodzi o załączony aparat krytyczny do tekstu aramejskiego, to bazowa edycja dla polskiego wydania zawiera zasadniczo te przykłady zmian, które są istotne. Zatem przyjęte przez autorów rozwiązanie można ocenić jako dobre i wystarczające.

Opierając się na edycji Sperbera, autorzy przekładu Targumu Jonatana na język polski postawili sobie za cel oddanie charakteru i składni tekstu aramejskiego. Postanowili też wskazać na różnice pomiędzy tym przekładem a jego pierwowzorem hebrajskim. Tym samym w swej pracy wykazali, że nie można postawić znaku równości pomiędzy kanonicznymi księgami biblijnymi a targumem. Warto zwrócić tu uwagę na zabieg translatorski, który wzmocnił ten przekaz. Jest nim konsekwentnie stosowana transliteracja nazw własnych oraz imion. Dzięki temu ukazano ich brzmienie aramejskie, przez co odróżniono je od tych, które znamy z polskich przekładów biblijnych. Przykładem może być imię Jozuego, które za aramejskim tekstem brzmi Jehoszu. Podobnie Amoryci są określeni jako Emoraici, zaś nazwa miejscowości Jerycho brzmi Jericho (t. 1, s. 146). Spotykamy też zamiast Gibea nazwę Giba, przy czym odniesiona do równiny jest zapisana jako Geba (t. 1, s. 272). To ostatnie zróżnicowanie, jeśli nie jest literówką, rodzi pytanie o ryzyko związane z zaproponowanym rozwiązaniem przekładowym: Czy nie stanowi ono jednak utrudnienia w identyfikacji miejsc i postaci występujących w tekście dla czytelnika oswojonego z nazwami funkcjonującymi w polskich przekładach biblijnych? Może rozwiązaniem tego problemu byłoby zastosowanie nazw tradycyjnych w nawiasach, choć to mogłoby przyczynić się do nadmiernego zwiększenia objętości tekstu. W tej kwestii pewnie trudno znaleźć salomonowe rozwiązanie, stąd zrozumiałe, że autorzy pracy zdecydowali się zaproponować nowatorskie ujęcie, zapewne zdając sobie sprawę z jego ograniczeń. Praktyka lektury pozwoli natomiast odpowiedzieć, czy potrzebne będzie dokonanie jakichkolwiek korekt w tej kwestii.

Omawiane wprowadzenie kończy bibliografia przedmiotowa pozwalająca na orientację w obszarze zasadniczych prac dotyczących tak zjawiska targumizmu, jak i kwestii przekładowych w ogólnym zarysie oraz zasadniczej problematyki Targumu Jonatana.

Drugi tom również zawiera ogólne wprowadzenie Kuśmirek podające niezbędne informacje na temat Targumu Jonatana, przy czym autorka unika powtórzenia treści wstępu z tomu pierwszego, przekazując jedynie niezbędne i zasadnicze informacje, by następnie zarysować podstawową tematykę zbioru ksiąg proroków późniejszych. W dalszej części wskazuje na możliwą datację ich aramejskiego przekładu, sprowadzając ją do wpływów tannaickich z okresu powstania Bar Kochby oraz uzupełnień z kręgu amoraickiego datowanych na czas pomiędzy III a IV wiekiem. Obie grupy łączy z tendencjami interpretacyjnymi – pierwsza to reakcja na dramat zniszczenia Jerozolimy i wygnania Izraela, druga to podkreślanie elementu transcendentnego oraz wzywanie do wiernego zachowania zasad judaizmu. W kolejnej części wstępu wskazano na tendencje translatorskie i zaznaczono, że egzegetyczna praca tłumaczy polegała na wyborze jednego z wielu wariantów tekstu hebrajskiego albo na ich własnej interpretacji przekładanego fragmentu. Stąd tak wielka przydatność tekstu Targumu Jonatana dla prac związanych z badaniami krytycznymi tekstu hebrajskiego. Wprowadzenie przedstawia również zasadnicze narzędzia do pracy nad tekstem samego Targumu Jonatana do proroków późniejszych. Natomiast zawarta w nim charakterystyka proponowanego przekładu stanowi przypomnienie zasad podanych w pierwszym tomie z uzasadnieniem kwestiami praktycznymi podziału drugiego tomu na dwie części.

