Verbum Vitae

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Verbum Vitae

Religious or Spiritual? Empirical Manifestations of Contemporary Changes in Poles' Self-Declarations and Media Representations

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Abstract: This paper comprises part of the current research on the phenomenon of new spirituality, conducted within the sociology of religion and social communication and media sciences. It aims to analyze selected manifestations of the new spirituality entering into the religious sphere of a religiously homogeneous society based on the example of Poland. A complementary application of quantitative and qualitative methods was proposed. The subject of the analysis is the results of a representative survey in which Poles define themselves in terms of religiosity and spirituality, with examples of their search for content on a new spirituality through online resources using the assumptions of the theory of social representations. The above concept resulted in the bipartite structure of the main part of the article. It was preceded by a theoretical introduction synthetically presenting phenomena identified as key features of new spirituality and ended with a discussion of the results and conclusions. The analyses indicate that, in Polish society, the category of phenomena and processes classified as new spirituality is distinguishable but complex and diverse. In the subsequent stages of the analysis, their socio-demographic determinants were shown, and then the media representations of the new spirituality were identified, categorized, and put into typologies.

Keywords: religiosity, spirituality, empirical manifestations of spirituality, media representations of spirituality

New spirituality, a subject of interest in many scientific disciplines, does not have an unambiguous definition or operationalization. It is a diverse, changeable, and fluid reality that takes many forms and encompasses many dimensions. Definition proposals formulated by researchers are more often descriptions of the phenomenon in its selected aspects rather than widely accepted definitions with precisely delineated meanings. This is due to the vagueness and ambiguity of the term as well as the scope and scattered nature of its designata. As a result, the concept of new spirituality remains unclear despite its boom in various science and interdisciplinary research fields.[1]

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1   Bellamy, "Spiritual Values"; Davie, *Socjologia religii*; Grabowska, *Bóg a sprawa polska*; Mielicka-Pawłowska, "Religijny wymiar duchowości"; Mariański, "O nowej duchowości"; Zduniak, "Duchowość w epoce mediów elektronicznych"; Waaijman, "Spirituality"; Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace*.

This does not change the fact that, for the needs of specific questions and research projects, attempts are made to formulate it theoretically for analysis and inter-subjective discussion.[2] They make it more accessible yet, at the same time, unlimited in the possible directions of investigation and research questions. From the multitude of scientific studies, empirical observations, and interdisciplinary conclusions, it is possible to distinguish elements constituting spirituality as a socio-cultural phenomenon and a common feature of contemporary Western societies.[3] They will be described synthetically below to provide a background to understand and further analyze the empirical material in this paper.

The new spirituality penetrates other spheres of life unrelated to religion, such as medicine, health, education, politics, and business, and finds expression in novel individual and social phenomena. It is often perceived as a socio-cultural megatrend,[4] which has become the subject of systematic analysis in the sociology of religion since the end of the 20th century.[5] It is also an issue explored in social communication and media studies because an increase in online interest in religion and spirituality can be observed.[6]

The expansion of a new spirituality was associated in the first decades of New Age activity with the development of the publications market popularizing spiritual ideas and practices. In the following years, it entered the digital space, starting to colonize the internet, which became one of the areas for the manifestation, supply, and consumption of spiritual products, a place for constructing individualized ideas of spirituality and expressing the *sacrum*. This finally led to scientific research on techno-spirituality or cyber-spirituality.[7] According to Hubert Knoblauch, we now observe the interference between religious culture and popular culture, manifested in and having an effect on the development of popular spirituality that is individualized, variable, and often modified.[8] Stieg Hjarvard interprets these phenomena in terms of mediatization typical of postmodernity, with the dominance of media culture also relating to the sphere of the *sacrum* and new spirituality.[9]

The new spirituality is viewed as a manifestation and element of processes typical of contemporary Western societies, including pluralism, secularization,

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[2]   Konecki, "Czy ciało może być świątynią duszy?," 15–16; Mariański – Wargacki, "Nowa duchowość," 138; Pasek – Dyczewska, "Człowiek i natura," 67.

[3]   Davie, *Socjologia religii*, 222.

[4]   Libiszowska-Żółtkowska, "Resakralizacja w ponowoczesnej scenerii"; Mariański, "O nowej duchowości"; Wargacki, "Duchowość w kulturze ponowoczesnej"; Zulehner, *Spiritualität – mehr als Megatrend*.

[5]   Wuthnow, *After Heaven*.

[6]   Berger – Douglas, "The Internet as Virtual Spiritual Community," 175–188; Campbell, "Spiritualising the Internet," 1–26; Campbell, *Exploring Religious Community Online*, 205–224; Majewski, "Ewangelia w sieci," 153–184; Misztal, "Przestrzeń medialna," 157–169; Sierocki, "Oblicza religii," 59–61.

[7]   Holmes, "Spirituality."

[8]   Knoblauch, "Privatreligion/Privatisierun"; Knoblauch, "Individualisierung."

[9]   Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion," 9–26; Hjarvard, "Three Forms of Mediatized Religion," 21–44; Hjarvard, *The Mediatization of Culture and Society*; Szulich-Kałuża, "The Pluralism of Spirituality"; Szulich-Kałuża, "Tożsamość religijna."

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desecularization, and resacralization.[10] It is recognized as a manifestation of religious individualization, developing under conditions of functional differentiation and pluralization of world views, progressing in societies. At the same time, it is democratic, easily accessible, and non-hierarchical.[11] This creates favorable circumstances for the independent construction of faith (a so-called religious *bricolage*), using elements and content from various religious and non-religious traditions.[12] In postmodernity characterized by uncertainty, risk, and liquidity, spirituality for many people means a new kind of "sacred canopy," the equivalent of religion, providing a sense of meaning and security.[13]

In relation to religiosity, new spirituality is sometimes associated with a religious revival within or on the periphery of traditional religious organizations. It is perceived as an expression of selective religiosity or extra-religious religiosity, situated outside the boundaries of traditional religious systems and institutionalized religiosity, along with negating religious organizational forms, rituals, and cults, keeping a distance from the Church dogmatics.[14]

The emergence of spirituality without confessional mediation favors religious and ecclesiastical transformation. It is expressed by a decrease in religious faith declarations, the frequency of practicing religion and subjective involvement (prayers), departing from traditional religious communities and churches, and the consolidation of selective, inconsistent, and fragmented religiosity.[15] In the wide range of labels used to identify concepts of spirituality, in order to specify its currently discussed empirically recognized variant, there is also the category of atheistic spirituality.[16]

The extent of the bonds or the alternative nature of religiosity and spirituality remains a discussion topic. On the one hand, one position postulates that spirituality, as a socio-cultural phenomenon, loses its religious connotations, emancipates itself from the influence of religion, and gains an independent status.[17] On the other hand, there are arguments that it is impossible to separate these realities from each other, and some empirical studies suggest a relationship between religiosity and spirituality in the experience and awareness of the respondents.[18]

The new spirituality is interpreted as a return to the *sacrum* without the mediation of religion and churches. Keeping religion at a distance means, at the same time, reducing transcendence, transposing the sacred, manifesting its subjectivization and

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10   Dobbelaere, *Sekularyzacja*; Taylor, *Oblicza religii dzisiaj*.
11   Lynch, *The New Spirituality*.
12   Siegers, "Spiritualität."
13   Wargacki, "Duchowość w kulturze ponowoczesnej," 27–28.
14   Knoblauch, *Populäre Religion*.
15   Mariański, "O nowej duchowości," 50.
16   Comte-Sponville, *Duchowość ateistyczna*; Skurzak, *Duchowość ateistyczna*.
17   Chmielewski, "Duchowość chrześcijańska," 163.
18   Motak, "Religia – religijność – duchowość."

privatization, and moving from the vertical dimension to the horizontal reality of man and his world. Contrary to secularization theses, researchers' attention is drawn to resacralization and re-spiritualization of reality, thanks to a subjectivist orientation and the abolition of the binary concept of transcendence.[19] These phenomena are associated with another distinctive feature of the new spirituality, which is its immanent character resulting from the central place of the individual and personal experience, the belief in one's ability to overcome the limitations of one's biological nature.[20]

Man, as the subject of beliefs, the central point creating their content and ranges according to one's ideas and needs, takes the place of transcendence. Privatized spirituality appreciates and makes basic a person's experiences and sensations, the pursuit of emotional saturation. As the work of an individual, it becomes an option to choose from based on freedom, law, and the ability to autonomously create sense and meaning, delineating the boundaries of what is transcendent.[21] At the same time, the new spirituality is treated as a carrier of a whole range of human experiences, showing an individual's potential, imagination, creativity, spontaneity, perseverance, consistency in action, relationships with oneself, others, God, spirit, or transcendence. Spirituality also includes such attitudes and impressions as delight, sanctity, adoration, sacrifice, suffering, and generosity, referring to gender differences or ecological sensitivity.[22]

The horizontal and subjectivist nature of the new spirituality, its rooting in individual experience and exploration, draws attention to another feature, at the same time being the consequence of the previous ones, oriented toward psychological well-being, harmony, and unity with the universe. The new spirituality aims at holistic interpretations of the world and man, including the psyche, body, health, rest, and work. It offers practices aimed at achieving the state of perfect health for one's soul and body and even self-transcendence.[23]

In trend analysis, there is a link between spirituality and caring for the quality of life as broadly understood *wellness*. Health is understood more as the absence of disease. The values are spiritual development, internal improvement, a sense of happiness and fulfillment, self-realization, and *wellness,* which lead to a state of holistic health combining the physical and mental dimensions.[24]

According to Paul Heelas, the center of contemporary spirituality is life itself. It is the carrier of meaning and development, and spirituality is located in the depths of life, and all its practices aim toward it.[25]

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[19] Luckmann, *Niewidzialna religia*; Mariański, "O nowej duchowości."
[20] Bellah *et al.*, *Skłonności serca*; Mielicka-Pawłowska, "Religijność zorientowana ekologicznie."
[21] Collins, *Łańcuchy rytuałów interakcyjnych*; Mariański, "O nowej duchowości."
[22] King, *The Search for Spirituality*, 3, 14–15.
[23] Mariański, "O nowej duchowości."
[24] Sierocki, "Oblicza religii," 59–61.
[25] Heelas, "Work Ethics," 78–96; Heelas, "The Spiritual Revolution," 371–372.

Empirical research strives to identify the described phenomena. The subjects of interdisciplinary analyses include practices, training, publications, and rituals, along with various forms of popularization, with their imitation or equivalents, including the mediation of internet portals.[26] From the perspective of social sciences, research also concerns changes in religiosity in individual countries and phenomena classified as belonging to the new spirituality. Indicators used by sociologists of religion include the self-declarations of respondents expressed in terms of religiosity and spirituality. They were used, among others, in American and European research projects.[27] However, the results remain controversial, as they indicate the existence of strong relationships between religiosity and spirituality; as in American society, researchers focused on a minority that describes itself as spiritual but non-religious.[28]

Findings regarding the relationship between religiosity and spirituality in the awareness of individual societies differ depending on the cultural context and the degree of religious heterogeneity. A particularly interesting situation is observed in religiously homogeneous countries with one main denomination, such as Italy, Portugal, or Poland, where religion is rooted in culture and identity. In this study, we want to draw attention to its specificity in identifying manifestations of new spirituality.

The analyses of religiosity in Polish society indicate the coexistence of a high level of self-declaration of faith and a decline in the frequency of religious practices, a low percentage of deeply religious, eclectic beliefs, abandoning institutionalized religion, keeping away and weakening trust in the institutional Church, and finally selectivity in relation to the dogmas of faith and moral norms.[29] Declarations of faith do not always go hand in hand with professing full dogmatic contents. Deep faith and systematic religious practices are often accompanied by a belief in superstitions, magic, and astrology, with various para-religious phenomena.[30]

Attitudes combining Catholicism, popular piety, and new spiritual trends are common, for example, belief in telepathy, clairvoyance, horoscopes, and the use of alternative medicine.[31] The above-mentioned research on self-definition in terms of religiosity and spirituality also covered Polish society. According to data from the end of the nineties, non-religious spirituality was the least common in Poland among all other European countries surveyed; to this day, it is claimed that it is found in 1% to 2% of Poles.[32]

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26   Sierocki, "Oblicza religii."

27   Fuller, *Spiritual, But Not Religious*; Barker, "The Church Without and the God Within."

28   Motak, "Religia – religijność – duchowość," 214.

29   Mariański, "O nowej duchowości."

30   Mariański, *Tożsamości religijne*, 115; Klimski, "Pluralizm religijny w Polsce."

31   Jędrzejek, "Na ścieżkach duchowości."

32   Barker, "The Church Without and the God Within"; Barker, "Jeszcze więcej różnorodności"; Mariański, *Nowa religijność i duchowość*, 144–164; Mariański, "O nowej duchowości," 58.

In the context outlined, exciting research questions arise as to whether and how the new spirituality marks its existence and manifests itself in a religiously homogeneous society where Church religiosity is alive and still dominant. We propose an analysis covering: 1) the results of a survey in which Poles redefine themselves in terms of religiosity and spirituality and 2) an exemplification of the search for content about a new spirituality through online resources in Poland.

In specifying the above research intentions, we ask questions about the extent to which the category of spirituality is an element of Poles' self-definition compared with religiousness or without religious references. What type of content related to spirituality do people look for and find on the internet? To what extent do people relate to the Catholic Church's religious sphere and spirituality, and to what extent are they related to the sphere of spirituality without religion? What phenomena and processes, including their directions, are indicated by the analyzed self-declarations of Poles and research into the digital space? Can stating that spirituality has become an autonomous experience of Poles be justified?

1. Methodology

Conscious that the contemporary social sciences methodology has limited possibilities in adequately approaching the phenomenon of new spirituality and finding accurate answers to these questions, we propose a complementary application of qualitative and quantitative methods.

The subject of the analysis will be data from a representative multi-topic survey conducted by KANTAR POLSKA SA in September 2020 at the request of the Institute of Sociological Sciences of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin on a statistically representative sample of 1,010 Poles aged 18+. A random household address sample was used. The research was carried out based on computer-assisted personal interviewing (CAPI), i.e., interviews in respondents' homes/apartments. The interview questionnaire consisted of several short thematic blocks, one of which concerned the religiosity and spirituality of Poles. As part of it, a modified wording of the question referred to in the introduction to this paper was proposed concerning self-determination in terms of religiosity and spirituality. The statistical analysis takes into account independent variables, which, in the light of sociological research, are dependent on various dimensions of religiosity and spirituality. In this study, they diversified the study population to a statistically significant extent. These include age, gender, education, religious practices, and an assessment of one's financial situation. The structure of the research sample is presented in Table 1.

The empirical sociological analyses will be enriched with an analysis of online material.

Table 1. The overall statistics

Variable	Category	N/M	%/SD
Sex	Man	483	47.8
	Woman	527	52.2
Age	24 and younger	113	11.2
	25–44	363	35.9
	45–64	340	33.7
	65 and older	194	19.2
Education	Elementary/Junior High	175	17.3
	Vocation	240	23.7
	High school	348	34.5
	Higher Education	247	24.5
Religious practices	Believers and regular practitioners	240	23.7
	Believers and non-regular practitioners	445	44.0
	Non-practicing believers	251	25.0
	Non-believers	74	7.3
Assessment of the material situation	I'm doing well	349	34.6
	I do well, on average	588	58.2
	I am not well-off	73	7.2

Media content on spirituality will be developed using the assumptions of the theory of social representations by Serge Moscovici.[33] We use the property of social representations that specifies the processes of collective meaning creation, resulting in shared cognitive constructs that can change individual and collective thinking in society.[34] According to Moscovici,[35] there are two essential functions of representation. First, they conventionalize (anchor) concepts, people, events, and situations into a specific linguistic or visual form. In this way, they assign them to a general, previously known category, gradually isolating their common meanings. Second, they are prescriptive in the sense that they are suggested and even imposed on people through social contacts, established structures, and the binding rules of social coexistence. These representations are intended to "make something unknown, or a mere unfamiliarity familiar."[36]

Representations are firmly embedded in communication practices such as dialogue, debates, media, and public and scientific discourses.[37] They use many

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[33] Moscovici, "The Myth of the Lonely Paradigm," 939–967; Moscovici, "The Phenomenon of Social Representations," 3–69; Moscovici, "Notes Towards a Description of Social Representations," 211–250; Moscovici, *The Invention of Society*; Moscovici, *Social Representations*; Moscovici, "Why a Theory of Social Representations?," 8–35; Moscovici, *Psychoanalysis*.

[34] Höijer, "Social Representations Theory," 3.

[35] Moscovici, "The Phenomenon of Social Representations," 7–10.

[36] Moscovici, "The Phenomenon of Social Representations," 24.

[37] Marková, *Dialogicality and Social Representations*.

mechanisms to conventionalize the phenomena, including naming, emotional anchoring, thematic anchoring, metaphoric anchoring, and anchoring via basic antinomies. Media representations will be treated as semantic constructs conceptualizing spirituality and generating meaning.

 As indicated above, we treat online texts as semantic constructs that generate meanings. The research intends to analyze the "implementation" of the textual categories of spirituality and its manifestations, which create specific virtual dictionaries of spirituality, conceptualizing the subjects in question. The movement of internet users in the global network in search of information about spirituality indicates that modern people are interested in it, and the media space is conducive to these interests.[38] For those seeking knowledge and spiritual experiences, the richness of content offered in cyberspace, with its speed, ease of access, and anonymity, makes it an ideal alternative to the real world.[39]

This study focuses on creating social representations through media communication channels using websites. We look at two representation formation mechanisms: naming and thematic anchoring. First, by calling something, "we tear it out of disturbing anonymity," give it a genealogy and put it into complexes of specific words, locating it in reality and the identity matrix of our culture: "we extricate it from a disturbing anonymity to endow it with a genealogy and to include it in a complex of specific words, to locate it, in fact, in the identity matrix of our culture."[40] The second mentioned mechanism – thematic anchoring – consists of the characteristics of topoi (threads, motives of phenomena in online resources).

Content analysis was used in exploring media representations of spirituality with many theoretical and definitional approaches.[41] It is based on a systematic, objective identification of precisely defined properties of media messages enabling a reliable overview of the forms and specificity of messages. This project applies the inductive type of computer-mediated content analysis. It is based mainly on a detailed qualitative study of thematic topoi added *ad hoc* during the investigation. When selecting the research material for the content analysis, it was decided to choose media material from the resources of the most popular search engine Google (https://www.google.com). According to global rankings, it ranks first and is responsible for over 92% of all internet search and query traffic.[42] The most popular websites among users in Poland and their outreach, according to the Media Panel Survey in March 2022, are ranked in Table 2.

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38 Misztal, "Przestrzeń medialna," 159.
39 Klenke, "E-Spirituality," 250.
40 Moscovici, *Social Representations*, 46.
41 Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*; Holsti, *Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities*; Krippendorff, *Content Analysis*; Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook*.
42 https://rapidapi.com/blog/best-search-engines/ (accessed 2.03.20222); https://gs.statcounter.com/search-engine-market-share (accessed 2.03.2022).

Table 2. Ranking of the most popular websites in Poland

Top Websites – March 2022		
Media channel	Real users	Coverage
google.com	27,949,860	93.23%
facebook.com	22,044,636	73.53%
youtube.com	21,380,598	74.80%

Source: https://pbi.org.pl/badanie-mediapanel/wyniki-badania-mediapanel-za-marzec-2022/;
https://www.egospodarka.pl/174925,Badania-internetu-Gemius-PBI–II-2022,1,12,1.html

The keyword *spirituality*[43] was used to compile a list of websites automatically considered by the search engine as the best match for the search term. Among them, a sample of 100 consecutive, unique natural search results (*organic search*), meaning free links to websites, were selected. The search engine algorithm is only responsible for displaying links and determining the order in which they are displayed. However, the deliberate activity of search engine administrators and applied mechanisms affect the specific order of the links.[44] The websites were archived on March 25, 2022. Next, they were subjected to qualitative content analysis, taking into account the quantitative dimension.

2. Religiousness and Spirituality of Poles in the Context of Socio-Demographic Variables

The respondents were asked: "which of the following statements describes you most accurately?" They had a choice of six proposed answers. The first item explained the term "spiritual" as "leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development." In addition, the self-determination: "I am partly religious, partly spiritual" was included in the selection of answers to allow declaring their intermediate attitude, with less clearly defined boundaries. Detailed data are presented in Chart 1.

The respondents most often chose the answer: "I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual" (29.8%). In the second place, with a slightly smaller percentage of indications, came: "I am partly religious and partly spiritual" (25.2%) and 7.1% of the respondents chose to declare being both religious and

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[43] The term *keyword* is defined in the IT sense as a word used in an information retrieval system that signals the content of a document.

[44] https://marketingwsieci.pl/slownik-e-marketingu/wyniki-organiczne/ (accessed 2.03.2022).

spiritual. Finally, at the opposite extreme, there are declarations of spirituality without religiosity, which currently apply to every twelfth respondent.

Which of the following statements best describes you?