Po zapoznaniu się z ogólnymi zasadami pracy targumistów czytelnik może przejść do lektury tekstu kolejnych ksiąg prorockich składających się na Targum Jonatana. Tekst każdej księgi poprzedzają informacje ukazujące, kto jest autorem danego przekładu polskiego i opracowania danej księgi. Następnie otrzymujemy zasadnicze informacje dotyczące nazwy, kompozycji księgi, stosowanych technik translatorskich oraz bibliografii przedmiotowej.

Zgodnie z podziałem Biblii Hebrajskiej tom pierwszy Targumu Jonatana do proroków wcześniejszych obejmuje opracowanie i tłumaczenie Księgi Sędziów (t. 1, s. 153–281) i 1–2 Samuela (t. 1, s. 283–589) przygotowane przez Kuśmirek oraz Księgę Jozuego (t. 1, s. 27–151) i Księgi Królów (t. 1, s. 591–925) sporządzone przez

Parchema. Natomiast w drugim tomie Targumu Jonatana do proroków późniejszych Kuśmirek opracowała i przetłumaczyła aramejski Targum Izajasza (t. 2, cz. 1, s. 27–377) i dwunastu proroków (t. 2, cz. 2, s. 1061–67), a Parchem opracował i przełożył Targum Jeremiasza (t. 2, cz. 1, s. 379–735) i Ezechiela (t. 2, cz. 2, s. 741–1059). Dla podkreślenia jedności obydwu części tomu drugiego zachowana została paginacja ciągła. W całej pracy obojgu autorom tak w przypisach, jak i we wstępach udało się zachować umiar oraz podać istotne i niezbędne informacje. To pomaga w lekturze tekstu, a jednocześnie pozwala osobom zainteresowanym szczegółowymi kwestiami na dalsze własne badania.

Należy dodać, że każdy z tomów został zaopatrzony w trzy grupy indeksów znajdujących się na końcu pracy, przy czym w tomie 2 umieszczono je w zakończeniu części 2. Indeksy te ułatwiają dotarcie zarówno do konkretnych tekstów biblijnych, dzieł starożytnych związanych z pracą, jak i do współczesnych autorów, do których w tej pracy się odwoływano. Jako pierwszy indeks zostały podane odniesienia biblijne (t. 1, s. 929–33; t. 2, cz. 2, s. 1371–79), po nich następuje wykaz miejsc pozabiblijnych (t. 1, s. 943; t. 2, cz. 2, s. 1380–81) pozwalający łatwo odnaleźć teksty literatury starożytnej, rabinicznej oraz odniesienia do pism ojców Kościoła. Te ostatnie dotyczą Talmudu Jerozolimskiego i Babilońskiego, Miszny, *Historia Ecclesiastica* Euzebiusza z Cezarei, *De civitate Dei* Augustyna, *Prologus Galeatus* Hieronima, *Geographia* Ptolemeusza, Steli Meszy, tekstów z Qumran. Całość zamyka indeks autorów współczesnych (t. 1, s. 935; t. 2, cz. 2, s. 1382). Kolejność indeksów związana jest nie tylko ze znaczeniem wymienianych dzieł, ale również z obszernością prezentowanych przez nie odniesień do tekstu targumu. W przypadku literatury pozabiblijnej warto zwrócić uwagę na jej precyzyjne uszeregowanie.