Statement	Percent
I am a religious and spiritual person (leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development)	7,1
I am a partly religious and partly spiritual person	25,2
I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual	29,8
I am a spiritual but not religious person	8,2
I am not a religious or spiritual person	18,3
I don't know; it is hard to say	11,3

Chart 1. Self-declarations about religiosity and spirituality

The independent variables selected for the analyses significantly differentiated the study population statistically. The first is "gender." Detailed data are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Distribution of self-declaration according to gender

	Gender	
	Woman	Man
	Percent	
I am a religious and spiritual person (leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development)	8.7	5.4
I am partly religious and partly spiritual person	26.9	23.4
I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual	31.7	27.7
I am a spiritual but not religious person	9.7	6.6
I am not a religious or spiritual person	12.5	24.6
I don't know; it is hard to say	10.4	12.2
Total	100.0	100.0

For both women and men, the most frequent answer was: "I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual" (31.7% and 27.7%). However, while women in the second place more often declared themselves as being partly religious and partly spiritual, men came in second place twice as often, choosing the statement: "I am not a religious or spiritual person" (24.6%). On the other hand, the opposite statement about being both a religious and spiritual person (leading a spiritual life, caring for one's spiritual development) was indicated by 8.7% of women as compared to only 5.4% of men. A similar finding applies to the declaration of being spiritual without practicing religion: women described themselves as such more often than men. The "gender" variable statistically significantly differentiates the studied population (p = 0.000, Kramer's V = 0.173).

The analysis of empirical data shows several interesting regularities related to statistically significant differences in the studied populations in terms of age. The distribution of responses is presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Self-declarations according to age

	Age			
	24 and younger	25–44	45–64	65 and over
	Percent			
I am a religious and spiritual person (leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development)	0.9	4.1	7.9	14.4
I am partly religious and partly spiritual person	22.1	23.1	24.1	33.0
I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual	27.5	28.2	33.6	27.8
I am a spiritual but not religious person	9.7	8.5	9.1	5.7
I am not a religious or spiritual person	21.2	24.0	15.3	11.9
I don't know; it is hard to say	18.6	12.1	10.0	7.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

With age, the percentage of respondents declaring that they are both religious and spiritual (leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development) increases, from 0.9% among the youngest aged up to 24 to 14.4% of people aged 65 and over. A similar tendency, but with a higher percentage of responses, is observed in people considering themselves partly religious and partly spiritual. This answer was chosen by similar percentages from the first three age groups (22.1%, 23.1%, 24.1%), with

almost 10 percentage points higher for people aged 65 and over (33%). The statement: "I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual" was most popular among respondents aged 45–64 (33.6%); in other age groups, it was about 27–28%. Spirituality without religiosity was most often declared by the youngest respondents, aged up to 24, and those aged 45–64. The analyzed independent variable differentiates the studied population statistically significantly (p = 0.0001, Kramer's V = 0.139)

The declarations of the respondents regarding their religious and spiritual determinations also depended on education. Detailed data are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Self-declarations based on level of education

	Education			
	Elementary/ Junior high	Vocational	High school	Higher education
	Percent			
I am a religious and spiritual person (leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development)	5.7	5.8	5.5	11.8
I am partly religious and partly spiritual person	21.7	23.8	27.9	25.1
I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual	33.1	35.4	26.1	27.1
I am a spiritual but not religious person	4.6	5.8	11.5	8.5
I am not a religious or spiritual person	22.3	20.0	17.2	15.8
I don't know; it's hard to say	12.6	9.2	11.8	11.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Being both religious and spiritual was most often declared by respondents with higher education. The higher the level of education, the lower the percentage of people declaring that they were neither religious nor spiritual. People with a secondary education most often considered themselves partly religious and partly spiritual, and the respondents with basic education declared themselves religious but not spiritual. The respondents with a secondary or higher education more often considered themselves spiritual but not religious than respondents with elementary and junior high school education. The relationship between the analyzed variables is statistically significant (p = 0.010, Kramer V = 0.100).

The study group is significantly differentiated by the independent variable "religious practices" (p = 0.0001, Kramer's V = 0.361). Detailed data are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Self-declarations according to religious practices

	Religious practice			
	Regularly practicing believer	Irregularly practicing believer	Non-practicing believer	Non-believer
	N=241	N=445	N=251	N=73
	Percent			
I am a religious and spiritual person (leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development)	21.6	3.8	0.9	1
I am partly religious and partly spiritual person	37.8	30.6	10.4	3
I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual	34.4	34.8	23.5	6
I am a spiritual but not religious person	0.4	6.3	17.9	13
I am not a religious or spiritual person	2.5	12.1	30.7	65
I don't know; it's hard to say	3.3	12.4	16.7	12
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100

Deeper religiosity expressed in the declarations on faith and practices corresponded with more frequent indications of being partly religious and partly spiritual or being religious and spiritual (in this case, with a difference of one percentage point between non-practicing believers at 0.9% and non-believers at 1%). As the level of religiosity decreases, the percentage of answers: "I am not a religious or spiritual person" grows. Every third non-practicing believer stated that they are neither religious nor spiritual.

It is worth noting that believers and regular practitioners most often declared they were partly religious and partly spiritual. And 21.6% of this group considered themselves to be religious and spiritual people (leading a spiritual life, caring for their spiritual development). The second answer of the surveyed believers and practitioners in terms of frequency was: "I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual " (34.4%). Among believers and irregular practitioners, the same two choices also dominate, but their order is opposite: 34.8% declared themselves to be religious without spirituality, while 30.6% considered themselves partly religious and partly spiritual: The choice: "I am a spiritual but not religious person" was an interesting point of the research. It was selected by 6.3% of believers and irregular practitioners, the most numerous among all respondents, 17.9% of respondents who believe but do not practice, and 13% non-believers.

The distribution of answers concerning financial situation was also analyzed statistically. Detailed data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Self-declarations regarding assessing one's material status

	Assessment of material status		
	I am doing well	I'm doing fine, average	I am not financially well-off
	Percent		
I am a religious and spiritual person (leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development)	7.8	6.3	11.1
I am partly religious and partly spiritual person	30.7	22.8	19.4
I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual	26.7	31.1	33.3
I am a spiritual but not religious person	7.8	9.2	2.8
I am not a religious or spiritual person	18.4	17.5	25.1
I don't know; it's hard to say	8.6	13.1	8.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

A worse financial situation is conducive to less frequent declarations of being partly religious and partly spiritual. This statement was most common among people assessing their financial situation as good. In this group, slightly fewer respondents (26.7%) chose the answer: "I am a religious person but do not consider myself to be spiritual." On the other hand, this answer was the most popular among people who assessed their financial situation as average or bad (31.1% and 33.3%). The declaration of rejecting religiosity and spirituality was most often chosen by the respondents who assessed their financial situation as bad (25.1%). Yet, the answer indicating spirituality without religiosity was chosen more frequently by people declaring an average and good financial situation. There was a significant statistical relationship between the analyzed variables ($p = 0.026$, Kramer's V = 0.101).

3. Media Representation: From Religious Spirituality to New Spirituality

The websites searched are arranged in terms of two criteria: their function and contents. The table below contains a list of investigated websites:

Table 8. Typology of websites

Type of website	Number of links to the website
Websites popularizing book publications	33
Websites of foundations, associations, and religious communities	19
Websites of scientific institutions (links to scientific articles, conferences, educational offers)	18
Media sites	15
Advertising sites	9
Sites with encyclopedic or dictionary entries	4
Author blog sites	2
Total	100

Source: Own study

In the compiled list, the most frequent are websites popularizing books on spirituality. Next are websites of religious communities, foundations, and associations (religious and secular), then websites of educational institutions and academic centers, and finally, a group of media websites, traditional and new. The four most frequently represented types of sites listed above will be subjected to a detailed description in terms of content to learn about the implementation of textual media representations of spirituality (mechanisms for naming and anchoring spirituality). Search engines less frequently place advertising on websites that contain definitions of spirituality and authors' blogs.

3.1. Book Content of Publishing Houses' Websites

The publishing houses' websites were categorized according to the key topics of the books on the pages. Three groups were obtained this way and organized quantitatively, starting with the most numerously represented in the research material and according to the number of website addresses assigned to a given type of spirituality: (1.1) websites with books on non-religious spirituality, (1.2) websites with books on religious spirituality, (1.3) websites with books on inclusive spirituality, combining previous types or going beyond the area of institutionalized religion. The first column lists the given type of spirituality, sorted according to the thematic key. Individual terms were selected based on the analysis of the content of websites. The sites with books on non-religious spirituality are described first (Table 9).

On the websites of positioned publishers, most books deal with the practical dimensions of spirituality realized on an individual level, including practices diversified in content and forms that develop the "I" spirituality. In addition, publishing

houses also popularize books on the role of medicine in forming a person's spirituality, concerning integral medicine ensuring harmony on the spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical levels. These serve to provide, among others, quite peculiar healings of the energy system with the help of symbols, number sequences, the use of hypnosis to achieve the state of proper functioning of the mind, as well as healing magic involving healing spells, natural remedies (medicines), and even cooking recipes and cosmetic products.

Table 9. Websites popularizing books on non-religious spirituality

Websites popularizing books	
Spirituality without religion	**Website address**
Spiritual practices on the personal level – the psychology of spirituality, "I" spirituality, positive thinking, self-confidence, personal development, a happy life – spiritual practices, e.g., mindfulness exercises – ethical and psychological training, Sufi meditations, Sufi mantras	https://www.taniaksiazka.pl/ksiazki-o-rozwoju-duchowym-c-82_573.html https://www.amazon.pl/b?ie=UTF8&node=20788867031 https://yogabazar.pl/product-pol-2568-Duchowosc-na-co-dzien.html https://www.practest.com.pl/duchowosc-na-co-dzien https://liberilibri.pl/duchowosc-ateistyczna https://yogabazar.pl/product-pol-2568-Duchowosc-na-co-dzien.html https://www.practest.com.pl/duchowosc-na-co-dzien https://liberilibri.pl/duchowosc-ateistyczna
Medicine and spirituality – integral medicine (intellect, emotions, body, psychotherapy) – meditation practices (healing symbols and number strings, hypnotherapy, healing magic: healing spells, natural remedies, recipes, beauty products) – body spirituality	https://www.empik.com/umysl-cialo-duchowosc-drogi-do-zdrowia--i-rozwoju-duchowego-z-perspektywy-psychoterapeuty-malinowski--pawel,p1245953229,ksiazka-p https://studioastro.pl/ksiazka_tag/duchowosc/ https://www.samosedno.com.pl/rozwoj-osobisty/2395-umysl-cialo--duchowosc-drogi-do-zdrowia-i-rozwoju-duchowego-z-perspekty-wy-psychoterapeuty https://audioteka.com/pl/audiobooks/rozwoj-duchowy https://www.czarnaowca.pl/kategorie/psychologia/duchowosc-ci-ala,p1708983808
Spiritual experiences: spiritism, occultism, sessions with non-physical beings	https://audioteka.com/pl/audiobooks/rozwoj-duchowy https://www.storytel.com/pl/pl/categories/21-Religia-i-duchowosc https://virtualo.pl/ebooki/duchowosc-c576/ https://liberilibri.pl/duchowosc-ateistyczna https://www.taniaksiazka.pl/ksiazki-o-rozwoju-duchowym-c-82_573.html
Eastern spirituality – Eastern mystical traditions: Buddhist and Taoist spirituality	https://audioteka.com/pl/audiobooks/rozwoj-duchowy https://virtualo.pl/ebooki/duchowosc-c576/ https://dlabystrzakow.pl/kategorie/zycie/religia-i-duchowosc
Atheistic spirituality (secular values and spirituality)	https://www.galaktyka.com.pl/rozwoj-duchowy/przebudzenie-du-chowosc-bez-religii https://liberilibri.pl/duchowosc-ateistyczna

Source: Own study

On websites, users will also find books about spiritualist experiences, meaning contact with non-physical beings. They act as spiritual guides, imparting secret knowledge about God, the universe, people, spirits, and the laws that govern life. Among the publications offered, one can also find items on Eastern spirituality traditions (Buddhism, Taoism) and non-religious (atheistic) spirituality, discrediting religiosity, including the essence of internal mystical experiences explaining the latest achievements of neurobiology.

Another group of featured websites concerns books on religious spirituality.

Table 9. Websites offering books on religious spirituality

Websites popularizing books	
Religious spirituality	Website address
Christian spirituality – the spirituality of Christian saints – Ignatian spirituality – Benedictine spirituality	https://wydawnictwowam.pl/ksiazki/duchowosc https://wdrodze.pl/kategoria-produktu/ksiazki/duchowosc/ https://virtualo.pl/ebooki/duchowosc-c576/ https://wydawnictwowam.pl/ksiazki/duchowosc https://www.salwator.com/duchowosc---psychologia-ducho-wosci,2,815,1,produkty.html https://tyniec.com.pl/29-duchowosc
Practices of religious spirituality (prayer, meditation, spiritual exercises)	https://wdrodze.pl/kategoria-produktu/ksiazki/duchowosc/ https://www.practest.com.pl/duchowosc-na-co-dzien https://gloria24.pl/ksiazki/rozwoj-duchowy
Dependence: religiosity and spirituality	https://www.nomos.pl/ksiazki/373-duchowosc-ponowoczesna-stu-dium-z-zakresu-socjologii-jakosciowej.html https://wydawnictwowam.pl/ksiazki/duchowosc
Women's spirituality	https://wydawnictwowam.pl/ksiazki/duchowosc https://www.storytel.com/pl/pl/categories/21-Religia-i-duchowosc
Holistic spirituality (body, soul)	https://wydawnictwowam.pl/prod.duchowosc-intymnosc-i-seksual-nosc.30233.htm?sku=87207 https://www.publio.pl/duchowosc-intymnosc-i-seksualnosc-john-ga-lindo,p999932.html

Source: Own study

An analysis of this group of positioned publications revealed numerous proposals for the concept of spirituality rooted in the Christian religion, differentiated according to schools, rules, and spiritual exercises. Ignatian and Benedictine spiritualities, often appearing in a selected sample, are good examples. In the above list of web pages, websites referring to practices essential for developing religious spirituality are also positioned, such as: practicing prayer, Christian meditation, spiritual exercises, the aestheticization of everyday life, and reflecting on it. The following thematic

topoi in the discussed block of sites concern the relationship between spirituality and religiosity, women's spirituality from the Christian perspective, and holistic spirituality (in which a person derives deep inner peace, joy, and a sense of security and meaning in life from the harmonious unity of body and mind).

The next step presents the content of websites with books on inclusive spirituality.

Table 10. Sites with books on inclusive spirituality

Websites popularizing books	
Inclusive spirituality	Website address
Paradigm syncretism: theological, philosophical, psychological, economic	https://ksiegarnia.difin.pl/czlowiek-duchowosc-wychowanie-impulsy-mysli-o-anselma-gruna-tom-1
Syncretism of personal experiences: radical individualism, narcissism, personal autonomy, depth psychology, self-realization, self-transcendence	https://sklep.eneteia.pl/duchowosc-i-narcyzm-102.html

Source: Own study

This group of books deals with spirituality broadly speaking, combining many elements of both religious and non-religious reality, such as science in psychology, medicine, and philosophy. Inclusive spirituality in a person's life means undertaking a multi-context and syncretic approach, expressed by combining theological, philosophical, and psychological paradigms and more pragmatic ones like economic and business paradigms. The descriptions of books include references to the classics of depth psychology, Platonic, Stoic and existential trends, and the experiences of Eastern and Western mystics (St. Augustine, Thomas à Kempis, Eckhart, Suzo, St. John of the Cross). The distinguishing feature of these book proposals is promoting forms of spirituality that correspond to the orientation of modern readers on inner experience, personal autonomy, self-realization, and well-being.

3.2. Website Content of Religious Communities, Institutions, and Associations

An analysis of the contents of positioned websites with institutional source domains allows generally stating that the Christian religion is embedded in many concepts of spirituality.

Table 11. Websites of religious communities, secular institutions, and associations

Websites of religious communities, secular institutions, and associations	
Type of spirituality	Website address
Domain: religious communities	
Benedictine spirituality	http://instytutmonastyczny.pl/ http://benedyktyni.pl/duchowosc/ http://www.mogila.cystersi.pl/
Franciscan spirituality	http://www.westiarki.pl/duchowosc-4040 https://www.siostryzorlika.pl/duchowosc.html
Ignatian spirituality	https://jezuici.pl/duchowosc/
Salesian spirituality	https://most.salezjanie.pl/duchowosc/
Domain: diocesan and charitable institutions, religious movements, religious and secular associations	
Religious (theistic) spirituality	https://caritas.pl/duchowosc/ https://www.focolare.org/polska/chiara-lubich/duchowosc/ https://ksm.org.pl/duchowosc/
New Spirituality: – the spirituality of "modern" religions – non-religious spirituality – inclusive spirituality	https://redakcjabb.pl/17231/wspolczesna-duchowosc https://iam.pl/pl/megaprojekty/duchowosc https://stopuzaleznieniom.pl/artykuly/czy-jestem-uzalezniony/ zdrowienie-alkoholikow-a-duchowosc/

Source: Own study

There is a noticeable dominance of high positioning of the official websites of Christian religious orders, representing evangelical spirituality characterized by various rules of spiritual discipline. Religious spirituality dominates in the messages on the domain addresses of other institutions. It is related to the Christian tradition, formation activity, and working out a lifestyle that integrates spirit, body, mind, will, and emotions.

Worth noting in this group are the websites of secular institutions that popularize the concepts of a new spirituality equated with "modern" religions (polytheists, duotheists, and atheists). They are based on assumptions about the lack of traditionally understood sin, the exclusion of guilty feelings, and resignation from dogmas and moral judgments.

3.3. Website Content of Educational Institutions and Academic Centers

This next group of sites is dominated by multi-topic scientific studies.

Table 12. Websites of educational institutions and academic centers

Websites of educational institutions and academic centers	
Type of spirituality	Website address
Scientific article	
The spirituality-religiosity relationship	https://www.ipri.pl/duchowosc/ https://repozytorium.uwb.edu.pl/jspui/bitstream/11320/9644/1 https://pressto.amu.edu.pl/index.php/tim/article/view/2397 https://fidesetratio.com.pl/ojs/index.php/FetR/article/view/69 https://www.ejournals.eu/pliki/art/73
Spirituality and psychology	https://journals.umcs.pl/j/article/download/ https://www.kul.pl/files/822/public/download/
Spirituality and education	https://depot.ceon.pl/bitstream/handle/123456789/13760/Duchowa https://czasopisma.marszalek.com.pl/images/pliki/em/9/em904
Spirituality and culture	https://www.kul.pl/files/102/articles/2016
Scientific research on spirituality	https://ruj.uj.edu.pl/xmlui/bitstream/handle/item/5679/
Educational offers	
Postgraduate studies, training, workshops	http://www.bobolanum.edu.pl/oferta-edukacyjna/podyplomowe-stu-dia-duchowosci http://centrumkapucyni.pl/?portfolio=warsztaty-duchowosci-bez-leku
Academic conferences	
Spirituality and psychiatry Spirituality and the Eucharist	https://www.facebook.com/events/uniwersytet-papieski-jana--paw%C5%82a-ii-w-krakowie/ https://akademiakatolicka.pl/duchowosc-dla-warszawy/

Source: Own study

Several issues are distinguished by more frequent attendance. These include the subject of the complex and evolving relationship between spirituality and religiosity. The redefinition of spirituality results from deep religious and social processes, including departure from traditional forms of religiosity, increase in the level of individualization of religiosity, striving to have religious experiences without contact with religious institutions, so-called new religious movements, religious pluralism, and abandoning the identification of religious spirituality with Christian spirituality. Academic discourses look for adequate terms to explain complex spiritual issues as thoroughly as possible. Another thematic topos in scientific articles is spirituality considered in the model of the psychological sciences. The proposed theoretical framework relates spirituality (abstract, ideational sphere) to a person's daily, individualized lifestyle.

The researched articles also featured reflections on spirituality in postmodern culture, where it replaces religiosity with its responses to the meaning of human existence. In addition, the corpus of texts includes the topic of the scientific status of researching spirituality and the problems with defining it due to its non-observability and immeasurability. Finally, the training sessions and conferences on spirituality offered by academic and educational centers are worth mentioning. The offers concern improving one's competence in religious spirituality (for example, "fearless" spirituality), a secular scientific meeting (about the role of spirituality in mental disorders), and a cyclical conference organized in a metropolitan environment promoting religious spirituality.

3.4. Media Site Content

The fourth group of websites includes secular and religious media sites.

The largest number of secular media sites present a rich offer of spirituality, with a dominant tendency to avoid formal religiosity and even discredit it in favor of a new spirituality. The concept of new spirituality on the web pages of thematic portals classified into the first group is uncoded, and their authors do not care about doctrinal unity. The created definitions of inclusive spirituality are broad and formulated *ad hoc* depending on the adopted perspective. Nevertheless, almost all proposals are united by the conviction that the fullness of holistic spiritual development requires openness to oneself, meaning contact with one's experiences, emotions, and feelings, including harmonious unity with the world. Spirituality understood in this way is not limited to religiosity, although it may constitute an important part of it and depend on it.