Autorzy przekładu są konsekwentni w stosunku do zasad translatorskich nakreślonych we wstępie. Cenne jest, iż w przedstawionym tekście polskim unikają naśladowania stylu któregokolwiek innego polskiego przekładu biblijnego. Autorzy stosują klarowny i zrozumiały język polski. Uniknięto w przekładzie naśladowania języka biblijnego, a jednocześnie zachowano powagę właściwą dla tekstu religijnego, jakim jest targum. Przykładem tego może być fragment Sdz 16,16: „I stało się, że dręczyła go gadaniem swoim całymi dniami i naciskała na niego, i jego osoba była zgnębiona na śmierć" (t. 1, s. 250). Przedstawiona fraza wyraźnie zachowuje semicki charakter wypowiedzi, a jednocześnie unika próby „sakralizowania tekstu" przez stosowanie elementów charakterystycznych dla potocznej rozmowy dwojga ludzi. Dzięki temu tłumacze chronią w swej pracy mniej doświadczonych czytelników przed utożsamieniem Biblii i targumu. Natomiast w przypadku tekstu ksiąg proroków późniejszych bliskość targumu tekstowi biblijnemu jest bardziej widoczna, co wydaje się zrozumiałe z racji charakteru tekstu, ale i tu tłumacze oddawali specyfikę targumu, starając się unikać sformułowań funkcjonujących w przekładach biblijnych. Można to zobaczyć na przykładzie Iz 49,2: „I włożył swoje słowa w moje usta jak ostry miecz; ukrył mnie w cieniu swej potęgi. Uczynił mnie jak wybraną strzałę, która ukryta jest w kołczanie" (t. 2, cz. 1). Dobrane słownictwo pozwala wiązać tekst targumu z tekstem biblijnym, ale ich nie utożsamia, zaś stosowane przypisy precyzyjnie wskazują na różnice między Biblią Hebrajską a targumem.

Noty translatorskie bardzo jasno ukazują elementy różniące tekst targumu od tekstu biblijnego. Dzięki nim wyraźnie widać, że wspomniane różnice to nie tylko kwestia stylu czy słowa dobranego przez tłumacza, ale konsekwencja interwencji translatorskiej w tekst hebrajski stosowanej przez targumistów. Atutem zastosowanych przez autorów przekładu przypisów jest ich zwięzłość. Podają oni niezbędne i istotne uwagi. W ten sposób tłumacze za każdym razem pozwalają czytelnikowi na poznanie i porównanie różnic między tekstem aramejskim targumu a tekstem hebrajskim danej księgi. Natomiast własne uwagi ograniczają do wskazania tego, co jest dodatkiem lub parafrazą tekstu. Sygnalizują także dosłowne brzmienie tam, gdzie zastosowanie go w tekście polskim czyniłoby ten tekst niezrozumiałym, równocześnie nie nasuwają czytelnikowi gotowych wniosków czy rozwiązań dotyczących interpretacji tekstu i odczytania treści, ale umożliwiają mu samodzielną pracę nad tekstem.

Spoglądając na zewnętrzną stronę obu tomów polskiej edycji Targumu Jonatana, na uwagę zasługuje solidność ich wydania, co jest efektem pracy wydawnictwa, jak i osób zajmujących się składem oraz opracowaniem graficznym publikacji. Praca ukazała się w solidnej twardej oprawie. Jednocześnie zadbano o prostą, lecz ozdobną i elegancką szatę graficzną. Projekt okładki i grzbietu bazuje na miniaturach z jemeńskiego manuskryptu Targumu Jonatana. Ten element przypomina nam, iż sięgamy do tekstu dawnego, odzwierciedlającego długą tradycję żydowskiego przekazu i interpretacji ksiąg biblijnych. Warto podkreślić, że zachowanie umiaru w zdobieniach nie przesłania treści, lecz ją eksponuje.

Podsumowując, można powiedzieć, iż polska literatura biblijna wzbogaciła się o ważne, bardzo potrzebne i dobrze opracowane dzieło, jakim jest przekład Targumu Jonatana, obojgu zaś autorom należy się za to wdzięczność i uznanie. Miejmy też nadzieję, że będą oni podejmować dalsze prace na tym polu, a kolejny wydania recenzowanego dzieła przyniosą jeszcze doskonalsze opracowanie tego, co już zostało dokonane.