It also includes other components, such as worldview, intellectual competence needed to understand oneself, awareness when forming one's moral inner life, participation in the natural world, and various beliefs and cult practices. The new spirituality is also identified with the spirituality of nature and ecology, with reverence for the Earth and the cosmos and focusing on positive, creative energy. The concept of new spirituality broadens the range of accepted theories and worldviews, fostering openness to extraordinary experiences popularized by gnostic-magical systems of an anthropocosmocentric nature. It promotes experiences accompanying deep self-insight, natural visions, and peak experiences. Consequently, it comes close to psychology and psychotherapy and vice versa.

Spirituality without religion is presented in the material of the media domains in the context of transitioning from religious spirituality to a spirituality that breaks with religious traditions and "external" blind faith in dogmas. Leaving religion behind does not mean losing one's spirituality but entering the path of exploration. This is done by people (the so-called "none") who constitute a heterogeneous group that includes: apatheists (religiously indifferent people), agnostics, typical anticlericals,

religious enthusiasts, supporters of alternative spirituality, syncretists, as well as "people disappointed or hurt by traditional religious institutions." In the next group of media sites (the dominant number of Catholic portals), men's and women's spirituality turned out to be popular topoi. The spirituality of the genders is confronted, which are different from each other, and reduced to two separate worlds that cannot meet.

Table 13. Media websites

Media sites (portals, press sites, TV show sites)	
Types of spirituality	Website address
New spirituality – inclusive spirituality – new ecological spirituality – the spirituality of the seekers – personal spirituality based on subjective needs, internal experiences, feelings, sensations, need for self-development – spirituality without religion	https://dzikiezycie.pl/archiwum/2009/maj-2009/nowa-duchowosc-ekologiczna-pod-lupa https://www.miesiecznik.znak.com.pl/7172015peter-c-phan-sjuduchowiony-i-religijny-tozsamosc-wieloreligijna-dla-poszukujacych-duchowosci/ https://deon.pl/wiara/wiara-a-pseudomistyka-bezdroza-duchowosci,186630 https://zwierciadlo.pl/psychologia/503228,1,cos-wiekszego-niz-ja-o-duchowosci-bez-religii.read https://deon.pl/wiara/czym-jest-dusza-nona--ojciec-jacek-prusak-sj-na--tropach-duchowosci-bez-religii,1231427 https://zwierciadlo.pl/psychologia/353114,1,duchowosc-w-naszych-czasach-rozmowa-z-psycholozka-joanna-heidtman.read https://dziendobry.tvn.pl/styl-zycia/czym-jest-duchowosc-jak-wplywa-na--czlowieka-da299403 https://www.zwrotnikraka.pl/duchowosc-w-chorobie-nowotworowej/ https://dzikiezycie.pl/archiwum/2009/maj-2009/nowa-duchowosc-ekologiczna-pod-lupa https://dziendobry.tvn.pl/styl-zycia/duchowosc-nie-powinna-eliminowac--rozumu-da290921 https://www.zwrotnikraka.pl/duchowe-aspekty-opieki-paliatywnej/
Men's and women's spirituality	https://pl.aleteia.org/2019/04/27/duchowosc-mezczyzny-i-kobiety-czy-wierzymy-inaczej/ https://deon.pl/wiara/wiara-a-pseudomistyka-bezdroza-duchowosci,186630 https://pl.aleteia.org/2020/05/26/wolnosc-duchowosc-i-biblia-dla-kobiet--w-kolorze-malinowym-rozmowa-z-s-anna-maria-pudelko-ap/ https://zwierciadlo.pl/psychologia/521904,1,praca-to-nie-wszystko--mezczyzni-poszukuja-duchowosci.read https://deon.pl/wiara/wiara-a-pseudomistyka-bezdroza-duchowosci,186630
Spirituality during an illness	https://www.zwrotnikraka.pl/duchowosc-w-chorobie-nowotworowej/ https://www.zwrotnikraka.pl/duchowe-aspekty-opieki-paliatywnej/
Spirituality of business, work, money	https://zwierciadlo.pl/psychologia/179048,1,duchowosc-pieniedzy.read https://zwierciadlo.pl/lifestyle/73604,1,duchowosc-pieniadza.read

Source: Own study

Another type of spirituality found in online resources of this group of sites is spirituality during an illness. It is distinguished by the fact that people who practice spirituality more easily overcome adversities and enjoy better health. Therefore, it is a vital force that helps one overcome a mental crisis, facilitating a person's adaptation to the illness and its limitations. In the context of serious medical cases, such as cancer, on the one hand, spirituality can be a source of additional stress, spiritual anxiety, blaming God for one's illness, and asking questions about the meaning of suffering and life after death. On the other hand, spirituality can provide positive reinforcements, support the therapy process, help someone understand their current situation, and find meaning in suffering, providing a sense of hope and dignity.

The Google search engine positions spirituality with a peculiar antonymic semantic combination: business, work, and money deserve to be distinguished. It is an intriguing exemplification of extending the semantic field of the concept of spirituality to areas previously inaccessible to it and the application of the mechanism of anchoring social representations through basic antinomies. The main assumption of such spirituality is that the spiritual and material worlds can strengthen each other. The secular world is strongly related to emotions and should be governed not only by the intellect but also by internal motivation, in which self-insight plays an important role.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

The conducted analyses indicate the existence of symptoms of phenomena classified as belonging to the new spirituality along with their distinctive features described in the introduction to Poland's religiously homogeneous society. They also allow us to cautiously state that spirituality is already becoming an autonomous experience for a certain part of it, as shown in the self-descriptions of 8% of the surveyed Poles. The analyzed websites reflect the above-mentioned characteristics of the new spirituality with the dominating position taken by spiritual content in non-religious spirituality. The detailed conclusions we propose, relating to the research questions formulated in the introduction, are situated and interpreted in the context of selected findings of researchers of new spirituality contained in the theoretical part.

Several interesting regularities were found in response to the question of to what extent the category of spirituality constitutes an element of Poles' self-definition in relation to religiosity or without religious references. First, the category of people who define themselves as spiritual but non-religious includes a small percentage of respondents. However, it was higher than in previous empirical studies mentioned in the introduction. This number is significant because the respondents could indicate an intermediate option, with less expressive features, dedicated to those who did not

want to give up any explicit self-identification in favor of another. The essential and symptomatic background for the above statements is the declaration of being a religious and spiritual person (leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development), which had the lowest percentage of indications.

This may suggest the perception of the 7% of Poles surveyed, according to which spirituality is an integral part of religiosity and an expression of its deepened character. The low percentage of choices concerning the discussed answer could, therefore, be in line with the general tendency, according to which a deeper level of faith concerns about 8% of the population in Polish society. On the one hand, self-declarations of spirituality without religiosity can be regarded as a signal of an upward trend in relation to the previously conducted empirical research. On the other hand, it can be treated as a low percentage, considering the rich, varied, and at the same time available offers regarding spirituality, including spirituality without religion.

Women considered themselves both religious and spiritual more often, while men more often than women said that they were neither religious nor spiritual. Religiosity is favored at an older age, while spirituality is the domain of the youngest respondents, up to 24, and people aged 45–64. The youngest respondents are a generation with clearly declining religiosity, defined as an abandoned generation, a generation left to themselves, lonely and self-insufficient, looking for a sense of belonging. They move efficiently in the world of new technologies, being influenced by them and having the opportunity to implement their research in this space. In turn, the 45–64 age group is described as a stage of relative family, professional and material stability, with potentially greater financial and time resources, including the possibility of self-centeredness and realization, as well as the age of one's first personal evaluation and crises.

These experiences may underlie the search for meaning in life, sources of a sense of security, and new development directions. People with higher education more often than others defined themselves in unambiguous categories, choosing answers on opposite poles: "I am religious and spiritual (leading a spiritual life, caring for spiritual development)" or "I am not a religious or spiritual person." Secondary and higher education, associated with deepened reflectivity and greater human and social capital resources, favor the frequency of choices of partial religiosity and spirituality as well as spirituality without religiosity. On the other hand, in respondents with a lower level of education (primary and vocational), choices of religiosity without spirituality dominate, which may indicate that the range of their experiences and self-identification include only the category of religiosity.

Interesting regularities were noted in the distribution of answers based on declarations of faith and religious practices. The greater their intensity, the more often the first three answers were chosen, confirming religiosity and spirituality or religiosity without spirituality. On the other hand, the answer "I am a spiritual but not a religious person" was most often chosen by non-practicing believers who were

looking – as it can be carefully assumed – for alternatives to confessional, formalized religious practices, people seeking their ways of experiencing the *sacrum*. Less pronounced regularities were noted in the analysis of the distributions of the variable "assessment of one's financial situation," although two issues draw our attention. People who are financially moderate or well-off are more likely to be spiritual but not religious, which can be cautiously combined with the practices included in new spirituality requiring material resources. On the other hand, the answer: "I am neither a religious nor a spiritual person" is much more often chosen by those who judge their financial situation as poor, which in turn may reflect the life orientation that is crucial for some of these people, focused on everyday material security, excluding interests and activities in other areas of life.

The next question concerned the type of content related to the category of spirituality found online. Quantitative distributions of grouped websites show that spirituality has invaded many different thematic areas in the media space, which is also confirmed by other research on internet resources.[45] Overall, the media texts offer a rich selection of different types and forms of spirituality. The media content review allows us to formulate a thesis on a capacious, multi-contextual, and polysemantic conceptualization of spirituality. There is a lack of semantic precision in media representations of spirituality, and their characteristic feature is typological differentiation. The spiritual content of various provenance coexist, located in the areas of religious and non-religious spirituality, the spirituality of "modern" religions, inclusive spirituality, "I" spirituality, everyday spirituality, women's and men's spirituality, spirituality based on spiritualistic experiences, atheistic spirituality, and some concepts of spirituality create meaning relationships with antonymic meanings (e.g., the spirituality of business, work, money, medicine).

Thematic anchoring of the new spirituality is oriented toward a number of *topoi*, among which the following are quantitatively distinguished: the topos of non-religious spirituality – the presentation by secular media websites of a rich offer of spirituality with a dominant tendency to distance itself from formalized religiosity, or even to discredit it; topos spirituality of inclusion – connecting and linking different elements reality, e.g., transcendent beings, non-physical beings, nature, health, body, psyche, work, relaxation, prayer, meditation, spiritual abilities, and experiences; topoi oriented toward the subjectively understood development of the inner "I," a transgression consisting in transcending oneself, one's imperfect biological dimension and "spiritualizing" new areas of social reality, including everyday practices.

Resolving the issue concerning the extent the media examples of spirituality relate to the religious sphere and the Catholic Church's spirituality and the extent to which they are present in spirituality without religion brings solutions that fit the general trends, suggesting that spirituality as a socio-cultural phenomenon loses its

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45   Rautela – Sharma, "Spirituality and Social Media"; Ramasubramanian, "Media and Spirituality," 46.

religious connotations. However, the content of Christian spirituality, differentiated according to schools and rules (e.g., Benedictine or Ignatian), cannot be omitted.

Spirituality without religion is portrayed in the media as shifting from religious spirituality to a spirituality that breaks with religious traditions. However, giving up religion does not mean losing one's spirituality but entering the path of exploration. The richness of spirituality proposals and the advantages of using online material (with its speed and ease of access, user anonymity, and the possibility of creating content) indicate both a high demand for it and the diffusion of patterns drawn from experiences and their media representations in countries where various forms of new spirituality have already been developing dynamically for some time.

The above analysis of the survey data and the results of searching for content on spirituality in the digital space provide an outline of new spirituality reported by researchers already recognized in Western societies. In the Polish case, this means: 1) the existence of the category of spirituality in self-declarations and its media representations online, 2) symptoms of blurring the boundaries between spirituality and religiosity, including the emergence of religiosity without a church, 3) the functioning of spiritual representations relating to Christian traditions, but also spirituality related to them, connected with gender, life experiences such as suffering, illness, profession, and 4) symptoms of the emancipation of spirituality from the influence of religiosity, expressed in a person's autonomous recognition as being spiritual but not religious, and in media representations of phenomena such as spirituality entering into the area of philosophy, science, medicine, psychology, and parapsychology, the dissemination of spiritual practices of an esoteric, magical, or spiritualist nature, spirituality related to eastern mystical traditions, for example Buddhist, Taoist, as well as the sacralization and transgression of the "I."

Aware that the results of the conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses are not entirely conclusive, we can state that in Polish society, which is religiously homogeneous, individualized, syncretic, and eclectic, a new spirituality finds its place and is developing within new areas. This is reflected in the phenomena and processes discussed above, revealing at the same time new problematic areas and research questions. In particular, it would be interesting to conduct 1) in-depth, qualitative analyses of the ways of understanding, motives, justifications, and determinants of the self-declarations of religiosity and spirituality, 2) further research on media representations toward the operationalization of their potential to shape opinions and beliefs of internet users about the new spirituality, and 3) analyze the internet as a space for manifesting and creating a new spirituality.

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Verbum Vitae

The Cultural Dimension of Catholic Liturgical Rites in Catholic Religious Education in the Context of the Objectives of the Education System in Italy

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Abstract: This article aims to show the possibility of an academic approach to teaching the Catholic religion at school to the liturgical rites of the Catholic Church from a cultural perspective. Liturgical rites consist of numerous signs and symbols that refer to the human dimension, which seeks what is beautiful, true, and good. At all levels, one of the main objectives of Italian and European schools is to teach, educate, and raise responsible and upright citizens. Therefore, while contributing to the general formation of the human being at school, the teaching of Catholic religion also draws students closer, in cultural terms, to the great code, i.e., the liturgy of the Catholic Church. It is certainly a form of public and social communication. It is education in action. In this sense, for example, it could be a considerable and systematic cultural opportunity for Ukrainian students residing in Poland, a chance to learn the symbolic language of the Catholic liturgy in the perspective of reaching human maturity without fear of proselytism from the Catholic Church. This article in no way intends to diminish the intrinsic value of the liturgy in the life of the Church, understood as a celebration, proclamation, commemoration, promise, and moral call whose purpose is to transform or transfigure the person so that he/she is oriented toward the highest good, i.e., God, and able to live a life of mutual love.

Keywords: teaching Catholic religion, liturgy, culture, public school, human formation

The war in Ukraine, triggered by the invasion by Russian troops on February 24, 2022, has shaken all of Europe and the world. According to UN estimates, more than three million people have fled the conflict-stricken country, more than half of the refugees being children. To help those fleeing the war, the European Union decided to activate the Temporary Protection Directive. The Directive came into force on March 4, 2022, ensuring, among other things, the right to education for children and adolescents. Furthermore, all the rights of Ukrainian refugees were published on the official website of the European Commission and came into effect forthwith.[1]

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1   Commissione Europea, *Informazioni per le persone in fuga dalla guerra in Ucraina.*

The Polish Border Guard Main Headquarters reports that 4,233,617 Ukrainian citizens, mostly women and children, crossed the border with Poland in the first quarter of 2022.[2] According to the Polish Minister of Education and Science, in April 2022, 185,000 Ukrainian refugee children attended Polish schools, with 35,000 in kindergartens and 135,000 in elementary schools. At the same time, about 540,000 children participate in online classes held by Ukrainian schools, connecting remotely from Poland.[3] This unprecedented situation generates numerous practical problems, including the issue of Ukrainian students attending religious education classes in Polish schools. Religious education in Poland follows a confessional model of religious education; Orthodox and Greek Catholic refugees spread throughout urban and rural areas of Poland, with mostly Catholic students,[4] are having difficulties reaching schools where their churches provide religious education. In addition, the Orthodox Church in Poland is autocephalous, and making a central decision about organizing separate classes for students of Moscow or Kyiv Patriarchates is very hard.

This article attempts to present the teaching of the Catholic religion according to the denominational model implemented in Italy. An important aspect that comes to the fore here is the cultural dimension of teaching Catholic religion in the context of education standards in Italy, whose specificity is guaranteed by the concordat signed with the Holy See. It seems to us that this particular aspect could become a genuine and systematic cultural opportunity for Ukrainian students in Poland, allowing them to learn the symbolic language of Catholic liturgy without fearing Catholic proselytism.[5] More broadly, these reflections attempt to provide a scientific response to the demands of the President of the Polish Bishops' Conference, who recently stressed the need to create a reformed educational and didactic project on the teaching of the Catholic religion in Polish schools with greater attention to the educational aspects of Christian culture.[6]

For the reasons mentioned above, the overall goal of this two-author Italian-Polish paper is indeed a cultural approach to the liturgical rites of the Catholic Church as a viable educational opportunity for schools. Rites involve many signs and symbols that relate to the human dimension, which seeks what is beautiful, true, and

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2   Komenda Główna Straży Granicznej (Polish Border Guard Main Headquarters), *Informacja Statystyczna za I kwartał 2022 r.*, 1.

3   Minister Przemysław Czarnek, Ministerstwo Edukacji i Nauki@MEIN_GOV_PL 21.04.2022 (accessed 10.06.2022).

4   Bishop Wojciech Osial, Head of the Catholic Education Commission of the Polish Bishops' Conference, states that the Catholic Church in Poland is undertaking initiatives to make Ukrainian children feel at home. First professional courses for Catholic teachers on teaching Ukrainian children are already taking place, e.g., KAI (Catholic News Agency) *Kościół w Polsce reaguje*.

5   It is worth recalling Pope Francis' statement, "To have lost the capacity to grasp the symbolic value of the body and of every creature renders the symbolic language of the Liturgy almost inaccessible to the modern mentality." Francis, *Desiderio Desideravi*, no. 44.

6   Gądecki, *Rada Stała*.

good.[7] The cultural dimension of the Church's liturgical rites has not been analyzed so far. At the same time, there are other scholarly studies devoted to the teaching of the Catholic religion in Italy[8] or the place of the liturgy itself within the teaching of Catholic religion or parish catechesis.[9] The principal method used here is a critical analysis of the source texts carried out using theological hermeneutics[10] and analysis and synthesis methods that make it possible to isolate and then compare the essential elements of the cultural dimension of the Church's liturgical rites in the teaching of the Catholic religion in the context of the objectives of Italian education.

In no way does this study intend to diminish the intrinsic value of liturgy in the life of the Church, understood as a celebration, proclamation, commemoration, promise, and a moral call whose purpose is to transform or change the person so that he/she is oriented toward the highest good, i.e., God, and knows how to live a life of mutual love for one another.[11] Instead, this study aims to draw attention to the cultural approach to teaching religion, in which a school subject such as Catholic religion 'can' and 'must' fit into the school goals. The recipients of 'cultural religion lessons' can be believers and non-believers, Christians and non-Christians. If the school is a place for the humanization of the human being, then teaching the Catholic religion by assuming a cultural approach to the great code of liturgy will help all students to confront themselves critically to grow in humanity through the construction of a personal life project.[12] Moreover, it may be another opportunity to deepen the human foundations of their religion for Catholic students.

1. Preliminary Remarks

Before moving on to the main argument, it is necessary to understand the importance of two key aspects of this topic: (1) teaching Catholic religion and (2) liturgy.

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7   Pope Francis (*Discorso al mondo della scuola italiana*) said, "The school's mission is to develop a sense of what is true, a sense of the good and beauty. This happens through a rich journey made up of many 'ingredients.' This is why there are so many subjects! Because development is the result of different elements interacting and stimulating the mind, conscience, feelings, and body."

8   See (in Polish), e.g., Misiaszek, *Koncepcja nauczania religii katolickiej*.

9   See, for example, Offmański, *Współczesna katecheza liturgiczna*. Piotr Tomasik, Zbigniew Marek, Andrzej Kiciński, Tadeusz Panuś, Anna Zellma, Stanisław Dziekoński, and others have published interesting articles in Polish on contemporary challenges of liturgical education and finding the right relationship between liturgy and catechesis and teaching religion at school.

10 See Napiórkowski, *Jak uprawiać teologię*, 70–72.

11 Annicchiarico, "La liturgia nella catechesi," 655.

12 It should be clarified that a 'life project' (within Catholic religious education) does not necessarily mean a Christian project; the student, confronting the system of Christian meanings, will be able to draw from it the tools to make personal choices of civic and responsible life.