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Michał Karnawalski, 2022. *Heaven for Elijah? A Study of Structure, Style, and Symbolism in 2 Kings 2:1–18*, European Studies in Theology, Philosophy and History of Religions 30 (Berlin – Bern – Bruxelles – New York: Lang, 2022). Ss. 384. ISBN 978-3-631-87134-8. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3726/b19363

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Książka Michała Karnawalskiego jest drukowaną wersją doktoratu obronionego przez autora dwa lata wcześniej na Uniwersytecie Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w Warszawie. Składa się z wprowadzenia (Introduction, s. 23–42), sześciu rozdziałów (s. 43–301) oraz zakończenia (Conclusions and Proposals, s. 303–317). Na początku znajduje się spis skrótów (Abbreviations, s. 19–21), a na końcu „cytowana bibliografia" (Quoted Bibligraphy, s. 325–350) oraz indeksy (s. 350–381). Jak można się domyślać, w stosunku do pierwotnej, doktorskiej wersji autor wprowadził szereg korekt sugerowanych przez recenzentów i wydana przez niego książka jest dziełem pełniejszym, a dzięki wprowadzeniu kilku indeksów, treściowo bardziej przystępnym dla czytelnika.

Na początku autor – za Hermanem Gunkelem – zauważa, że interesująca go perykopa (2 Krl 2,1–18) stanowi powiązanie dwóch tematów: sukcesji po Eliaszu i wniebowzięcia (ang. *ascent*) Elizeusza. Zaraz potem stawia istotne pytanie: „jak to możliwe, że opowiadanie o sukcesji Elizeusza zostało zapamiętane jako opowiadanie o wniebowzięciu Eliasza?". Odpowiedzi na nie – jego zdaniem – można udzielić na dwa sposoby: intertekstualnie i intratekstualnie. Pierwsze z tych podejść prowadzi go do wniosku, że mamy do czynienia z jedynym tekstem w Biblii Hebrajskiej, który wprost opisuje, skądinąd popularny na starożytnym Bliskim Wschodzie, motyw wstąpienia/wzięcia do nieba. Drugie podejście polega, według autora, na „wyodrębnieniu cech charakterystycznych stylu, struktury oraz symboliki, które to elementy uprzywilejowują postrzeganie perykopy 2 Krl 2,1–18 bardziej jako opis wniebowzięcia/wstąpienia Eliasza niż jako opis sukcesji Elizeusza" (s. 32). Na kolejnych stronach (s. 37–42) autor prezentuje swoją metodę pracy i wynikający z niej podział na poszczególne rozdziały. Tym razem punkt wyjścia stanowi teza Romana Ingardena określona przez niego jako *phenomenological approach to the literary work*. Chodzi w nim o to, by przy interpretacji starożytnego tekstu uwzględniać również czynniki historyczne (*historical factors*). Karnawalski zgadza się z tym wymogiem. Chce się

ISSN 1644-8561 | e-ISSN 2451-280X | DOI: https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16927

podjąć analizy poszczególnych warstw tekstu (ang. *strata*) 2 Krl 2,1–18, a zarazem dla pełnej jego interpretacji, uwzględnić ich powiązanie z kolejnymi fazami powstawania tego opowiadania. Dostrzega jednak najpierw zasadniczą trudność w odróżnianiu wspomnianych *strata*, rozumianych przez niego jako „styl, struktura i symbolizm". Jak sam pisze, pojęcia te z jednej strony wymagają precyzyjnego zdefiniowania, a z drugiej interferencje zachodzące pomiędzy nimi mogą sprawiać, że takie ostre rozróżnienie może okazać się czysto ideologiczne i oddalać od narratywnej rzeczywistości. Niemniej ostatecznie autor podejmuje się dokonać takiego zdefiniowania wspomnianych trzech *strata* (s. 38–39).

W kolejnym podpunkcie („Methodology", s. 40–41) Karnawalski deklaruje posługiwanie się w swojej pracy metodą narracyjną, która polega na analizie stylu i struktury badanego przez niego tekstu w jej intratekstualnym aspekcie oraz zdefiniowaniu funkcji elementów wewnętrznych w odniesieniu do głównego wątku. Inspiracją do podziału badanej przez niego perykopy na sceny jest „analiza werbalna", którą zaproponował Jean-Louis Ska, zaś etapy w rozwoju wątku (Arystoteles, Tzvetan Todorov) oraz identyfikacja funkcji struktur stylistycznych (techniki narracyjne) to z kolei wpływ Meira Sternberga. Ostatecznie powiązania struktur stylistycznych i etapów w rozwoju wątku dokonać zamierza nasz autor, opierając się na modelowych badaniach nad rolą czytelnika (Umberto Eco) (s. 40).