1.1. Catholic Religious Education as an Academic Discipline

Teaching Catholic religion, through enriching religious culture, fitting into the objectives of the school, and borrowing a system of meanings from Christianity in the form of the Catholic creed, may offer the student a confrontation with the human being, the world, God, and the search for truth linked to the ultimate meaning of life. Moreover, it may help the student's personality to mature in religious terms and plan his/her role in society and history (see Figure 1[13]).
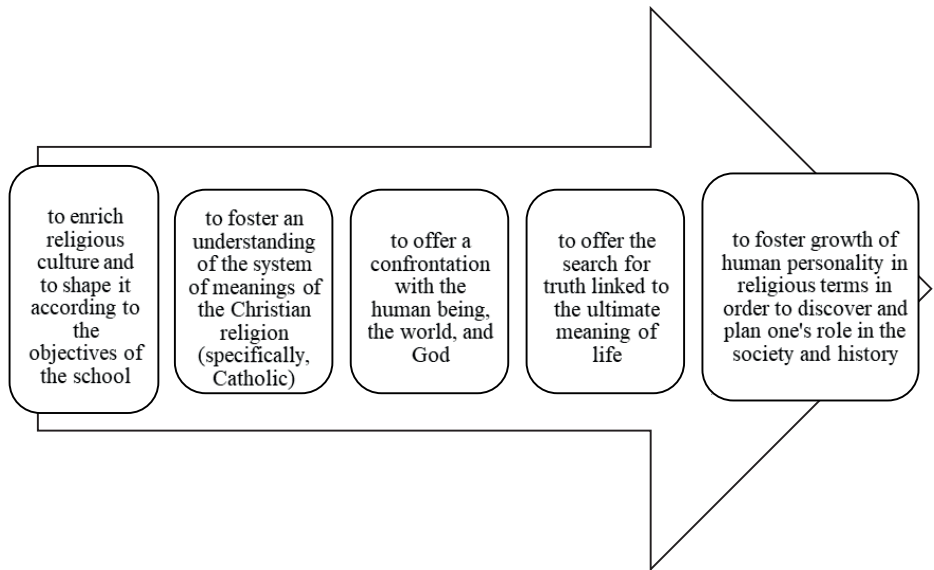
Figure 1. The goals of teaching the Catholic religion in the Italian school.

Like all academic disciplines taught at school,[14] Catholic religious education has its epistemological status, which can be defined in four constitutive dimensions: biblical and theological, historical and cultural, anthropological, and pedagogical and methodological,[15] as shown in Figure 2.

The Bible, with its historical, cultural, and anthropological significance, is the basis of the teaching of the Catholic religion and makes it a particularly formative subject whose theological approach to the Bible must not be merely philosophical and speculative or liberalist, but it must follow the principles that regulate the interpretation and guide the study of texts of proper nature.[16]

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[13] All figures in this paper have been prepared by the authors.
[14] When speaking of the 'academic discipline' in a school context, we mean to help the student to think like an expert in a specific academic field, to see the world in a specific way, and not just 'the content' in the sense of collecting knowledge. See Gardner, *Cinque chiavi per il futuro*, 36–40.
[15] Annicchiarico, "L'Irc tra continuità e innovazione," 30–45.
[16] Lorizio, "La dimensione relazionale," 24–40.

•biblical and theological dimension

•historical and cultural dimension

•anthropological dimension

epistemological
status of teaching
Catholic religion

•pedagogical and methodological dimension
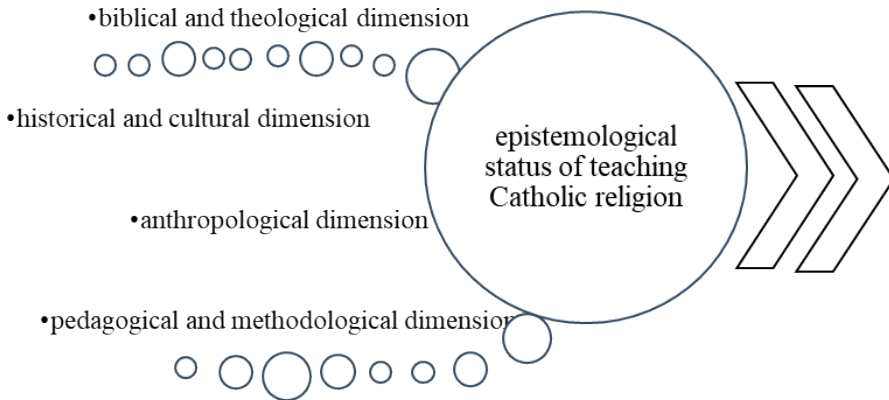
Figure 2. Teaching Catholic religion as an academic discipline at school.

Looking at teaching Catholic religion from a cultural-historical perspective, the post-biblical history of the Christian event characterizes the root-fruit relationship, that is, the religious reality that has constantly been developing in the history of the Church, the relation between faith and culture in Christian life. In this way, Christianity is brought closer to the student, demonstrating its connection with many aspects of the Italian and European cultural tradition, which, apart from giving the experience of faith, the understanding of reality, situations, and events, determine history, life, language, as well as express themselves in art, literature, social life, the development of thought, philosophy, and many other areas.

The anthropological dimension in teaching Catholic religion emphasizes the idea of the human being in which a dialogue between the humanities and theology is evident, for the human being is presented as a 'personal being' in relation to God, and he/she holds a special place among creation. Moreover, in relation to God, human lives in a state of dependence. He/she is therefore aware of his/her own responsibility, possesses a spirit with life force, knows that he/she is rational and conscious; he/she is rooted in time along with his/her existential wholeness and is called to live through history as a protagonist and a collaborator of God. From these premises follow the basic anthropological topics that can be further explored at school: interpersonal relations, sexuality, corporeality, symbolism, historicity, experience, conscience, and freedom.

The pedagogical and methodological dimension of Catholic religious instruction places the student in the center and is based on an idea of the integral vision of a person; learning is supported by the law of 'educational unity,' to which all academic disciplines contribute, conceived not as separate hermetic chambers but as

interconnected blocks. Furthermore, teaching Catholic religion helps to establish a dialogue in the cultural and historical dimensions of the fact of Christianity, encouraging interest in religion, deep existential questions, and the growth of personality in the religious sphere. In a historic address to Catholic religion teachers, Pope Benedict XVI stated, "Consequently, the religious dimension is not a superstructure, it is an integral part of the person from the very earliest infancy; it is fundamental openness to otherness and to the mystery that presides over every relationship and every encounter with human beings. The religious dimension makes the person more human."[17]

1.2. Liturgy as the 'Great Code' of the Church

The semantic evolution of the term 'liturgy' is not the primary concern of this study. However, it is worth mentioning some fundamental aspects related to this term: its origin, meaning, the biblical context, and its relationship with the Second Vatican Council.

The word 'liturgy' comes from the Greek λειτουργία (= leitourgía), derived from λαός (= laós) 'the people' and ἔργον (= érgon) 'work' (in the sense of 'the effect of effort; something we create or do through work and effort'). In ancient Greece, the term meant work, action, and initiative undertaken voluntarily by an individual or a family (out of their own will) for the good of the people, the neighborhood, the city, or the state.[18] The LXX[19] always uses it as a technical term, denoting public and official worship in accordance with Levitical cultic regulations, as opposed to private worship, which in the same LXX translation is mainly referred to through 'latría' (from Greek λατρεία = latreía) or 'dulía' (from Greek δουλία = doulía).

It should be noted that in the New Testament, both in the Gospels and in the Apostolic writings, the term 'liturgy' never appears as a synonym for 'worship' except for Acts 13:2: "One day while they were offering cult to the Lord and keeping a fast, the Holy Spirit said, 'I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them,'" [in our translation]). Although this term does not appear in the New Testament, probably because in early times, it was too closely associated with the Levitical cult; nonetheless, it is present in noncanonical writings of Judeo-Christian origin.

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17 Benedict XVI, *Discorso agli Insegnanti di religione cattolica italiani*.
18 Benedict XVI, *Discorso agli Insegnanti di religione cattolica italiani*, 726–727.
19 Benedict XVI, *Discorso agli Insegnanti di religione cattolica italiani*, 726–727. The term LXX refers to the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the *Septuagint*. It is worth mentioning here that the full Greek translation of the Jewish Torah was produced in the early third century BC, and the term the *Septuagint* reflects the Latin notation 'seventy,' referring to the approximate number of translators mentioned by Aristotle. This version is used to refer not only to the Pentateuch in Greek but – in Christian circles – to the entire corpus of the Greek translations and compositions of the Old Testament.

After some remarks on the origins and meaning, it is worth looking at the meaning of the term 'liturgy' in Vatican II's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. This constitution was the first conciliar document approved by an overwhelming majority. It states, "The liturgy then is rightly seen as an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It involves the presentation of man's sanctification under the guise of signs perceptible by the senses and its accomplishment in ways appropriate to each of these signs. In it, full public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members. From this, it follows that every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ, the priest, and of his Body, which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others. No other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree"[20] (*SC* 7) (see Figure 3).
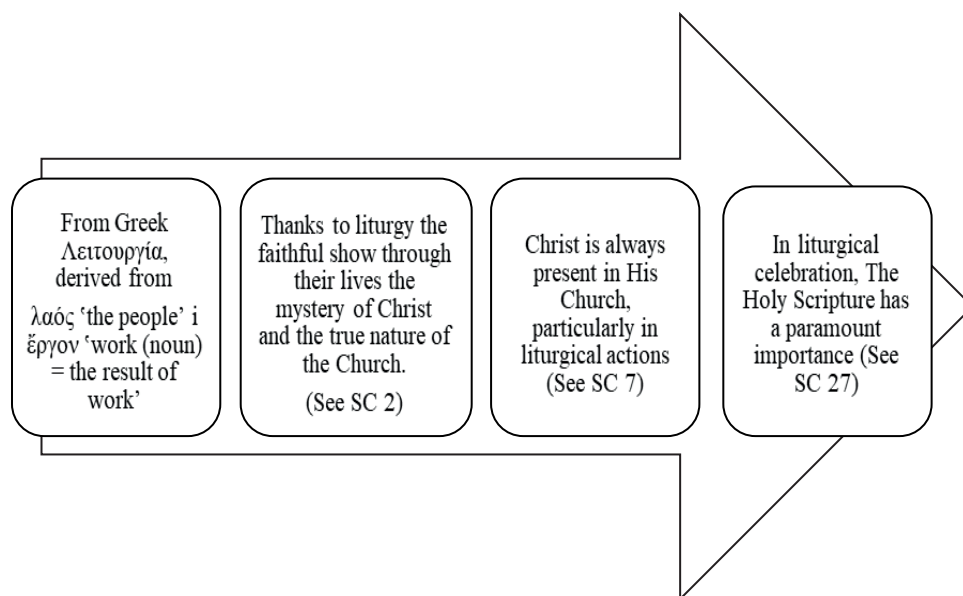
Figure 3. 'Liturgy' according to *Sacrosantum Concilium*.

The teacher of Catholic religion has the duty to assume a cultural approach toward this great code, i.e., the liturgy, following the school's objectives which aim at human maturity toward religion and Christianity, and not just the strictly Christian maturity offered within the ecclesiastical community.

In short, Italy, Poland, and the whole of Europe are experiencing pluralism which is not so insignificant at all, has different facets, and which any educational system

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20   Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 7.

must accept. Undoubtedly, this is a challenge for teaching the Catholic religion in public schools. This unprecedented situation we are witnessing in Europe creates the need for a change of vision to which the instruction of the Catholic religion must also give an educational and cultural response. In fact, the increasing number of non-native students professing a faith other than Catholicism or no religious affiliation invites teachers of the Catholic religion to confront this unprecedented element of school educational practice, namely religious pluralism. Students (and their families) bring to school with them, often unconsciously, their perception of the world, the truth, and the rules of life marked by a significant difference in values.

This mainly affects religious education but applies to philosophy, humanities, history, and other disciplines. This is cultural pluralism crystallized in the pluralism of scientific disciplines. To this religious and cultural (academic) pluralism, we add the third factor, albeit less perceptible but objective, which manifests itself in Christian identity and is revealed in Catholic religious teaching, namely, confessional pluralism, namely, the non-superficial difference between Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants.

Studying the ritual form in the liturgy, we discover that it involves the whole person and his/her senses, as well as objects, sounds, colors, lights, words, and gestures. In essence, it is not just a way of expressing the already processed content but an act of revelation and the beginning of new communication. For this reason, the understanding of liturgy has a symbolic character before it is developed at the conceptual level.[21] The right communication environment fosters the realization of the liturgical celebration. For the teaching of the Catholic religion, liturgy is a reality that we have to draw from in order to learn about the cultural heritage of a given nation, with particular attention given to the anthropological meanings associated with liturgical signs, such as gestures and words, signs and symbols, lights and shadows, moments of fullness and silence, songs and proclaimed words, the space within which the congregation moves, places of worship, the liturgical calendar, feasts, sacraments, rites, and folk traditions. At the cultural level, everything provides rich material for the discovery and reflection on attitudes toward human life that each person can put into practice. For this reason, the instruction of Catholic religion at school can explain and interpret the religious and spiritual elements present in the culture to discover in them the deepest meaning of human existence; in other words, the teaching of liturgy in Catholic religion classes from a cultural perspective demonstrates the reasonableness of faith.

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21   With regard to the distinction between conceptual language and symbolic language, it should be emphasized that conceptual language, one of the greatest historical achievements of mankind, enables precision, rigor, and linearity in words and discourse, as well as the ability to analyze, abstract and synthesize; while symbolic language is best suited to communicate realities that are 'compressed' into overly precise definitions, such as speaking of beauty, love, faith, God, etc. See Annicchiarico, *L'omelia nell'era digitale*, 86–93; See also Kiciński, "Verso la didattica del simbolo," 253–284.

2. The Catholic Religion Teacher's Use of Symbolic Language Typical of the Liturgy

If the essence of the liturgical celebration is the mystery of God revealed and given in Christ and His Passover, then we can assume that for Christians, this is a reality in itself challenging to express in conceptual language alone; in fact, the proper language of the liturgy is symbolic. It best expresses the unspeakable. However, symbolism in the liturgy is always accompanied by the word that clarifies its meaning, and it must be understood in the biblical context from which it originated and on which its meaning is based; in fact, liturgical symbolism is always dynamic and leads to action.[22]

That said, the question arises whether a cultural approach to liturgy (especially to its signs and symbols) at school can have a constructive effect on the student's maturity. While we will come back to this issue later, let us point out here that for the approach to liturgy to be cultural, the Catholic religion teacher should avoid careless liturgical preparation that lacks specific technical language[23] (see Figure 4). The Catholic religion teacher should competently explain that the liturgy consists of multiple signs and symbols which, on the one hand, refer to inner and profound truth and, on the other hand, tend to elevate the relationships of those who participate in it to the maximum humanization of the human being, emphasizing the 'God-human' and 'human-God' relationships. From a cultural point of view, the teacher helps the student recognize the goodness of human endeavors and discover their value when the theandric mystery of the human being is presented in all its beauty.

In the face of the Mystery of God and the mystery of the human being, the liturgy – a source and summit of the Christian life – reveals the divine-human nature of the human being and thus emphasizes his/her identity. If the search for truth is one of the tasks of the human being that the school knows how to interpret, the goal of teaching Catholic religion is to demonstrate the validity of the Christian response to the human religious question of otherness and openness to transcendence, to the 'Other' par excellence, that is, to God himself. The figure and work of Jesus Christ can be approached culturally from a liturgical perspective to understand the Paschal mystery and, thus, the heart of Christian revelation.

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[22] Tilliette ("Réflexion et symbole," 583) remarks, "Le symbole véhicule un contenu de pensées, il pousse vers l'expression spéculative, il est, non pas une pensée inarticulée et confuse à proprement parler, mais l'inauguration d'un mouvement qui finalement se résout ou se sublime en langage rationnel." (The symbol conveys the content of thought, which leads to speculative expression. This thought is not inarticulate or confusing, but it is the inauguration of a movement that eventually resolves itself or sublimates into rational language. – Translation from Italian). See also Ferrer Grenesche, "L'adeguamento delle chiese," 232–244; Lameri, *Segni e simboli riti e misteri*, 64–66.

[23] An example is the celebration of November 2nd, commonly referred to as the 'Feast of the Dead,' but in fact it is the 'Remembrance of the Faithful Departed.'
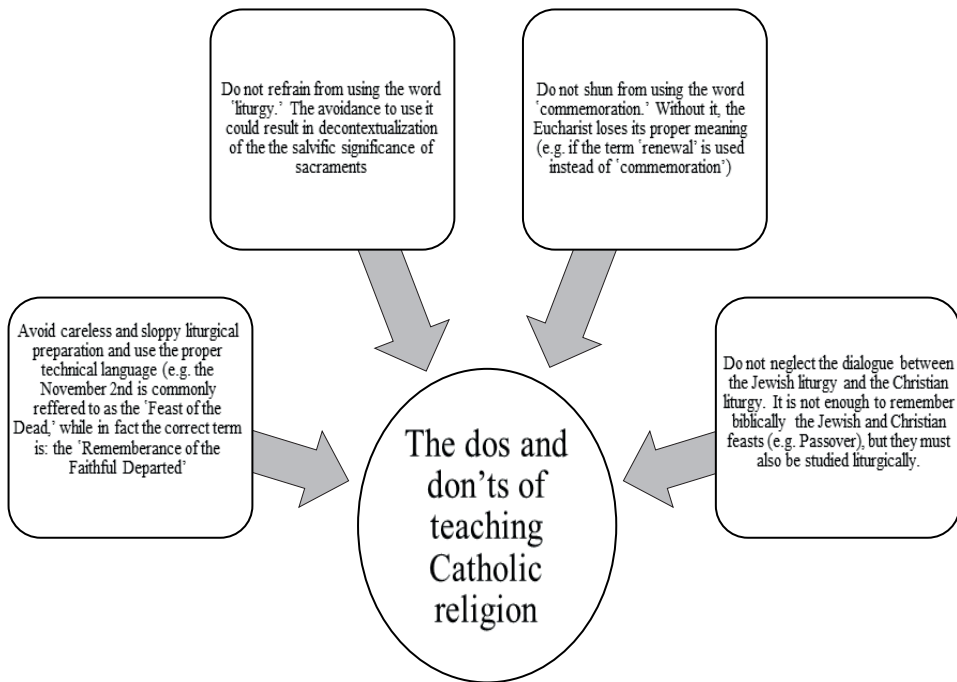
Figure 4. Teaching Catholic religion and liturgy: what should the teacher avoid

In this sense, liturgy can be considered an expression of the human search for beauty and, at the same time, a laboratory of art, precisely because of the elaboration of the rite itself, which the human being defines by employing human signs, figures and symbols, sounds, lights, chromatic nuances, words, and gestures to narrate and recount his/her encounter with God, thus creating this physical and 'immaterial' heritage of human history. It is a cultural heritage that is the object of Catholic religious studies. Pope Francis emphasizes, "We face a universal tension toward truth and the bimillenary witness given by believers in the light of faith, with the extraordinary heights of knowledge and art accomplished by the human spirit, and with the fruitfulness of the Christian message that so deeply permeates the culture and life of the Italian people."[24]

Therefore, the religious competence that the student acquires in Catholic religion classes will manifest itself in maturity toward religion, where attitudes and behavior will express, in terms of humanization, a determination with greater responsibility and freedom toward religious values and meanings. For this reason, teaching the Catholic religion presents this determination in terms of service to the student's human maturity.

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24   Benedict XVI, *Discorso agli Insegnanti di religione cattolica italiani*.

3. The Cultural Approach to the 'Rite' in Catholic Religious Teaching

When we study the liturgical rite of the Catholic Church, we notice that various communicative codes interact, namely: word, gesture, music and singing, architecture, silence, dress, color, images, light, movement, smell, and taste. In fact, five human senses are involved: sight, hearing, smell, touch, and taste.[25] Therefore, at the anthropological level, it can be said that by observing the rite, the student will be able to grasp its three aspects from a cultural point of view: (1) a rite provides a break in the daily routine, (2) a rite is not a function of something but expresses selflessness in a relationship, (3) a rite expresses the principle of being together, of being a community.

The rite provides a break in the daily routine. It prompts a re-reading of the time spent in an attempt to give it meaning and direction. In this context, it is interesting to refer to Saint-Exupéry's interpretation which puts a profound explanation of the meaning of ritual into the mouth of the fox in *The Little Prince*, "'It would have been better to come back at the same hour,' said, the fox. 'If, for example, you come at four o'clock in the afternoon, then at three o'clock I shall begin to be happy. I shall feel happier and happier as the hour advances. At four o'clock, I shall already be worrying and jumping about. I shall show you how happy I am! But if you come at just any time, I shall never know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you... One must observe the proper rites...' 'What is a rite?' asked the little prince. 'Those also are actions too often neglected,' said the fox [...].'"[26] In this sense, the rite is really an opportunity to give meaning to the flow of time, which is not always the same.

The rite expresses selflessness in a relationship. In a social context, typically guided by the criterion of 'useful relationships,' that is, relationships for their own sake, by emphasizing the centrality of God, the rite invites the human being to go beyond himself/herself and seek the Other, the Absolute. Relationships are the fundamental center of the human being, and, at the cultural level, Christianity, also through the rite, is the bearer of a profound novelty in the vision of the human being: a life in fraternity. Pope Francis stresses that living as brothers is good for humankind and states, "Goodness always tends to spread. Every authentic experience of truth and goodness seeks by its very nature to grow within us, and any person who has experienced a profound liberation becomes more sensitive to the needs of others."[27]

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[25] "Humans receive information through five senses: sight, hearing, taste, touch, and smell. The reality created by the mind is the result of partial information obtained from these senses." Siemieniecki, *Introduzione alla pedagogia cognitiva*, 79–80.

[26] De Saint-Exupéry, *Il piccolo principe*, chapter XXI: 131. The English translation quoted from the version available online at https://books-library.net/files/books-library.online-12201041Ti6B3.pdf (accessed 8.06.2022) 52.

[27] Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 9.

Therefore, a cultural approach to the rite means learning to construct interpersonal relationships that are authentic and oriented toward truth, goodness, and beauty.

The rite expresses the principle of being together, of being a community. It represents the desire to identify/recognize oneself in a group and to be part of its culture. The symbolic language which expresses the rite is unifying; it links the individual to the community, making the community perceptible also in its mystery as the Church of Christ; in short, the rite as a symbol is an act of communion. Of course, to give reasons for their faith, the believers use cultural categories to express the reason-faith binomial; this supports understanding and encourages dialogue also with the so-called 'cultural world,' so dear to the school. In fact, in line with the scientific method of the study of the Catholic religion, drawn from the collaboration between religious studies and theology, one enters into a debate with many other opinions, using one's own categories and language, highlighting foundations and rationales, and yet maintaining one's autonomy and singularity on the scientific path.

4. Teaching Catholic Religion and Symbolic Language of the Liturgy

The relevance of the relationship between liturgy and symbolic language becomes most evident if we consider the elements that are fundamental to both: sign and action. Communication is essentially a 'transmission of signs,' which takes place 'through signs.'[28] The liturgy shares two communication features, namely, sign and action. For example, when one studies the sacraments in the liturgy from a cultural point of view, one speaks of 'efficacious signs;' when one speaks of a celebration from a cultural point of view, it becomes a more or less long sequence of actions and behaviors that often modify the ordinary meaning of signs. Therefore, the liturgy, as 'sign' and 'action,' has a clear connection with human communication; moreover, the subjects of celebration exhibit communicative competence because they are engaged in interpersonal communication in their own ways.[29]

In the following part of this study, we want to show how the current *Indicazioni Nazionali* (National Guidelines) for teaching Catholic religion at school relate to liturgy as a cultural heritage, a great communicative code.

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[28] By signs, we mean various forms of expression, such as words, gestures, music, and space organization, among others. Communication through signs and symbols, as in the liturgy, is essentially the organization and usage of human languages as language in action, where the sign is not a mere structure but a behavior. See Bonaccorso, "Liturgia e comunicazione," 679–680.

[29] Bonaccorso, "Liturgia e comunicazione," 680.

4.1. Teaching Catholic Religion and Symbolic and Liturgical Language in the Kindergarten

In the Italian kindergarten, teaching Catholic religion offers opportunities for the integral development of children's personalities (3 to 5 years of age), opening them up to the religious dimension and strengthening it. It also promotes reflection on the children's heritage of experiences and contributes to responding to the need for meaning/sense, also present in the youngest children. In order to support children's personal growth, the learning objectives of teaching Catholic religion are distributed across different areas of experience: self and others, the moving body, language – creativity – expression, speech and words, and knowledge of the world.[30] The cultural approach to teaching Catholic religion with reference to the liturgy as a whole is particularly present in the area of language – creativity – expression, as illustrated in Figure 5.

Childhood

Recognizing some symbolic and figurative language characteristic of the Christian tradition and life (signs, feasts, prayers, songs, gestures, space, art) in order to creatively express one's own religious experience (languages, creativity, expression)

Figure 5. National guidelines for teaching Catholic religion to children: examples related to the liturgy.

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30 "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana," 11.02.2010, *Premessa*.

Of course, other areas of experience should not be excluded or forgotten. For example, in the so-called 'speech and word' area, the child learns some Christian terms by listening to simple biblical stories; in addition, the child learns to narrate the content using the re-learned language, thus developing meaningful communication also in the religious sphere.

4.2. Teaching Catholic Religion in the First Cycle of Education

It must be noted that in Italy, the first cycle of education is an important moment in the overall development of the student (6 to 13 years of age).[31]

This stage is divided into primary school (6 to 10 years of age) and secondary school (11 to 13 years of age). At the end of this course, thanks to schooling, individual studies, and educational experiences in the family and the community, the student can deal independently and responsibly with life situations typical to his/her age, reflecting and expressing his/her personality in all its dimensions.[32] On a side note, at all levels, one of the main objectives of Italian and European schools is the education, formation, and raising of responsible and upright citizens.[33]

The path we are discussing comprises the *Objectives for the Development of Competences and the Learning Objectives* (*Traguardi per lo Sviluppo delle Competenze e in Obiettivi di Apprendimento*). As far as the teaching of the Catholic religion is concerned, these objectives are formulated to express the desire to create a cultural map to help the students develop a unified understanding of reality and apply the various knowledge and skills through the lens of meaning that highlights the existential potential of each student. For this reason, the objectives for teaching Catholic religion by age group are divided into four thematic areas: (1) God and the human being, with the main historical and doctrinal references to Christianity, (2) the Bible and the sources, to provide an objective and documentary basis of knowledge, (3) religious language, in its verbal and non-verbal declensions, (4) ethical and religious values, to illustrate the link between purely religious elements and the development of a moral sense to promote civic and responsible coexistence.[34]

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[31] For the structure of the Italian school system, see MIUR, *Sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione*.

[32] MIUR, "Indicazioni nazionali," 16. See also "Decreto del Ministero dell'Istruzione della Repubblica Italiana," no. 254, 16.11.2012, establishing national guidelines for curricula in pre-school education and in the first cycle of education, in accordance with Article 1, paragraph 4, "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana," 89/2009.

[33] Parlamento europeo e il Consiglio dell'Unione europea, *Raccomandazione del Consiglio*, 22.05.2018. Point 2.7 can be taken as an example, as it states that "promoting the development of civic skills in order to enhance awareness of the common values identified in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union and in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union."

[34] "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana," 11.02.2010.

4.2.1. Teaching Catholic Religion as a Method of Examining Symbolic and Liturgical Language in the Primary School

It is worth noting that the preamble to the *National Guidelines for the Teaching of Catholic Religion in the First Cycle* states that the educational proposal aims to form people capable of dialogue and respect for differences, capable of behavior based on mutual understanding in a context of cultural and religious pluralism. That is why "it encourages comparison with the response matured in the Christian tradition with regard to the process of development of the person and in a manner adjusted to a specific age group, deepening the implications related to anthropology, society, and values; and encouraging a comparison through which the person, exercising his/her freedom, reflects and is guided in the choice of a responsible life project."[35] Nowadays, the school provides a learning experience that students go through to acquire specific skills. Therefore, schools cannot dispense with promoting pupils' ability to make sense of various experiences, including out-of-school experiences, to reduce the fragmentation and episodicity of their experiences that may characterize their lives.

Primary school and up to (and incuding) grade 3

- In *God and man*: recognizing prayer as a dialogue between man and God, highlighting the specificity of the *Our Father* in Christian prayer
- In *Religious language*: recognizing Christian signs, especially those related to Christmas and Easter, in the environment, feasts, celebrations and traditional popular piety; knowing the meaning of liturgical gestures and signs characteristic of the Catholic religion (modes of prayer, celebration, etc.)

Primary school and up to (and incuding) grade 5

- In *God and man*: the meaning of the sacraments in the Church's tradition as the signs of Jesus' salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit
- In *The Bible and other sources*: interpreting the main meaning of Christian iconography
- In *Religious language*: understanding the religious meaning of Christmas and Easter, starting form the evangelical narration and the life of the Church; recognising the value of silence as a 'place' of meeting oneself, another person, and God; identifying significant works of art (starting with the local ones) in order to discover how faith used to be interpreted and passed down by artists over the years.
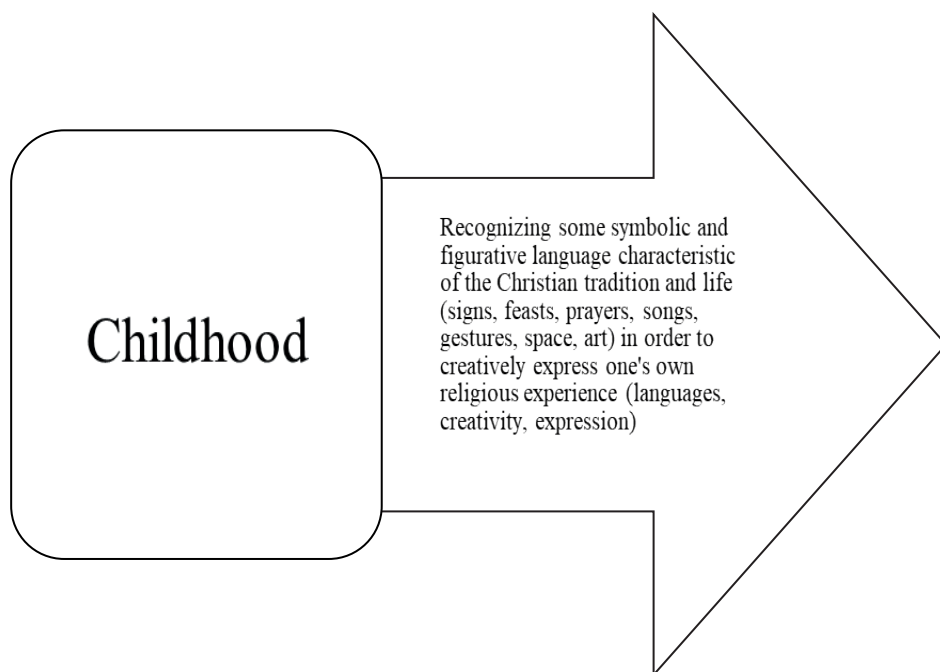
Figure 6. National guidelines for teaching Catholic religion in the primary school: examples related to liturgy.

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35 "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana," 11.02.2010, *Premessa*.

Regarding the teaching of liturgy in Catholic religion classes from a cultural perspective, it can be observed that the learning objectives in primary school, both at the end of the third grade and at the end of the fifth grade, draw attention to symbolic language in the following aspects: prayer (in particular the *Our Father*), Christian feasts (for example Christmas or Easter), the meaning of liturgical signs and gestures, sacraments, and so forth (see Figure 6).

It is clear from Figure 6 that this kind of program allows the student to see that the liturgy abounds with messages mediated by multiple codes, verbal and non--verbal. To acquire religious skills, we can say that through a cultural approach to the liturgical rites of the Catholic Church, students, both believers and non-believers, learn to make full use of their verbal, paraverbal, and non-verbal language.[36] In addition, students learn that all aspects of human expression are needed for authentic interpersonal communication by studying gestures, movements, music, organization of space, placement of objects and people, and images.

Symbols assume great importance in forming authentic religious expression, which can be a source of inspiration for the person's life project and developing a civic, responsible coexistence and solidarity. In fact, through the study of liturgical symbols, Catholic religion classes foster an educational experience that can change the behavior of students, constructively orienting them toward tasks involving responsibility (= personal action) and directed toward themselves and others. For example, being guided by knowledge related to the symbolic Eucharistic language allows the historical and cultural deepening and learning about Christian values such as thanksgiving, listening, and living together as brothers, among others.

4.2.2. Teaching Catholic Religion as a Method of Deepening Symbolic and Liturgical Language in the Lower Secondary School

The objectives for developing competences in the lower secondary school state that the student develops various religious competences at the end of the third grade. "[The student] recognizes the languages of expression of faith (symbols, prayers, rites), identifies their traces in the local, Italian and European areas, as well as in the world, learning to appreciate them from an artistic, cultural and spiritual point of view."[37] In order to develop such competences, with regard to the cultural approach to the liturgy in teaching the Catholic religion, the teacher chooses the most appropriate learning objectives, as demonstrated in Figure 7.

Based on the learning objectives mentioned above, we can see how students can be helped to develop critical thinking and a spirit of observation. This creates an opportunity to culturally understand the meaning of Christian symbols, liturgical

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[36] Mehrabian, *Nonverbal Communication*, 178–190.
[37] "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana," 11.02.2010.

celebrations, and sacraments of the Catholic Church in Italy and Europe. Education that begins with liturgical symbols will help students become accustomed to finding connections, similarities, and differences both with respect to their own way of life and to other religions, thus cultivating respect for cultural differences while enabling them to recognize their own religious identity and prompting them to action. For instance, by observing how the liturgical space is used for meeting people, though it is primarily the place for meeting God, the student learns how to manage this space not in a selfish and self-referential way but as a place of proximity to another person with the view of an authentic relationship.[38]

The lower secondary school

In *Religious language*

Understanding the central meaning of religious symbols, liturgical celebrations and sacraments of the Church.

Identifying the Christian message in the art and culture of Italy and Europe, in late antiquity, the Middle Ages, modern and contemporary times.

Identifying the characteristic elements of Christian prayer and comparing them with the prayer of other religions.

Focusing on the structures and meanings of sacred sites from antiquity to the present day.

(The learning objectives up to (and including) grade 3)

Figure 7. National guidelines for teaching Catholic religion in the lower secondary school: examples related to liturgy.

This approach allows the student to gain and effectively use the cultural tools which – through the optimal development of symbolization stimulated and supported by the school – enable communication even in the case of otherwise inexpressible and unknowable realities. In this sense, the confrontation with the historical form of the Catholic religion plays a fundamental role in teaching civic coexistence because

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38 Lameri, *Segni e simboli riti e misteri*, 69–70.

it allows capturing the important aspects of cultural identity, helping the student to discover ways of relating to people of other cultures and religions.[39]

4.3. Teaching Catholic Religion in the Second Cycle of Education and Professional Formation

The structure of the second cycle of education in Italy (14 to 18 years of age) is based on knowledge, skills, and competences.[40] Knowledge aims at 'knowing' per se, for instance, knowing the content of Christianity related to the young person's existential condition, with which he/she is confronted critically and constructively. Skills, on the other hand, express the learning path required of the student and the mental, affective, and practical attitude that fosters such learning. Therefore, in the school of competences, also while teaching Catholic religion, competences stand for personal action, which is "a proven ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social, and/ or methodological abilities in work or study situations and professional and personal development."[41]

On such an educational and didactic path, the student adopts the values of religious culture by acquiring correct and well-grounded knowledge and critical thinking expressed in a personal way. He/she can discern the values inherent in the religious vision, evaluate its existential and cultural effects to compare with other religious proposals and intellectual trends and make free decisions about what he/she has learned in view of his/her life project.[42]

4.3.1. Teaching Catholic Religion as a Method of Improving Symbolic and Liturgical Language in the Secondary School

In secondary school, the competences related to the instruction of the Catholic religion are grouped into three areas of meaning: anthropological and existential, historical and phenomenological, and biblical and theological. In addition, they recognize the value of religious culture and how the human principles of Catholicism can significantly contribute to the student's overall formation in relation to the historical, cultural, and civic heritage of the Italian and European nations. Indeed, the instruction of the Catholic religion adopts the cultural, educational, and professional profile of secondary schools by participating in developing the cultural axes with its own

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39   "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana," 11.02.2010, *Premessa*.
40   Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (MIUR), *Sistema educativo di istruzione e di formazione*.
41   Parlamento europeo e il Consiglio dell'Unione europea, "Raccomandazione del Parlamento," 23.05.2008.
42   Annicchiarico, "L'Irc tra continuità e innovazione," 71.

academic identity. Moreover, it situates itself in the linguistic and communicative field, taking into account the specificity of the religious language and the relational scope of every religious expression. It thus makes a specific contribution to the methodological field, enriching the epistemological opportunities of interpreting reality, to the logical-argumentative field, providing critical tools for reading and evaluating religious data, to the historical-humanistic field, through the effects that the Catholic religion has historically produced and is still producing in Italian, European, and world culture, and to the scientific, mathematical, and technological fields, through its search for meanings and the attribution of meaning.[43]

Figure 8 shows how teaching Catholic religion improves the learning of symbolic and liturgical language in a manner appropriate to secondary schools.

The second-cycle secondary school

- the recognition of the origin and nature of the Church and the forms of its action in the world, such as the proclamation of the Gospel, the sacraments or charitable activity
- the improvement of religious vocabulary through learning the origin, meaning and relevance of some of the main biblical themes (salvation, conversion, redemption, communion, grace, eternal life) understanding the proper meaning of these categories in the message and work of Jesus Christ
- the understanding of the Christian-Catholic concept of marriage and family: institution, sacrament, indissolubility, fidelity, fertility, family and educational relationships, social subjectivity
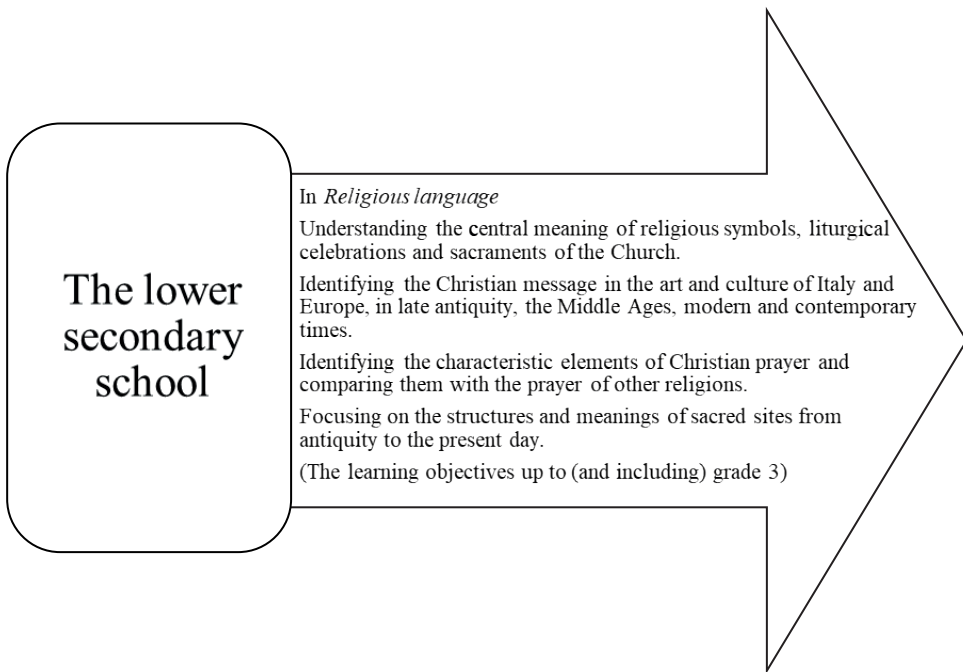
Figure 8. National guidelines for teaching Catholic religion in the secondary school: examples related to liturgy.

If we take a closer look from the point of view of the symbolic and liturgical language, it is possible to see how a high school student can pick up anthropological elements from the so-called 'liturgical processions' and find them useful for his/her own life project. For example, during the celebration of the Eucharist, the four types of processions emphasize the human value of walking together according to one's responsibilities.[44] At the level of the humanization of the human being,

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43 "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana," 20.08.2012, *Allegato* no. 1.
44 The procession to the alter of the priest and altar servers passing through the assembly; the procession from the altar to the pulpit with the Gospel for the proclamation of the Gospel; the procession to the altar for the offering of bread and wine; the procession of the faithful to receive the Holy Communion.

the student learns that authority by observing and studying the initial procession in the Eucharistic celebration, where entering the liturgical space last demonstrates the Christian concept of authority as service and not as the exercise of power. Indeed, the priest expresses this Christian concept by taking the final position in the entrance procession.[45] The student, believer or non-believer, Christian or non-Christian, critically confronts these elements and formulates his/her own beliefs in the context of his involvement in civic society.

Another example may be the study of the symbolic and liturgical language of the marriage rite. Here, the student can grasp the communicative and symbolic, and ritual value in its biblical and theological, historical and cultural, anthropological, and pedagogical-methodological sphere; he/she learns to distinguish the Christian-Catholic concept of marriage from other forms of union, discovering their meanings and responsibilities; if we assume that at a cultural level, he/she has a precise linguistic, cognitive, heuristic, and methodological knowledge that allows him/her a comparison with a concrete situation and with the interpretative tools of a religious fact in a socio-cultural context, in order to acquire a religious competence capable of helping to build one's own life project.

4.3.2. Teaching Catholic Religion as a Method of Improving Symbolic and Liturgical Language in Technical Institutes and Professional/ Vocational Institutes

Catholic religious education in technical institutes offers specific approaches to the critical reading of the relationship between human dignity and technical, scientific, and economic development in confrontation with Christianity.[46] Similarly, in vocational schools, specific approaches are proposed for the critical reading of the relationship between human dignity, social development, and the world of production in open dialogue with Christianity.[47]

As the approaches to teaching Catholic religion in these two types of schools are similar, it is possible to see how a cultural approach to the Catholic Church's liturgy helps students acquire religious skills concerning authentic forms of religiousness, distinguishing them from superstition and many other forms of esotericism. Moreover, in today's multicultural context, the school curriculum offered by the Catholic religion program encourages participation in an open and constructive dialogue, raising the student to exercise freedom in the perspective of justice and peace.

Figure 9 presents the national guidelines for teaching Catholic religion in technical and professional institutes.

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45 Lever, "Rilevanza della Messa," 1207–1223.
46 "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana" 20.08.2012, *Allegato* no. 2.
47 "Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica Italiana" 20.08.2012, *Allegato* no. 3.