Kolejny krok badawczy autora będzie miał charakter semiotyczny. Narzędzia, jakimi posługuje się semiotyka pozwolą, zdaniem Karnawalskiego, zbadać symboliczną warstwę opowiadania. Kierując się wreszcie wskazaniami innych badaczy (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johann Jacob Bachofen) przyznaje on istotną rolę czemuś, co określa mianem „proto-symbolu". Rozróżnia w końcu tzw. „symbol słaby/mocny" (ang. *strong/weak symbol*) oraz „przyległość" (ang. *contiguity*) i „indeksy" (ang. *indices*). Wszystkie te „nowe" terminy zamierza wyjaśnić we właściwym rozdziale, w którym podejmie się analizy tekstu tą właśnie metodą. Ostatnim krokiem badawczym, który zamierza wykonać autor, będzie zbadanie relacji istniejącej pomiędzy tekstem a tradycją ustną (zasady Gunkela i Alexandra Rofé).

Podejście metodologiczne zaproponowane przez Karnawalskiego już na wstępie zapowiada ciekawe wyniki badawcze. Metody narracyjna i semiotyczna są w ostatnim czasie rzadziej stosowane w polskiej biblistyce, i nie tylko w niej. Jak wykazał swego czasu w swojej pracy habilitacyjnej Zdzisław Pawłowski (2003), pierwsza z nich może tymczasem wnieść dużo nowych treści i odkryć nowe elementy przesłania dobrze znanych i przebadanych już tekstów. Nie inaczej jest z prawie zupełnie niestosowaną w polskiej biblistyce metodą semiotyczną. Jakkolwiek Karnawalski nie posługuje się zasadami analizy narracyjnej w podobny sposób jak wspomniany Pawłowski, a stosowane przez niego słownictwo również odbiega często od przyjętych wzorców (por. Kłósek 2014), to samo połączenie analizy narracyjnej i semiotyki wydaje się tu bardzo nowatorskie i – jak wspomnieliśmy – zapowiada ciekawe efekty takiego podejścia do tekstu.

W rozdziale pierwszym („From Hebrew to English", s. 43–67) autor wyjaśnia, że jego celem nie jest „usprawiedliwienie" wszystkich wyborów dokonanych w tłumaczeniu. W jego opinii uzasadnienia wymaga jedynie przekład niektórych sformułowań (ang. *whirlwind to the sky*: ww. 1a.11b; *living Yhwh with the life of your brath, I will not leave you*; ww. 2a.4a.6a; *he also*, w. 14; oraz wybór Ketiv/Qere w w. 16a). Chodzi o istotne momenty narracji i nie mniej istotne sformułowania, które decydują o właściwym zrozumieniu opisanych wydarzeń. Widać w prezentacji i uzasadnieniu jego wyborów translatorskich dużą precyzję i samodzielność badawczą. Nie inaczej jest też w drugim rozdziale („From Redaction to Structure", s. 71–111). Autor omawia tu krytycznie najpierw różne opinie na temat pochodzenia i redakcji cyklów o Eliaszu i Elizeuszu, uwzględniając także opinie polskich badaczy (Stanisław Łach, Tomasz Hergesel). Ostatecznie zgadza się z propozycją Rofé i Stevena McKenziego, że część opowieści o Eliaszu jest pochodną opowieści o Elizeuszu. Teksty, w których obaj bohaterowie występują razem (1 Krl 19,19–21; 2 Krl 2,1–18), uznaje za nimi za część tradycji związanej z drugim z nich (część tzw. *Vita* – Rofé). W końcu opowiada się za wiodącą dziś opinią o późniejszej redakcji intersującej go perykopy (poszerzenia z ww. 1.16–18). W tej części monografii autor dokonuje raczej tylko wyboru i ustala najbardziej aktualny *status quaestionis.* O wiele więcej samodzielności wykazuje już jednak w części poświęconej strukturze badanej przez siebie perykopy. Dokonuje najpierw przeglądu opinii zakładających chiazm w strukturalnej budowie perykopy (Jack R. Lundbom, T. R. Hobbs, Jesse C. Long, Jr., Robert L. Cohn, Thomas L. Brodie) i zauważa oraz uzasadnia niewystarczalność takich propozycji. Dalej przygląda się więc propozycjom strukturalnym „nieopartym na chiazmie", a w końcu proponuje zastosowanie kryteriów narracyjnych do ustalenia „właściwej" struktury interesującego go tekstu. W tzw. *macro-narrative* (s. 100–104) sugeruje zastosowanie podziału opowiadania o Eliaszu i Elizeuszu na trzy części, tj. cykl o Eliaszu i cykl o Elizeuszu oraz przynależna do obu tzw. *Transitional Cycle* (s. 103), do którego zalicza m.in. badaną przez siebie perykopę. Na poziomie *micro-narrative* (s. 104–109) zastosowanie kryteriów narracyjnych prowadzi go do wyodrębnienia w perykopie 2 Krl 2,1–18 trzech zasadniczych scen (1–6/7–14/15–18). Sam podział na trzy sceny w tym wypadku nie jest nowy, ale sposób jego uzasadnienia zaproponowany przez autora niewątpliwie już tak.