Second-level schools (technical and professional)

- using the appropriate religious language to explain the content, symbols and cultural impact of Christianity, distinguishing forms of religious expression and practice from fundamentalism, superstition and esotericism
- explaining the origin and nature of the Church and the forms of its action in the world: preaching, the sacraments, charitable work
- the Christian-Catholic understanding of marriage and family; life choices, vocation, profession

Figure 9. National guidelines for teaching Catholic religion
in technical and professional institutes: examples related to liturgy.

Figure 9 shows how the cultural approach to the religious language, symbols, religious practices, sacraments, and marriage, among others, is a source of sound knowledge of fundamental importance for the student who, by studying, for example, the structure of the rite of reconciliation, at the level of humanization of the human being, strengthens the conviction that relationship requires an understanding of oneself, others, and life itself; one cannot live a life as a nomad, isolated and self-centered, but instead, one can be capable of taking a step for the common good, living in reconciliation with oneself and with others (and for Christians also with God). Catholic religion instruction deals with the universal question of the relationship between God and humans interpreted through the figure and work of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Church in history, which should be understood in this sense.

Through studying the cultural approach of the doctrine of Catholicism to the liturgical rites of the Catholic Church, the student can see that they are present in people's lives anyway. It is the presence in the fundamental order. It is a mistake to think that any religion can be entirely internal, without rules, without liturgy, and without external signs of an internal spiritual experience. As in social life, so on the level of religious experience, the external form is the condition of the existence of religion. As a social being, the disciple acquires the knowledge that he/she is also a ritual being. Despite the weakening of certain forms of rituals, it is observed that they recur in

other forms; they are stronger in cases when social interaction is stronger. The presence of rituals is of fundamental importance in the life of the human being because it makes visible to him/her the multiple connections with his/her own experience.[48]

If rituality is intrinsically unimaginable and functions in a symbolic order, the student has the opportunity to become competent in the use of time and space to mediate the complex relationships between nature-culture, thought-action, word-body, and the infinite openness to others, things, society, and history. In this sense, teaching liturgy during Catholic religion classes from a cultural perspective helps the student to situate himself/herself in time and history, orienting him/her toward personal answers to questions of meaning: Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going?

The student thus has a further opportunity to mature both in terms of 'knowing' and 'knowing how to act' by expressing in his/her personal experience the achievement of religious competence, for instance, his/her 'ethos' apparent in attitudes and values.[49]

Conclusions

In order to truthfully answer the 'question of meaning' and open hearts to hope, it is necessary to rediscover the purpose of human existence, the purpose that makes one's life worthwhile. All this requires an honest search and a deep commitment. Approaching Catholic liturgy from a cultural point of view within the framework of the guidelines operating in Italy (*Objectives for the Development of Competence, Objectives for Education, Competences and Specific Objectives for the Teaching of Catholic Religion*) means understanding that it is the highest and fundamental expression of communication with God and with brothers. In doing so, it should be emphasized that pedagogical and cultural significance has always characterized the teaching of the Catholic religion as an academic discipline; for example, studying the liturgical rites of different eras and the Church's reforms has never been done merely for the sake of abstract knowledge, but to confront a cross-section of believers' lives that makes the celebrated faith an intrinsic motive for choices concerning one's own life project; this encourages the student to define his/her own criteria of reference.

In the Italian context, the instruction of the Catholic religion is a proposal addressed to all – not only to Catholics. This study aimed to draw attention to the specificity of the school environment, its nature and purpose, the methods of research and in-depth study, and the process of maturation of students. One may venture to

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48   Maggiani, "Rito/Riti," 1222–1232.
49   Maggiani, "Rito/Riti," 1222–1232.

say that teaching Catholic religion at school contributes to creating the school culture and proposes an appropriate method of an interdisciplinary nature, a method of research that does not renounce the Christian revelation but is a serious search for the truth about the human being.

In this regard, the new *Directory for Catechesis* points out that Catholic religious instruction at school has significantly changed over time. Where it has been implemented, it represents a service to humanity and a valuable contribution to the educational project of the school. The Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelisation (today the Dicastery for Evangelization) quotes Pope Benedict XVI's words addressed to Italian Catholic religion teachers, "The religious dimension is intrinsic to the culture. It contributes to the overall formation of the person and makes it possible to transform knowledge into the wisdom of life. [...] Thanks to the teaching of the Catholic religion, school and society are enriched with true laboratories of culture and humanity in which, by deciphering the significant contribution of Christianity, the person is equipped to discover goodness and to grow in responsibility, to seek comparisons and to refine his or her critical sense, to draw from the gifts of the past to understand the present better, and to be able to plan wisely for the future."[50]

The example of the cultural approach in teaching Catholic religion toward the liturgical rites of the Catholic Church (in line with the school's objectives) emphasizes, on the one hand, fidelity to the doctrinal aspect of the Catholic Church so as not to betray its message and, on the other hand, it contributes to the human and cultural maturity of students from different backgrounds in order to build a civic society described by respectful and open dialogue, especially during times when positions are easily inflamed to the point of violent ideological clashes. However, the teaching of the Catholic religion as a school discipline cannot be reduced to a single model of reference since it has developed historically as a result of agreements with states and the arrangements of individual European Bishops' Conferences. With regard to agreements between the state and the Catholic Church in today's Europe, one can perhaps cite the example of Italy; this agreement was worked out following the school's objectives on the basis of the Concordat between the Holy See and the Italian Republic (18.02.1984) and followed by later agreements from 1985 to 2012 between the Italian Bishops' Conference and the Ministry of Education, University, and Research.

Especially today, when many European countries host students from Ukraine, this cultural model of religious teaching can be applied to students whose parents would like their children to fully integrate with their peers and learn about the important religious dimension of life and education of the host countries. This proposal

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50 Benedict XVI, *Discorso agli insegnanti di religione cattolica*. Pontificio Consiglio per la Nuova Evangelizzazione, *Direttorio per la catechesi*, no. 314. For more on the new Directory, see Kiciński, "Rozwój dyrektoriów katechetycznych," 5–27. The English translation is taken from the online version of the address available at https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090425_insegnanti-religione.html (accessed 7.08.2022).

does not require modification of one's own teaching models (including the confessional one), but it only allows learning what is important to Catholics. It can also become an important contribution to the academic debate on the models of teaching Catholic religion in state schools in secularized Europe.

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From Desecularization to Sacralization of the Political Language: Religion and Historiosophy in Vladimir Putin's Preparations for War

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Abstract: This article aims to analyze religious and mystical elements contained in Putin's public statements by referring to selected examples characteristic of contemporary Russian identity politics. In order to demonstrate the importance of religious and mystical threads in Putin's speeches, we chose five specific cases. The analysis of these statements indicates that religious and mystical motifs in Putin's language are an attempt at self-creation for the purpose of domestic policy. We claim that this self-creation is more of an effort to strengthen Putin's public support than proof that he borrows patterns for shaping Russia's political life from the Russian religious and political tradition. Putin's rhetoric is not so much a desire for an axiological renewal of Russian politics but an attempt to search for the new legitimization of the power system he created in confrontation with the West.

Keywords: Russia, Vladimir Putin, Russian Orthodox Church, church and state, Russian neo-conservatism

While analyzing the language of the Russian political debate, it can be noticed that since the beginning of the 21st century, that is, since Vladimir Putin assumed the presidency, the language has been undergoing steady and gradual desecularization. During his first (2000–2004) and second (2004–2008) presidential terms, Putin often mentioned that, in his opinion, Russia is part of the Western democratic world and could see its future precisely as a modern democratic state. After he assumed the presidency, however, his rhetoric also contained ideological elements that were hardly ever found in Boris Yeltsin's speeches. Since Putin's "Munich speech" in 2007, which marks the beginning of acute ideological confrontation with the West and whose strong initial accent was the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, Putin has been making fewer and fewer references to Western democratic values (although they have not disappeared completely). However, religious and mystical elements have become increasingly more prominent.

Sacralization of the language of Russian politics coincides with another phenomenon that is only seemingly of the opposite nature. In recent years, primarily since the Pussy Riot protest in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow in 2012 aimed at the alliance of the state and Russian Orthodox Church, the previously existing consensus in Russian public debate on avoiding direct criticism of the church and its political involvement has been fading.[1] Nonetheless, it does not influence the direction in which the language of politics is developing. On the contrary, it appears to purposefully and significantly differ from the parlance of Western politics. The objectives of Russian internal and foreign policies are often manifested not only pragmatically but also in religious and mystical concepts. While it cannot be said that President Putin's rhetoric contains the voices of the Russian messianic tradition assigning to Russia a particular historic mission and moral superiority over the West, it can be noticed that religious and mystical motifs so frequent in his public statements are in keeping with Russia's new identity politics. They strengthen the idea promoted by Putin that Russia forms a separate civilization based on unique spiritual ties and building social unity through a community of traditional values as opposed to Western liberal values.

Therefore, this article aims to analyze religious and mystical elements contained in Putin's public statements by referring to selected examples characteristic of contemporary Russian identity politics. The analysis of these statements indicates that religious and mystical motifs in Putin's language serve as an instrument. They are an attempt at self-creation for the purpose of domestic policy. This self-creation is aimed primarily at Russian recipients, the citizens of the Russian Federation, and Russian-speaking citizens of post-Soviet states who identify as Russians. We claim that this self-creation is more of an attempt to strengthen Putin's public support than proof that he borrows patterns for shaping Russia's political life from the Russian religious and political tradition. Putin's rhetoric is not so much a desire for an axiological renewal of Russian politics (despite his repeated declarations) but an attempt to search for the new legitimization of the power system he created in an open ideological confrontation with the West.

1. Sources and Methodological Remarks

In order to demonstrate the importance of religious and mystical threads in President Putin's addresses, we chose five specific cases. They can serve as examples of these threads to be used in the correct sense, in an apparent religious or ideological

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1   Uzlaner – Stoeckl, "From Pussy Riot's 'punk prayer' to Matilda," 427–430; Uzlaner, "The End of the Pro-Orthodox Consensus," 173–175.

context, and interpreted according to this particular key. This is an important initial remark. While analyzing Putin's language, one must be cautious when attributing deeper motivations to him or interpreting the religious and mystical themes contained in it. Putin often raises historical or religion-related issues in public speeches. Nonetheless, the style of those speeches can be quite casual, not devoid of irony or distance from the speech content. This observation is important because not all of his statements referring to religious themes can be interpreted in this context. Two famous public comments are a case in point. One is found in a known film by a Russian propagandist Vladimir Solov'yov *Miroporyadok 2018* (World Order 2018), where Putin quotes the famous words of Burkhard Christoph von Münnich (1683–1767), a German who reached the rank of field marshal in the Russian army, claiming that "Russia is ruled by God." In another statement, in 2018, on a nuclear-armed conflict in which Russia might be involved in the future, Putin compares Russians to martyrs who will go to paradise and their opponents to those who will "perish in hell" because they will not even manage to repent.[2] These two well-known comments demonstrate the methodological difficulty in our study. Historical and religious themes often appear in Putin's language outside their proper context. They are more stylistic devices and references to famous historical accounts than an expression of the ideological orientation of Russia's new identity politics. This general remark points to potential difficulties with interpretation and the risk of overinterpretation. It does happen that Western observers, especially those representing conservative circles, would like to perceive Putin as a defender of traditional values or traditional patterns of social life and the opponent of liberalism and globalism. This perception, however, is not accurate.

We chose five statements by Vladimir Putin to examine, in which the reference to Russian historiography and religious and mystical tradition can be clearly linked to the current Russian identity politics. The selected statements are juxtaposed with their interpretations in Russian public life in order to determine how they relate to the objectives of said politics.

This article is divided into three parts. Firstly, we outline the main ideas in the new Russian identity politics implemented by Putin after 2007. Secondly, we analyze five case studies representing the sacralization of Putin's language. Thirdly, we provide an interpretation of his language from the perspective of the objectives of Russian identity politics.

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2 "My kak muchenniki popadem v ray."

2. Vladimir Putin's New Identity Politics

In this article, the new identity politics refers to the actions undertaken or inspired by the Russian Federation authorities to influence various groups in Russian society to reinterpret Russian identity and the meaning of "being Russian," belonging to Russian society, and participating in creating Russian culture and tradition. These actions can be considered on three levels. Firstly, they are manifested in the media language (directly or indirectly controlled by the state), in the reinterpretation of school curricula (especially regarding history), or in programs for cultural and educational institutions promoted and financed by the state. Secondly, the new identity politics is supported by changes in legislation. For example, both the Constitution of the Russian Federation (amended in 2020) and legal acts referring to numerous areas of national security include much ideological and identity content. In addition, recent years saw changes in criminal legislation, broadening legal protection to the official interpretation of history and redefining the level of protection for religious people's feelings. Thirdly, the new identity politics manifests itself in the language used by the representatives of Russian political elites, especially President Putin.

Therefore, why should contemporary Russia's identity politics be considered "new"? The main reason is that it is fundamentally different from the identity politics implemented in Russia after 1991, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The era of Boris Yeltsin, despite the lack of consistent democratizing of Russia's political life, was an attempt to build Russian identity as a part of a greater Western identity.[3] Although in the symbolic domain, one could still notice a reference to the imperial past and the collaboration between the authorities and the Russian Orthodox Church was official, the identity discourse was based, at least in its verbal layer, on values and standards characteristic of liberal Western democracies. It was expressed particularly in the provisions of the Constitution of the Russian Federation of 1993. The Constitution explicitly states that the rights and freedoms of the person are of supreme value in public life, and their protection is the duty of the state (Article 2). The list of rights and freedoms corresponds to the concept of legal state organization adopted in the West (Articles 17–64). The source of state power is exclusively the people, who exercise their power primarily through democratic elections (Article 3). The Constitution also disallows the existence of any state ideology (Article 13). Moreover, Russia is a secular state, where separation of church and state is guaranteed (Article 14).

These provisions remained in the Constitution of 2020, which not only made it possible for Vladimir Putin – in his fourth term in the presidential office – to run for the presidency for two more terms but which also, more importantly from our point of view, included new regulations containing ideological and identity

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3   Stent, *Putin's World,* 51.

content. Noteworthy, those regulations reference ancestors who passed their faith on to the citizens of the Russian Federation, implying that Russia's history goes back a thousand years (Article 67.1.2), and the state has an obligation to defend historical truth and disapproval of diminishing the heroic deeds of Russia's defenders (Article 67.1.3). This is how the complexity of the new identity politics is expressed. On the one hand, official statements and Russian legal documents contain declarations as to the significance of democratic values, including respect for the rights and freedoms of a person. Yet, on the other hand, new regulations are being introduced that reinterpret the extent of these rights and freedoms and aim to legally protect the version of Russian history accepted by the authorities.

The main elements of the new identity politics are contained not only in the updated Constitution but also in other legal acts. Significant identity issues, including permissible and impermissible interpretations of historical facts, are now regulated at the legal level. For example, after further modifications, the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation provides for legal protection of religious people's feelings without providing adequate protection for the views of non-religious citizens (Article 148). The federal law on Commemorating the Victory of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945, amended in 2021, prohibits mentioning the Nazi-Soviet alliance and military cooperation between Nazi Germany and the USSR before 1941. It also opposes denying the decisive role of the Soviet people in defeating the Nazis and the humanitarian motives of the USSR behind liberating European countries (Article 6.1). Clear identity elements, in most cases oppositional to Western concepts, are contained in Russian strategic documents concerning national security.

This new identity politics can be viewed as a set of main ideas introduced to legislation, media coverage and educational curricula, and the language of Russian political elites. Although this set cannot be considered comprehensive, it does express the idea and main objectives of said politics well.

Firstly, Russian identity is depicted as based on conservative values, contrary to the liberal and decadent West.[4] Russia embodies its identity by challenging the universal nature of liberal values. Instead, it becomes the center for promoting traditional values in the world, which are spiritual and strictly connected to religion. Secondly, there is continuity of the history of the Rus' and Russia in various forms of political organization from the 10th century onwards, which is traditionally said to be the beginning of the Rus' statehood (baptism of the Kyivan prince Saint Vladimir in 988) to the present. Russia is the only continuator of this Rus' state tradition. Thirdly, Russia has a particular mission to complete in the post-Soviet area. Its main objective is to protect Russian-speaking citizens of post-Soviet states and spread the message

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4   Engström, "Contemporary Russian Messianism," 356–358; Likhacheva – Trifonov, "Modernizatsiya Rossii," 60–61.

of the Soviet Union's positive role, both in terms of the development of its republics and the social and cultural development of the inhabitants. Finally, Russia identifies as a global empire. It cannot resign from this international role without the risk of losing its own identity. Therefore, it deserves the area of influence, which combines the majority of the post-Soviet region (except for the Baltic states) acknowledged by the international community.

3. Case Studies

The elements of the new Russian identity politics indicated above (conservative turn, emphasis on Russia's axiological separateness, unity of the Rus' and Russia's historic mission, and Russia as a separate civilization) are present in President Putin's statements. What we mean here is not the occasional remark on the issues related to current political events. Putin's speeches, in which the mystical and religious elements are particularly evident, concern the Russians' existential problems, the future of society and state, and fundamental values which are supposed to ensure Russia's continuous existence and development. This is why such statements are rooted in the context of the ongoing and increasing conflict with the West, characteristic of the official Russian propaganda, and even the conviction that Western culture, lifestyle, and dominant values pose an existential threat to Russia.[5]

3.1. The Collapse of the Soviet Union as a Geopolitical Catastrophe

Since assuming power in 2000, President Putin has made a number of gestures interpreted as a rehabilitation of the Soviet Union in the symbolic domain. The most famous is perhaps adopting the melody of the Soviet Union anthem as the anthem of the Russian Federation, with new lyrics that are strikingly reminiscent of the Soviet anthem lyrics. However, it would not be true to state that the Russian president is rehabilitating the Soviet period. He has not abstained from criticizing communist totalitarianism.[6] Furthermore, he has not supported crucial ideological elements underpinning the Soviet Union. Therefore, one could not say that Putin is nostalgic for the Soviet era.

If any nostalgia can be detected in Putin's comments related to the Soviet Union, it is limited. Nevertheless, it has clear social, ethical, axiological, and historiosophical motifs. It manifests itself in the longing expressed by many participants in Russian public life for unity and uniformity in Soviet society, which is in stark contrast

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5   Pain, "The Imperial Syndrome," 60.
6   E.g., Putin, "Totalitarizm dostoin osuzhdeniya."

to the social and economic stratification of contemporary Russian society. This Soviet social unity and uniformity is partially a myth and does not correspond to the truth. Nevertheless, it serves as a starting point for Putin to present ethical values and fundaments that unify Russian society.[7] It is interesting that Putin, who was a member of the Communist Party, like many officials of the contemporary political elite, and is currently identifying as an Orthodox Christian,[8] notices a strong relation between Christian axiology and ethical values forming the foundations of Soviet society. In this context, he claims that the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" (*Moral'nyy kodeks stroiteley kommunizma*), containing basic moral rules and key values indispensable for building Soviet society, was, in fact, a simplified copy of moral values based on the gospel.[9] Even more interesting is that a similar view is expressed by the head of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, Gennadiy Zyuganov, who claims that values and social norms preached by Jesus Christ were identical to the fundamental ethical values of Soviet communism.[10] Although such views of President Putin and Zyuganov may seem disputable, they do intend to portray the Soviet Union as a state and society built on solid, universal human principles. In the same way, the collapse of the Soviet Union should also be, in their opinion, interpreted not as a result of internal weaknesses and systemic, ideological, or economic discrepancies but more as a result of the destructive influence of external forces opposing Soviet social and moral order.

In this perception of the Soviet Union reflected in Putin's rhetoric, a clear historiosophical theme is noticeable. This theme has been exploited heavily in the writings of representatives of the Russian alt-right, such as Aleksandr Dugin or Sergey Kara-Murza. They perceive the collapse of the Soviet Union as a sign of foreign aggression aimed at Russia.[11] The consequence of said aggression was not only supposed to be the political crisis and weakening of Russia's international influence, especially in the post-Soviet region, but from a historiosophical perspective, it was also the threat to the independent existence and development of Russian culture and national identity. According to Russia's Constitution, this identity is understood as the identity of a multi-ethnic society based on shared values (Article 3.1). According to this take, the collapse of the Soviet Union was not merely the climax of a political or economic crisis but a social disaster.

In this context, the significance of President Putin's address to the Federal Assembly in 2005[12] is fully revealed. Putin said then that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. This statement

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7   Laruelle, "Russia as an Anti-liberal European Civilisation," 287–290.
8   Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy,* 90; Fagan, *Believing in Russia,* 27.
9   "Putin sravnil kommunisticheskuyu ideologiyu s khristianstvom."
10   "Nagornaya propoved' i kodeks stroitel'stva kommunizma."
11   E.g., Dugin, *Geopolitika Rossii,* 426–436; Kara-Murza, *Demontazh naroda,* 434–453.
12   Putin, "Poslaniye Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [2005].

was to be interpreted according to the historiosophical and social key, which he later explained in the context of acute confrontation with the West. In 2017, Putin was interviewed[13] by Oliver Stone, an American director and a Putin supporter. Putin claimed that his nostalgia for the collapse of the Soviet Union did not have any political or ideological background. In his opinion, however, its collapse was a tragedy for Russian society and all societies of former Soviet republics. He reminded people that on December 25, 1991, the final day of the Soviet Union, 25 million Soviet citizens, who considered themselves ethnic Russians, were left outside of Russia's borders. According to Putin, the fall of the state led to severing family ties, the destruction of the health and social system, economic collapse, and a dramatic rise in poverty. Massive social problems that began with the destruction of the Soviet state have not been wholly tackled to this day. Moreover, the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in ethnic, often armed, conflicts in the post-Soviet region, including two Chechen Wars described by Putin as fully fledged domestic conflicts.