Kolejne rozdziały monografii oparte są na tym podziale strukturalnym. W rozdziale trzecim („The First Scene: «From Gilgal to Jericho»", s. 113–167) autor analizuje najpierw tzw. *verbal structures*, rozróżniając pomiędzy narratorem a bohaterami w roli podmiotu, oraz wyodrębnia dodatkowo w pierwszym przypadku trzy kolejne kategorie: *times verbal structures*, *space verbs* oraz *speech verbs*, zaś w drugim – słowa Eliasza i Elizeusza oraz tzw. synów prorockich. W kolejnym kroku badawczym proponuje dalszy podpodział na *incidents* i *quasi-incidents* oraz definiuje techniki narracyjne zastosowane w tej części perykopy (ww. 1–6: *prolepsis*, *repetition*). Ostatnią część swoje analizy określa mianem *plot stages* (tj. etapy w rozwoju akcji). Bardzo precyzyjne rozróżnia w tej części swojej monografii przejście pomiędzy tym, co określa jako *equilibrium* i *desequilibrium*. Jak sam zauważa, wybrana przez niego nomenklatura jest jedną z możliwych, ale też dzięki niej z powodzeniem udaje się mu przekonująco uzasadnić swoje końcowe wnioski (s. 163–164).

Rozdział czwarty („The Second Scene: «At the Jordan River»", s. 169–222) ma podobną strukturę i sekwencję badawczą. W tej części pracy zauważa się nowe techniki narracyjne (*simultaneity* i *point of view*) oraz kolejne etapy w rozwoju wątku narracyjnego (*plot stage*). Karnawalski definiuje je jako *extended* disquilibrium oraz *re-establishment of the* equilibrium. W tym rozdziale autor zwraca szczególną uwagę na zdanie, które przetłumaczył w sensie: *double portion of the spirit* (s. 214–215). Jak zauważa, może ono oznaczać, podobnie jak w Pwt 21,17, podwójną porcję (tak większość egzegetów) lub mieć sens 2/3 (por. Za 13,8). Karnawalski słusznie wskazuje, że badany przez niego tekst jest postdeuteronomistyczny, co nie pozwala zbyt łatwo wykluczyć drugiego ze znaczeń (por. potrzeba dwukrotnego uderzenia wody w Jordanie, pomimo że w kontekście Elizeusz dokonuje dwa razy więcej cudów niż Eliasz). Autor ostatecznie nie rozwiązuje tej kwestii, traktując ją jako problem otwarty, ale zarazem uzasadniający potrzebę wprowadzenia kolejnej sceny (s. 217–219). Końcowe wnioski, które wyciąga z analizy całej drugiej sceny (s. 220–222), są jednak interesujące i pod wieloma względami nowatorskie. Ten ubogacający dotychczasową wiedzę fakt, to niewątpliwie efekt zastosowanej przez niego metodologii badawczej i umiejętne jej wykorzystanie.