3.2. The Historiosophical Interpretation of the Annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol

Vladimir Putin adopted a similar historiosophical interpretation of the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation in 2014. Significantly, he avoided anti-Ukrainian rhetoric in this context. He did not point to the armed conflict with Ukraine as the cause of annexation. Besides, during public addresses after the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and the beginning of the conflict in Donbas, Putin often claimed that he still considered the Russians and Ukrainians as one people, permanently united by culture, history, and religion.[14]

From the modern perspective, one can search for various explanations as to why Putin abstained from open anti-Ukrainian rhetoric after the events of Kyivan Euromaidan and the "Revolution of Dignity," the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, and the actual armed intervention on the part of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts controlled by Ukraine. At the same time, anti-Ukrainian statements did often appear in state-controlled media. Moreover, numerous Russian political or intellectual elite representatives also expressed anti-Ukrainian sentiment. In this context, it is worth pointing out that even Aleksey Naval'nyy, who portrays himself as the leader of Russia's democratic opposition, did not oppose the annexation of Crimea.[15] Therefore, Putin's language regarding the history and future relations between Russia and Ukraine and Russian and Ukrainian nations should be analyzed against this background.

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[13]   "The Putin Interviews."
[14]   Putin, "Ob istoricheskom yedinstve russkikh i ukraintsev."
[15]   "Rossiyskiy oppozitsioner Aleksey Naval'nyy o Kryme."

This language again emphasizes historiosophical themes, most notably in a speech given on March 18, 2014, right after the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol.[16] It is not a coincidence that it did not contain anti-Ukrainian accents. The annexation of a part of a neighboring country was not presented as a result of war or a political or ethnic conflict either. Instead, according to Putin, Crimea and Sevastopol were returned to where they belonged, to their homeland.[17] Putin explained, "after a long, hard, and exhausting voyage, the Crimea and Sevastopol are returning to their harbor, to their native shores." It was a clear reference to Sevastopol's history as a city connected with the Russian fleet and a site of bloody fights during the Russo-Turkish wars of the 19th century and World War II.[18]

Such language reveals the historiosophical concept of unity in the Rus' history. This concept does, in fact, negate the independent existence of states, a distinct culture, and identity of other nations that are part of the historical Rus', namely the Belarusians and Ukrainians.[19] According to this idea, said nations constitute part of one cultural sphere of the "Rus' world" (*russkiy mir*), whose center and the guarantor of existence and identity is Russia. The historiosophical explanation of the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol and the constant emphasis on the unity of Russia and Ukraine's nations conform to the image Putin created in the public domain as the "gatherer of Russian lands" (*sobiratel' zemel' russkikh*). This is reminiscent of Prince Vasili III, who – after the division of the Kyivan Rus' – began the unification of the Rus', taking the previously insignificant Moscow as its center.

3.3. The Monument of Vladimir the Great – A Vision of Historical Continuity, Axiological Unity, and Identity of the Rus' and Russia

The important idea in Russian history of "gathering Rus' lands" justified Moscow's (Muscovy and then Russia) political, cultural, and religious claims to occupy a dominant position among Rus' peoples in the past. It also justified the transference of the political, cultural, and church capital of the Rus' from Kyiv (called "the Mother of Rus' cities" – *Mat' gorodov russkikh*) to Moscow. This idea has a strong historiosophical and mystical character. Its historiosophical aspect expresses the notion of the Rus' uninterrupted existence and its unique mission in the world despite political changes, including the fall of the Kyivan Rus' as well.[20] Its mystical dimension is expressed in the concept of "Moscow, the Third Rome," it justified Moscow's dominance by noting that the Moscow State remained faithful to Orthodoxy while western Rus' lands, including Kyiv, were for a long time under the political and cultural influence

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16   "Putin poblagodaril krymchan i sevastopol'tsev."
17   Auer, "Carl Schmitt in the Kremlin," 957.
18   Putin, *Rossiya ustremlennaya v budushcheye,* 128.
19   Richters, *The Post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church,* 101.
20   Putin, *Mysli o Rossii,* 42–43.

of non-Orthodox states: first the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and then the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In the period of Russia's expansion to the west and gradual subjugation of western Rus' lands, the idea of "gathering Rus' lands" became the basis for questioning the distinct character of Belarusian and Ukrainian cultures, as well as denigrating Belarusian and Ukrainian languages. On the linguistic level, it even led to the creation of an artificial concept of "Little Russia" to denote Ukraine in contrast to "Great Russia," namely Russia itself. This linguistic aspect is also visible in the Russian Orthodox Church, whose leader uses the title of Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus'. On the one hand, this title refers to the cultural and religious unity of the Rus'. On the other, it indicates the dominance of the Russian Orthodox Church over local Orthodox churches in Belarus and Ukraine.

The idea of the historical continuity of the Rus', leading to the actual identification of the Rus' and Russia, is also present in the contemporary language of Russian politics. In the view of right-wing conservative and nationalist circles (such as Aleksandr Dugin), it justifies Russian political and military expansion in Ukraine and denies the sovereignty of Belarus and Ukraine as independent states.[21] As mentioned above, however, Putin's language lacks such simplifications because, at least officially, Putin portrays himself as a politician working for the unity of Rus' cultural space as well as peace and reconciliation between Russia and Ukraine. In Vladimir Putin's take, the concept of the historical continuity of the Rus' and Russia has an axiological dimension. It points to the continuity of fundamental values differentiating the Rus' and Russia from other states and nations and ensuring the identity and survival of the Rus' and Russia over the centuries. Vladimir Putin expressed this notion in his speech during a significant event. On November 4, 2016, during the ongoing conflict with Ukraine in Donbas and the second year after the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol by the Russian Federation, a monument to Vladimir the Great, Prince of Kyiv, was unveiled in Moscow. It should be noted that during the reign of Prince Vladimir, Moscow did not even exist (the year 1147 is accepted as the date of its establishment by Prince Yuriy Dolgorukiy). Nonetheless, Vladimir, who is also a saint in the Orthodox Church, occupies a special place in Rus' historiosophy. Due to his decision to adopt Christianity from Constantinople (in 988), he is considered the creator of the Rus' as an independent political and cultural entity, where values and patterns preached by Orthodoxy shape social and individual lives. Referring to Vladimir and placing him in the pantheon of the Rus' and Russian rulers is a symbolic confirmation that modern Russia continues the historical mission of the Kyivan Rus'.[22]

During the unveiling ceremony, President Putin said Prince Vladimir provided the moral foundations to shape Russian lives. These foundations are the Russians'

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21   Shlapentokh, "Dugin Eurasianism," 232.
22   Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy,* 186.

source of unity and their ability to unite, overcome various obstacles, and achieve victories over their enemies, as well as the source of Russia's rise to power over the generations. According to him, the Russians must oppose the challenges and threats to their country, which is possible thanks to the spiritual foundations that date back to Vladimir and the Rus' tradition of unity and peace. Speaking of Prince Vladimir, Putin repeated the claim that Russian history spans a thousand years.[23]

The concept of the historical continuity of the Rus' and Russia, even if shown in an axiological context as in Putin's statements, must lead to the conclusion, however, that contemporary Ukraine has no participation in the historical and cultural heritage of the Kyivan Rus'. Even if President Putin does not state this as openly as thinkers such as Dugin, such historical (historiosophical) thinking contributes to the attempts in Russian political life to question Ukraine's sovereignty or the foundations of its identity as an independent state with its own culture, history, and language. Since the only heir to the Kyivan Rus' legacy is modern Russia, Ukraine can preserve its own identity only in close political, cultural, and religious (in the basic axiological layer) ties with Russia.[24]

3.4. The Uniqueness of the Russian People – Genetic Distinctiveness and Moral Superiority

It is not a coincidence that Putin's statements contain references to the uniqueness of the Russian people – a recurring motif in the Rus' and Russian historiosophy. However, the significance of these references is sometimes neglected when other representatives of Russian political elites trivialize and take them to extremes. This is what happened with the famous comment by the former Minister of Culture Vladimir Medinskiy, who claimed that the uniqueness of the Russians resulted from the possession of an additional chromosome, which distinguished them from other nations.[25]

Despite some apparent similarities to the absurd rhetoric mentioned above, Putin's language regarding the Russians' uniqueness is decidedly different. He sees the distinctive character of the Russians and their uniqueness in a moral and axiological layer, not a biological or genetic one.[26] Putin, therefore, also referred to the Russian unique genetic code in a well-known statement on April 17, 2014, during a televised meeting with the nation (*Pryamaya liniya*).[27] Nonetheless, he clearly indicated that what he had in mind was the "moral genetic code" characteristic of the Russians, which was one of the factors related to historical continuity in the Rus' and Russian culture and tradition. This Russian moral genetic code makes the Russians

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23 "Putin prizval protivostoyat' vyzovam i ugrozam."
24 Putin, "Ob istoricheskom yedinstve russkikh i ukraintsev."
25 "Ministr kul'tury schitayet, chto u rossiyan jest' lishnyaya khromosoma."
26 Torbakov, *After Empire,* 326
27 "Ne soglasilsya by ostavat'sya prezidentom pozhiznenno."

morally and spiritually different from other nations. Furthermore, this separateness is interpreted as moral superiority, although Putin does not emphasize any xenophobic or nationalist stereotypes in these types of statements.

In Putin's approach, this special moral genetic code has enabled the Russians to survive various difficulties throughout their history. It is also a source of social norms and order. The essential norm is the Russians' renunciation of individualism, understood as concern for one's own well-being and prosperity. According to Putin, it is characteristic of the Russians to subjugate the individual to society and sacrifice individual interests for the good of the community (nation, society, or state).

Putin contrasts such a position with Western egoism and individualism. In his opinion, "Western values mean that a person is focused on themselves, and the greater the success one achieves, the better they are." Meanwhile, for the Russians, individual success has no real value. In this context, he referred to an old Russian saying *Na miru i smert' krasna* ("When in the community, even death is beautiful"). In his interpretation, a Russian can sacrifice their interest and give up their life for others, friends, or their country. According to him, Russians' moral uniqueness and superiority have become a source of heroism during wars and their ability to sacrifice throughout history. He also claims that the Russians are "less pragmatic," but they have "wider souls," which is how Russia's authentic greatness manifests itself.

The absolute emphasis on the priority of the good of a community (society or state) over the good of an individual coincides with Russian Orthodox anthropology, which stresses that a human being becomes a person only in a community. The community is, therefore, a source of human dignity and value, in contrast to Western concepts of the human person in which the community performs a serving role towards an individual.

While talking about the uniqueness of the Russian people, Vladimir Putin also mentions its genetic aspect in the biological sense. His approach, however, emphasizes the internal variety of the Russian nation, which is the result of historical forming by integrating various ethnic groups into one state and one cultural space. This approach corresponds to the concept of "multinational people" (*mnogonatsional'nyy narod*) contained in the Constitution of the Russian Federation. It can be understood as the supra-ethnic idea of a nation composed of various ethnic groups bound together by deep ties, not only common history, language, or state, but far more common values or norms of social and individual life.[28] As Putin said, "Our country, like a vacuum cleaner, has sucked in the representatives of particular ethnic groups, particular nationalities. Through mixed marriages, we have created a strong genetic code. Our genetic code is one of our special strengths."[29]

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[28] Davydova – Bokov, "Mnogonatsional'nyy narod," 101–111.
[29] "Ne soglasilsya by ostavat'sya prezidentom pozhiznenno."

The context of this statement is crucial for political reasons. It was made during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in Donbas and not long after the annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol. It is not a coincidence that Putin spoke about unity not only to the Russians (meaning the citizens of the Russian Federation) but most of all to those belonging to the "Rus' world," namely both ethnic Russians living outside the Russian Federation as well as representatives of ethnically close nations, primarily Belarusians and Ukrainians. At the time, he also said, "the foundation of the Russians' uniqueness is moral guidelines. A Russian, or more precisely, a person belonging to the "Rus' world," believes that a human being possesses a certain higher moral principle. Therefore, a "Russian person" focuses not on the inside but on the outside."[30]

While commenting on these words, it should be remembered that Russia supported the separatists of the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics precisely in order to defend the "Rus' world" and the Russian-speaking inhabitants of eastern Ukraine.[31] This is the concept of cultural unity and, at the same time, uniqueness and superiority over other nations to which the participants of Russian public life referred when they justified their support for Donbas separatists and even called for open-armed intervention in Ukraine.

3.5. Spirituality as a Solution to Contemporary Social Problems

A permanent feature of Putin's rhetoric when he talks about Russian identity and cultural differences from other countries, especially the West, is his emphasis on axiological issues. In his approach, despite its multi-ethnic and multi-religious character, the Russian nation is bound together by shared values and resulting behavior patterns. As Putin often admits to being an Orthodox Christian, he perceives the Orthodox Church as a special ally in cultivating and promoting said values.[32] His statements do not, however, favor one religious organization. Instead, he believes that spirituality and appreciation for values proclaimed by religious tradition, the acceptance of traditional patterns of social life, and the rejection of such forms of social progress which oppose them distinguish Russia from the contemporary West.[33]

This idea serves most of all the confrontation between Russian and Western cultures, the latter being portrayed as fallen and degenerate.[34] Not only does this idea justify the rejection of non-traditional family patterns and social equality for non-heteronormative people, but most of all, it serves to question the values which form the foundation in Western democratic societies – the subservient role of

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30   "Ne soglasilsya by ostavat'sya prezidentom pozhiznenno."
31   Trenin, *Should We Fear Russia?,* 46
32   Putin, *Mysli o Rossii,* 51.
33   Chadayev, *Putin. Nashi tsennosti,* 164–165.
34   Semenova, "Osobennosti konstrukta politicheskoy identichnosti," 175–177.

the state with respect to an individual, respect for freedom, including freedom of speech and property, as well as the right of every human being to self-definition according to their own identity.

In Vladimir Putin's approach, the community of values distinguishing Russia from the fallen West is primarily a spiritual one with a sacral dimension. Such a view was presented during his address to the Federal Assembly on December 12, 2012.[35] He pointed out that, in his opinion, Russian society lacks spiritual ties (*dukhovnyye skrepy*). He believes those ties also include characteristic values, such as mercy, compassion, mutual support, and assistance from a political point of view. They all bind together the life of society and do not explicitly address the well-being of a person. In Putin's view, the Russians have been proud of these values for centuries. These values have made the Russian nation stronger. Therefore, all Russian leaders must support those social institutions that pass on and strengthen traditional values. Moreover, he clearly said during his address that law could be used to defend traditional morality, even though there is no legal way to establish and promote said morality. The state does not want to encroach on the beliefs and opinions of individuals through legislation. He added, "Attempts by the state to encroach on the beliefs and opinions of individuals are without a doubt a manifestation of totalitarianism. I find it utterly unacceptable. We are not going to enter that path. We should not act through prohibitions and restrictions, but we should strengthen society's lasting spiritual and moral basis." Instead of state interference in worldview issues, President Putin announced his support for developing Russian culture, education, and activities for young people. In his opinion, these spheres, which cannot be considered mere services, account for the harmonious moral development of responsible and mature citizens of Russia.

These words were put into practice by implementing important social and ideological activities, such as introducing religious instruction into public schools, supporting the paramilitary patriotic youth organization Young Army (*Yunarmiya*), or social and educational activities conducted by the Russian Orthodox Church. Nonetheless, the interpretation of the actual meaning of the words uttered in 2012 is influenced by the further development of Russia's ideological politics under Vladimir Putin's rule. It was hard to ignore them, given the context of the Pussy Riot protest in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow in 2012. It led to changes in Russian criminal legislation regarding the protection of religious feelings of believers in the absence of protection of the beliefs of non-religious people.[36] A prime example of the application of law promoting a religious worldview was the case of the video blogger Ruslan Sokolovskiy, who was charged and subsequently sentenced

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35   Putin, "Poslaniye Prezidenta Rossiyskoy Federatsii Federal'nomu Sobraniyu Rossiyskoy Federatsii" [2012].
36   Stoeckl, *The Russian Orthodox Church,* 100–101; Ponomariov, *The Visible Religion,* 292; Bernstein, "An Inadvertent Sacrifice," 221–222.

for offending religious feelings by "hunting Pokémon" in a church in Yekaterin-burg.[37] Finally, the most important stage of introducing ideological elements into state legislation was the constitutional reform of 2020. It introduced an invocation to God into the Russian Federation Constitution, defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman, and assigned legal protection only to such a family pattern (Articles 72.1 zh1 and 114.1 v).

The promise of no ideological involvement on the part of the state through re-strictive legislation interfering in one's worldview sphere has not been fulfilled. On the contrary, as a source of Russia's separateness and foundation of values that dif-fer from the ones characteristic of liberal Western societies, spirituality has become a space of active state pressure. This pressure has manifested itself in the support for various social and educational initiatives considered desirable from the perspective of Putin's political agenda. It has also led to tampering with legislation. In such a way, spirituality has become an important device in Russian internal politics, especially in culture and social life.

4. Interpretation and Discussion

While analyzing numerous other statements of President Putin, it is worth asking the following questions: what is the meaning of such language? How does it present the truth about Russian political life, especially its axiological and anthropological aspects? To what extent was it artificially created to achieve specific political goals? The answer to these questions is complex and inconclusive. On the one hand, in his speeches, Putin does evoke motifs present in Rus' and Russian historiosophy and mysticism. On the other hand, the context in which said speeches have been made strongly connects them to the immediate policy objectives of the authorities, espe-cially to ideological influences on Russian society.

In an attempt to interpret the political and ideological significance of Putin's words of a historiosophical and mystical character, one should extrapolate three is-sues: firstly, the evolution of Putin's language, in which we can observe an increase in such content; secondly, the way in which he treats religion in his policies (especially in the internal policy and relation with the so-called near abroad, namely the coun-tries formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, except for the Baltic states); fi-nally, the question of whether the sacralization of Putin's language is also manifested in his other activities, which would further imply an actual attempt at the quality change in Russian politics and axiological strengthening of Russian social life.

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37   Amnesty International, "Russian Federation."

4.1. The Increasing Sacralization of Putin's Language

One can easily notice a significant evolution in Vladimir Putin's language since 2000 when he took over the office following Boris Yeltsin. In the first years of his presidency, Putin was building his image as a modern leader in opposition to Yeltsin's public image. He referred both to imperial and Soviet traditions, whose signs were symbolic gestures, such as restoring the melody of the Soviet Union's national anthem. At the same time, however, he supported the democratization of Russia, opposed any forms of authoritarianism, did not allow the possibility of violating constitutional deadlines for presidential terms, and supported freedom of speech and independent media. In that period, he described Russia as part of Western civilization.[38] He saw Russian culture as an integral part of European culture.[39] Dmitriy A. Medvedev adopted a similar style during his presidency (2008–2012), although the interpretational context was decidedly different – after Vladimir Putin's "Munich speech" in 2007 and the Russo-Georgian War in 2008.

The change in Putin's rhetoric, including its historiosophical and mystical threads, can be noted after his address during the Munich Security Conference in 2007. He announced Russia's disapproval of the world order and international relations patterns proposed by Western liberal democracies at that time.[40] It is worth noting that the significance of the "Munich speech" as a turning point in the ideological orientation of his policies was emphasized by his supporters stemming from alt-right and conservative circles.[41]

The ideological evolution of Vladimir Putin's language was influenced not only by external conflicts in which the Russian Federation participated but also by significant personal changes in Russia. After the unexpected death of the Patriarch of Moscow and all Rus' Alexiy II on December 5, 2008, Metropolitan Kirill (Gundyayev) was elected as his successor on January 27, 2009. This change resulted in a decidedly closer collaboration between the Russian Orthodox Church and the authorities. In cultural policy, axiology, or opposition to values characteristic of Western democratic societies, this collaboration sometimes assumes the form of symbiosis.

What is reflected in Vladimir Putin's language then is the "conservative turn" observed since 2007 both in Russian external policy and various areas of internal policy. It is particularly notable in the sphere of freedom of speech and mass media, education, or the extent of legal regulations of ideological issues, such as the protection of religion and the promotion of an official version of Russia's history accepted by the authorities. In the linguistic dimension, the term "conservative turn" is revealed

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38   Evans, "Putin's Legacy," 900.
39   Galeotti, *We Need to Talk About Putin,* 41–42; Chadayev, *Putin. Nashi tsennosti,* 114.
40   Putin, *Rossiya ustremlennaya v budushcheye,* 93–94.
41   Silvius, "The Russian State," 59.

in the abandonment of the language of politics and public life that is characteristic of liberal democracies. On the other hand, this type of language expresses the concept of Russia's historical mission and reclaiming its rightful place in the world. Although one cannot reasonably speak of the penetration of the idea of Russian messianism into the authorities' official language, it is impossible not to notice the key features of Rus' and Russian religious historiosophy. These include (1) the idea of Russia's special mission, the idea of historical and cultural continuity of the Rus' and Russia; (2) the conviction about the spiritual superiority of the Rus' and Russia (the source of which is the concept of Moscow, the Third Rome); and (3) the view that Russia is fundamentally different from Europe on a civilizational level (the source of which are the views of Russian Slavophiles of the 19th century and the Eurasians in the first half of the 20th century). All these ideas are increasingly more recognizable in the public addresses of President Putin, primarily when he refers to Russia's axiological separateness from the Western world or presents Russia as a "spiritual" country and society built on perennial spiritual foundations.