Rozdział piąty („The Third Scene: «From the Jordan to Jericho»", s. 223–256) pod względem strukturalnym i metodologicznym jest podobny do dwóch poprzednich. Również tu autor odkrywa nowe techniki narracyjne (*analepsis*, w. 18a), kolejny etap w rozwoju wątku narracyjnego (*end of denouement*, w. 15) oraz „konkluzję" (ww. 16–18). W tym miejscu warto zwrócić uwagę nie tylko na bardzo dobrą znajomość metody badawczej, którą autor umiejętnie się posługuje, ale zarazem na komunikatywność jego przekazu. Karnawalski nie tylko precyzyjnie informuje czytelnika, co i dlaczego robi w kolejnych krokach badawczych, ale dodatkowo ujmuje w kwadratowe nawiasy hasła zapowiadające na początku każdego kolejnego kroku to, o czym będzie za chwilę mowa. Podobną rolę odgrywają w jego pracy wspominane już podsumowania, zbierające owoce przeprowadzonych analiz. Z tak zebraną dotychczas wiedzą o wiele łatwiej autorowi i czytelnikom pójść dalej w eksplorowaniu treści i przekazu badanej perykopy.

Ostatni, szósty rozdział („From Narrative to Symbolism", s. 257–301) kieruje uwagę czytelnika na symbolikę. Autor stosuje pojęcie „symbol", odróżniając go precyzyjnie od innych fenomenów literackich (np. alegoria). Na tym etapie – jak sam pisze – posługuje się zasadami wypracowanymi przez Goethego, Todorova i Eco (s. 257–259). Wyszczególnia też *itinerary symbolism* (*Bethel*, *Jericho*, *sky*), *heritage symbolism* (*sons of*, *two*, *spirit of*, *mantle*) i *etiological symbolism* (*Gilgal*, *whirlwind*, *chariotry*). Tej ostatniej kategorii przyporządkowuje też, choć pod odrębnym tytułem, motyw *further remarks on rolled up*. Na ostatni paragraf składa się analiza symboliki na poziomie tekstu greckiego (LXX), z czego autor czerpie wiedzę pozwalającą porównać mu, co zostało zachowane w nim z tekstu hebrajskiego, a co uległo zmianie wraz ze zmianą języka przekazu. Karnawalski klasyfikuje tu omawiane przez siebie elementy jako alegorie (*Bethel*, *Jericho*) i symbole (*Jordan*, *sky*, *son of*, *two*, *spirit of*, *mantle*), a całą tak wyróżnioną grupę (określaną dotąd jako *etiological*) traktuje jako *proto-symbolism*. Potem jednak mianem tym określi jedynie Gilgal, a kolejne elementy (*whirlwind* i *chariotry*) sklasyfikuje jako *allegory and symbolism*, zaś ostatni paragraf (*rolled up*) pozostawi bez szczegółowej klasyfikacji. Każdy z symboli będzie potem analizowany przez niego etapami (morfologia, syntaksa, styl) oraz pod kątem funkcji, jaką pełni on w narracji, a także występowania oraz identyfikacji semiotycznej. Na szczególną uwagę zasługuje według autora *Gilgal*, element wyróżniony przez niego jako proto-symbol. To, jego zdaniem, najważniejszy element narracji, który znika jednak potem w tłumaczeniu LXX.

W podsumowaniu Karnawalski zbiera wnioski wyciągnięte w trakcie swojej analizy, stosując dodatkowe kategorie i podziały: alegorie słabe (*Bethel*, *Jericho*) i silne (*rolled up*); symbole słabe (*sky*, *sons*, *two*) i silne (*Jordan*, *spirit*, *mantel*, *whirlwind*, *chariotry*) oraz wspomniany już proto-symbol (*Gilgal*). Czytelnik jego monografii nie ma wątpliwości, że autor doskonale opanował i owocnie posłużył się metodą analizy semiotycznej, praktycznie rzadko, o ile w ogóle stosowanej w polskiej biblistyce. Już sam ten fakt, że przybliża on swoim czytelnikom tę metodę i pokazuje, ile ciekawych i nowych wniosków pozwala ona wyciągnąć z badanego tekstu, czyni z jego monografii lekturę, po którą warto sięgnąć.

Ostatnia część monografii (Conclusions and Proposals, s. 303–317) pełni rolę zakończenia. Autor dochodzi do wniosku, że przeprowadzona przez niego analiza symboliki w perykopie 2 Krl 2,1–18 (chodzi głównie o scenę drugą; ww. 7–14) pozwala sądzić, iż temat *Eliah's ascent* jest zakorzeniony w tradycji ustnej związanej z Eliaszem, co uczyniło ją na tyle silną, że zdominowała uwagę czytelnika na sobie zamiast na sukcesji Elizeusza („Proto-symbolism vs. Hierarchical Comlpexity", s. 303). Dla pełnego uzasadnienia swoich wniosków autor raz jeszcze zbiera syntetycznie wyniki przeprowadzonych przez siebie analiz, starając się wykazać obecność wspomnianej *hierarchical complexity* w narracji na poziomie złożoności stylu i struktury, relacji zachodzących pomiędzy podstawowymi kategoriami, a więc hierarchiczność w sferze przestrzeni, czasu i podmiotów. Analizuje potem kategorię wskazaną jako proto-symbol w relacji do wspomnianej *hierarchical complexity.* Po tej przekonującej prezentacji autor zgadza się z tezą Rofé, że epizod z 2 Krl 2,1–18 stanowi część gatunku literackiego określanego mianem *Vita*. Zanim jednak tekst osiągnął ten kształt literacki, przeszedł – zdaniem Karnawalskego – etapy pośredniego rozwoju (legenda i tzw. przepracowana legenda, ang. *elaborated legenda*). Według niego proto-symbol (*Gilgal*) swoją pełną rolę uwydatnia na poziomie fonetycznym, stając się synonimem dla dwóch fundamentalnych słów w narracji (*whirlwind* i *chariotry*) oraz – poprzez aliterację – dla motywu *rolled up*. To, zdaniem Karnawalskiego, stanowi ślad tradycji ustnej, gdyż dzięki powyższym technikom ułatwiano sobie zapamiętywanie i przekazywanie określonych treści. Te ślady stały się jednak niewidoczne w procesie adaptacji legendy do języka zrozumiałego dla późniejszych czytelników.

Zdaniem autora w perykopie zachowały się trzy zasadnicze tradycje: *chariotry*, *whirlwind* i *rolled up.* Idąc śladem analizy krytycznoliterackiej zaproponowanej przez Carla Schmitta, Karnawalski umiejscawia w kolejnych warstwach literackich wskazanych przez tego autora zaproponowane przez siebie trzy etapy powstawania perykopy (legenda, przepracowana legenda, *Vita*) i omawia proces przepracowania wymienionych trzech zasadniczych tradycji w ramach procesu redagowania perykopy 2 Krl 2,1–18.

Zaletą omówionej powyżej monografii jest niewątpliwie zaproponowana metoda analizy, która pozwala odkryć w dobrze znanej i przeanalizowanej przecież perykopie biblijnej nowe pokłady informacji i wyciągnąć z nich szereg nowatorskich wniosków. Książka Karnawalskiego jest więc nie tylko przykładem tego, jak nowe podejście metodologiczne może ubogacić naszą wiedzę o konkretnym tekście biblijnym, ale również owocem rzetelnie wykonanej analizy stanowiącej cenny wkład w rozwój wiedzy biblijnej. Fakt, że ukazała się – póki co – w języku angielskim (to język oryginalny doktoratu) w znacznym stopniu może ograniczyć jej przystępność dla „szeregowego" polskiego czytelnika, ale niewątpliwie stanowi lekturę, do której powinni zajrzeć badacze poszukujący nowych sposobów podejścia do tekstu biblijnego.

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