While interpreting this evolution of Vladimir Putin's rhetoric, one cannot ignore its political context. This evolution occurs alongside the toughening of Russian foreign policy, both with respect to Western liberal democracies and the so-called near abroad.[42] Military, political, and economic confrontation with the West is accompanied in Russia by the striving to present Western culture as fallen, decadent, and dying. At the same time, political pressure in the post-Soviet region is followed by denying the cultural and historical separateness and questioning the territorial integrity of some states: Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, and, in recent years, Kazakhstan. Particularly in the case of Ukraine and Belarus, which occupy a large part of the territory of the historical Rus', the historiosophical idea of the continuity of the Rus' and Russia and the unity of Rus' and Russian culture forms an ideological argument for challenging their national, cultural, and linguistic separateness and state sovereignty.

4.2. Instrumental Treatment of Religion

The collaboration between the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Russian Federation authorities tightened after Patriarch Alexiy II's death and Kirill's election. The most influential bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church have repeatedly expressed their full support for the authorities and, personally, for Vladimir Putin. Two recent statements are worth mentioning. In an interview published in November 2021, Patriarch Kirill called Russia "the leader of the free world."[43] In his opinion, there are no problems dividing Russian society at the moment. Russia is developing and treading

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42   Stent, *Putin's World,* 35.
43   "Patriarkh Kirill."

its path while successfully opposing foreign pressure. Thanks to solving social problems and a high degree of social consensus on important issues for public life, Russia can set an example for other countries. In another interview published in October 2021, Metropolitan Tikhon (Shevkunov), a bishop supposed to be Putin's spiritual adviser, made an already famous statement when he said that Vladimir Putin had gained such authority – both nationally and internationally – that it would be difficult to find a decent successor. According to Metropolitan Tikhon, the main problem for Russia is that Putin is not immortal. He is the one saving Russia, thus completely sacrificing himself for his country.[44]

Such statements reveal that the Russian Orthodox Church profits from the collaboration with the state.[45] In particular, the Church and organizations connected to it are the main beneficiaries of the state grant system, which supports social organizations that perform important educational, cultural, and charitable functions.[46] In addition, the authorities have taken many other measures in favor of the Russian Orthodox Church, such as supporting the construction of new churches, introducing classes on the basics of Orthodox culture in public schools, and recognizing theology as an academic discipline.

However, the extent and manner of state support to the church raise doubts about the motivation of such support.[47] On the one hand, the state benefits from the church's endorsement of implementing the objectives of social policies that it finds politically profitable.[48] An example of this was the campaign against the LGBTQ+ community, which resulted in adopting a law prohibiting the promotion of "non-traditional sexual relations" in 2013, penalizing any form of the public presence of LGBTQ+ community representatives.[49] On the other hand, the state has not made any demands from the church regarding moral issues that do not enjoy sufficient social support (such as the prohibition of or restrictions on abortion).[50]

Similarly, state authorities endorse the presence of the Russian Orthodox Church wherever it is politically advantageous for Russia, particularly in Belarus (where the local church is part of the Russian Orthodox Church structure) or in Ukraine (where the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, an autonomous part of the Moscow Patriarchate, supports pro-Russian politicians and plays a significant role in Ukraine's political life).[51] As a result, in many aspects of domestic and foreign policy (especially

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[44]   "Mitropolit Tikhon o Putine."
[45]   Drinova, "Napravleniya i prioritety," 41–53.
[46]   Mitrokhin, *Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov',* 278–279.
[47]   Papkova, *The Orthodox Church,* 200–201; Fagan, *Believing in Russia,* 28–29; see also Zabaev – Mikhaylova – Oreshina, "Neither Public nor Private Religion," 17–38.
[48]   Kelly, "Competing Orthodoxies," 312–313.
[49]   Stoeckl, *The Russian Orthodox Church,* 96, 100.
[50]   Ponomariov, *The Visible Religion,* 293–296.
[51]   Trenin, *Post-Imperium,* 299.

in relations with Belarus and Ukraine but also with Bulgaria and Serbia), the church has become a tool for implementing a very pragmatic Kremlin policy subordinated to political, economic, or military interests.[52]

5. Conclusions: Sacralization as a Self-Creation

Even when speaking on strictly political topics, President Putin's language is often puzzling. At times, it is filled with metaphysical depth; at others, it evokes nostalgia for the lost past or is full of a religiously rooted hope that seems to transgress longings characteristic of political life. This emotional language appears in his most significant statements. Sacralization of Putin's rhetoric is supposed to indicate, at least in the official message, the abandonment of the Western pragmatic language of politics and, consequently, Western political patterns to achieve clear political goals. It is supposed to indicate a turn towards the language and politics of the historic mission, which transgresses political, economic, or military dimensions. This is how numerous Russian neoconservatism and neo-imperialism representatives would like to interpret Putin's statements. Given such an interpretation, President Putin's open rejection of secularism, frequent references to religious ideas (mainly, but not exclusively, Orthodox), and invocations to God could point to a new vision of politics, full of metaphysical depth answering the spiritual depth of the human person and the uniqueness of Russia itself as a country built on spiritual foundations and values.

While it is difficult to deny that Putin's rhetoric does contain elements of sacralization, the appreciation of religion in social and political life does not correspond to changes in the moral standards of said life. Besides this basic, albeit difficult to measure, argument, one can also indicate two more obvious ones, which suggest that the discussed sacralization is a part of his identity politics, devoid of any actual metaphysical depth or more profound message.

Firstly, despite repeated references to religious and mystical motifs, Putin did not decide to make religion the identity foundation of contemporary Russia. This is understandable since Russian society, despite the significant presence of Orthodoxy in public life, is multi-ethnic and multi-religious. Hence, according to Putin's declaration, the main element of the Russian "national idea," which binds this extremely diverse society and ensures the country's stability, should be patriotism.[53] While not placing religion at the center of his identity politics, Putin uses only some of its

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52   Adamsky, *Russian Nuclear Orthodoxy,* 86–87; Laine, "The Russian World," 208–210.
53   Sakwa, *Russian Politics and Society,* 316.

elements, which he considers profitable from the perspective of immediate political objectives.

Secondly, religious and mystical threads found in Putin's statements are taken out of their interpretational context and placed in a foreign context in political and historiosophical references. They promote the idea that Russia is separate from the West and that the values of Western liberal societies do not correspond to traditional Russian axiology.[54] They also serve as support for the reinterpretation of Russia's history. This reinterpretation makes explicit references to current events because it questions the cultural uniqueness and sovereignty of Ukraine and Belarus to a certain extent.

All the above considerations can lead us to conclude that the sacralization of President Putin's political language is more the result of self-creation than an actual willingness for quality changes in internal and foreign policies, even if it uses the Rus' and Russian political and religious traditions quite well. At the same time, this shows that the path from a declared appreciation for the religious sphere in political life to an actual radical transformation of said life following declared values is often quite long – a view that can refer to the states in which political elites are trying to provoke a "conservative revolution" or renewal by supporting arbitrarily defined traditional values.

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54 Stent, *Putin's World,* 36; Torbakov, *After Empire,* 319.

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Trust as the Foundation of the Spirituality of Mercy according to Michael Sopocko

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to show that Father Michael Sopocko, in his writings, presented the virtue of trust as the basis of the spirituality of mercy. This author, now blessed of the Catholic Church, was the first to carry out the mission of extending the devotion to Divine Mercy in the form given by Jesus to Sister Faustina. He elaborated on this theologically and pastorally. One might say that he built the foundation of the spirituality of mercy of modern times. The article shows how Sopocko understood the essence of the virtue of trust and what qualities he attributed to it, as well as how he perceived the importance of this virtue in Christian life and what role he attributed to it in the devotion to Divine Mercy. The author in question grounded his analyses on the virtue of trust primarily in the Word of God, which he frequently referred to. He also referred in some of his writings to the issue of the new forms of devotion to Divine Mercy and, in their context, showed trust as the foundation of the spirituality of mercy. The article uses the method of analysing the writings of Michael Sopocko with commentaries. The result of this analysis is the conclusion that the virtue of trust is not only an indispensable element of a properly understood spirituality of mercy, without which this spirituality would be incomplete and skewed, but is in fact the basis of this spirituality and gives it its proper direction.

Keywords: trust, Divine Mercy, Michael Sopocko, Michał Sopoćko, spirituality of mercy

Father Prof. Michael Sopocko (born 1 November 1888, died 15 February 1975, beatified 28 September 2008) was the heir and at the same time the implementer of the mission entrusted by Jesus Christ to St Faustina Kowalska.[1] This mission was about proclaiming the truth of Divine Mercy to the world, new forms of worship associated with this "attribute in God"[2] and active mercy towards fellow human beings. These truths are not new to the Church, but rather reminded and renewed. Faced with the difficulties he encountered in spreading this devotion, Father Professor elaborated theologically on the issue of Divine Mercy, while at the same time

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[1]   Sister Faustina Kowalska (*Diary*, no. 53)wrote this about him as her confessor: "But the goodness of Jesus is infinite; He had promised me visible help here on earth, and a little while later I received it in Vilnius, in the person of Father Sopocko. I had already known him before coming to Vilnius, thanks to an interior vision. One day I saw him in our chapel between the altar and the confessional and suddenly heard a voice in my soul say «This is the visible help for you on earth. He will help you carry out My will on earth»." These words show that Sopocko was regarded by the Sister as a spiritual director, chosen for her by Jesus. She entrusted all spiritual matters to him and followed his guidance in her life.

[2]   It is an expression that the Blessed uses in his writings. It is less present in contemporary theology. However, in the studies of Father Sopocko, for whom showing mercy as the greatest attribute of God was one of the aims of his academic work, this very term is crucial.

building up the structure of a spirituality that particularly emphasises this attribute in God, that is, a spirituality of mercy. A significant element of this spirituality is trust. The Blessed based his scientific studies primarily on the Bible and the teachings of the Church. Nevertheless, his writings were also influenced by the revelations experienced by Sister Faustina. Christ, during these visions, spoke many times to his Secretary about the great importance in the spiritual life of an attitude of trust in a merciful God. Father Sopocko talked to the Sister, read her notes and was himself convinced of the validity of this thought. The Professor's most important works on the subject of Divine Mercy are a four-volume work entitled *The Mercy of God in His Works*, several other short works, and dozens of articles.[3] In his main work, he did not refer to the revelations associated with Sister Faustina. He did so with a view to the 1959 decision of the Holy Office.[4] Instead, he referred to the person of St Faustina and her notes in the few articles that had been written previously.

The purpose of this article is to show, based on the Blessed's writings, that, according to him, the virtue of trust is the basis of a properly understood spirituality of mercy. All its other elements, such as the various forms of the devotion to the merciful God, the works of mercy, will be as fruitful and correctly understood and experienced as long as an attitude of trust is at their basis. The studies produced by Father Sopocko contain original approaches and definitions of the virtue of trust. This originality lies in the characteristic phrases and comparisons, and the position he ascribes to the virtue of trust in the spiritual life, especially in the spirituality of mercy. The extensive literature on Divine Mercy by Sopocko, whether of a scholarly, retreat or private nature, is not widely known or sufficiently developed theologically. Previous studies have focused mainly on the person of Father Sopocko himself (works by Bishop Henryk Ciereszko, Father Stanisław Strzelecki). There are also individual studies by various authors, presenting some selected aspect from Father Sopocko's writings, most often the attribute of the Divine Mercy. The trust, on the other hand, is addressed occasionally and not holistically. Hence, the aim of the article is to systematically frame the virtue of trust and bring out its existential specificity. For this reason, the article uses the method of philological analysis, and an intuitive insight into Sopocko's thought, tracing his thought with a critical commentary. The results of the scientific research carried out are presented in the conclusion of the article.

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[3] For a full bibliography of Father Sopocko's works, see: Ciereszko, *Życie i działalność*, 611–619.

[4] Father Sopocko faced many obstacles in promoting the devotion to Divine Mercy; the issue was not sufficiently developed. As a result, there has been a lot of misunderstanding about the correct comprehension of the whole idea. Therefore, the Church authorities opposed the introduction of this devotion into the life of the Church. The proof was the decision of the Holy Office of 19 November 1958 announced on 6 March 1959. It prohibited the promotion of the devotion to Divine Mercy in the form presented by Sister Faustina. Cf. Ciereszko, *Życie i działalność*, 440–443.

Firstly, the article shows how Sopocko understands the virtue of trust and what characteristics he defines it by. Next, the effects of this virtue in the spiritual life are presented. The final section shows the role of the virtue of trust in the worship of Divine Mercy.

1. The Essence of Trust

Sopocko calls trust "a tribute to the Divine Mercy"[5] and explains it as follows: "whoever expects help from God confesses that He is all-powerful and good, that He can and wants to show us this help, that He is above all merciful."[6] According to him, "trust is the rest of our mind immersed in the constant thought of the presence of an all-powerful merciful God, conceived as Father and Saviour rather than as Lord."[7] The term "rest of one's mind" points to the closeness of the relationship between man and God, peace and security. It even suggests some kind of deeper connection with the Creator.

Trust in itself is defined by Sopocko as "expecting someone's help."[8] In his studies, he also distinguishes the issue of natural and supernatural trust. Natural trust is when we expect help from people, supernatural one is when we look for help in God.[9] In his studies, the Blessed refers to the Word of God to explain how the essence of trust is to be understood. Among other things, he quotes the words of the psalmist: "Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, as we have hoped in thee." (Ps 32:22), commenting that trust in God is the measure by which we receive mercy from Him.[10]

The professor shows the relationship between trust and other virtues. He writes that trust flows from faith, enhances hope and love. The virtues of hope and trust are close to each other, and are therefore sometimes confused. He explains

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5   Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 191.
6   Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 191; cf. Sopoćko, "Najskuteczniejszy motyw ufności," 328; Sopoćko, *Doskonałość a ufność*, 52.
7   Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 2.
8   Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 189; cf. Sopoćko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 24; Sopoćko, *Godzina święta*, 99; Sopoćko, *O święto Najmiłosierniejszego Zbawiciela*, 16; Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 20; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 1; Sopoćko, "Potrzeba ufności," 136; Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 132; Sopoćko, *Poznajmy Boga*, 26; Szałkowska, *Tajemnica Miłosierdzia*, 113–114.
9   Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 189; Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 21; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 1; Sopoćko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 24.
10   Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 189; In Sister Faustina's *Diary* (no. 1578) we find such a record: "The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is – trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive. Souls that trust boundlessly are a great comfort to Me, because I pour all the treasures of My graces into them. I rejoice that they ask for much, because it is My desire to give much, very much. On the other hand, I am sad when souls ask for little, when they narrow their hearts." This is one example showing the influence his penitent had on Sopocko's views.

the relationship between the two by stating that "the object of hope is God himself, and the object of trust is God's promise to give us the help we need."[11] The virtue of hope is the pursuit of future good, that is, of eternal happiness, which man can only attain by the mercy of God. The virtue of trust is a source of power to overcome difficulties and fears for one's own salvation and that of one's neighbour.[12]

Trust is also part of the virtue of fortitude; it strengthens the will and makes it resilient to any adversity. It gives the will the power to overcome any fear, the serenity and readiness to accept all that God gives.[13] It is also indispensable in the virtue of magnanimity, when God calls individual people to lofty and difficult acts. Trust in God's help and mercy is a support in overcoming the obstacles associated with them.[14]

Sopocko writes that natural trust is the expectation of help from people. Such trust, though necessary, is nevertheless limited and imperfect, as imperfect as man is.[15] The only one who does not fail is God and therefore one can place complete trust in Him. The main basis for trust in the Creator is His mercy. In proving his assumptions, the Professor cites examples from the Bible showing that those who put their trust in the Lord overcame all adversity and were victorious.[16] He draws particular attention to the merciful words and actions of Jesus presented in the New Testament. They form the basis for complete trust in the goodness of God.[17] Other Gospel passages, including the pericope recounting Peter's walking on the lake, are also examples. Jesus reached out his hand to the drowning disciple and said: "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" (Matt 14:31b). To the other Apostles, fearful in the storm, he said: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." (Mark 6:50).[18] The encouragement to trust was also heard by the Disciples at the Last Supper. Christ then announced to

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11   Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 136.
12   Cf. Sopoćko, "Ufność kapłana," 299.
13   Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 189; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 13; Sopoćko, "Ufność kapłana," 299; Sopoćko, "Miłosierdzie Boże a ufność," 2; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 1; Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 20; see Molinie, *Oddać się miłosierdziu*, 48.
14   Cf. Sopocko, "Ufność kapłana," 230.
15   Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 189; Sopoćko, *Godzina święta*, 99; Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 132; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 1; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 13; Sopoćko, *Poznajmy Boga*, 13. Here, Father Sopoćko (*The Mercy of God*, IV, 24) referred to events in Polish history, including the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, "during which the besieged made heroic efforts, expecting the promised help. But human help is unreliable, promises uncertain and covenants very often treacherous. By contrast, supernatural trust in God never fails."
16   The victorious battle between David and Goliath (cf. 1 Kgs 17:45); and the psalms Ps 41:6; 45:3; 31:10; 32:18 and others were given as examples. Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 189–190; Sopoćko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 24–25; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 1; Sopoćko, *Poznajmy Boga*, 24–25; Sopoćko, *Zrzeszenia chrześcijańskie*, 14.
17   "He says – «I am the good shepherd» and this one title should awaken in everyone's heart boundless trust" (Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 190); cf. Sopoćko, "Miłosierdzie Boże ufającym Jemu," 17–18; Sopoćko, "Najskuteczniejszy motyw ufności," 327; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 13; Sopoćko, *Poznajmy Boga*, 25; Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boże względem grzeszników*, 11; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 1–2.
18   Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 25; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 13; Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 21; Sopoćko, "Potrzeba ufności," 136; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 2.

them the suffering that would befall them and, at the same time, pointed to the trust that would enable them to overcome the burden of this pain: "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).[19]

Blessed Michael is not only a theologian, but also a priest. Therefore, it must be taken into account that, on the one hand, he is keen to develop scientifically the attribute of mercy in God and, consequently, also the subject of trust. On the other hand, as a preacher, he writes his books and articles in a pastoral manner. An example of this is the understanding of trust, which stems from the "image of God" that the believer carries within himself. Sopocko starts from the assertion that a relationship of trust between man and God is only possible with a proper knowledge of God. Any erroneous perception of the Creator as a punishing Judge, or creating in oneself an image of Him in the image and likeness of sinful man, leads to the construction of inappropriate references, not allowing a loving and trusting approach of man to his Father.[20] Being foster children of God, in practice we often do not follow this vocation.[21] A proper knowledge of God, in which there is room for trust in His mercy, leads to holiness, and "the concept of God is the key to holiness."[22] There is a correlation between man's trusting attitude towards God and the mercy shown to him by the Creator. Sopocko puts it in a short statement: "trust pierces the heavens and returns from there with blessing."[23]

The professor believes that trust is not just about passively expecting help from God. One cannot rely solely on people, but neither must one despise them. One should "expect help from God while making a personal effort."[24]

To explain the essence of trust, Father Sopocko uses comparisons. One is the symbol of an anchor. Just as dropping an anchor is, in the event of a storm, a rescue from shipwreck, so trusting in the mercy of God is such an anchor in

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[19]   Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 190; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 2.

[20]   Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 191–192; Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boże jedyna nadzieja ludzkości*, 11.

[21]   Sopocko (*The Mercy of God*, III, 192) explains his views as follows: "God's sonship is only a name, and in deeds we do not show childlike trust towards such a good Father."

[22]   Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 191; cf. Sopoćko, *Doskonałość a ufność*, 52–53; Sopoćko, "Najskuteczniejszy motyw ufności," 327; "Trust shows that God is a merciful Father" (Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 136).

[23]   Sopoćko, "Potrzeba ufności," 137; cf. Sopoćko, "Najskuteczniejszy motyw ufności," 327; cf. Sopoćko, "Potrzeba ufności," 137; Kruszewska, *Pozwól mojemu miłosierdziu*, 66–67; Sopocko (*The Mercy of God*, III, 200) also uses figurative comparisons of a more pastoral nature, such as: "Trust, then, can be compared to a chain hanging from heaven to which we attach our souls. The hand of God lifts this chain up and takes those who cling tighter to it. He who grasps firmly will get to heaven, but he who is effeminate and weakly or does not grasp and hold firmly at all will fall ignominiously inescapably into the depths of the abyss. Let us therefore grasp this chain during prayer [...]. Let us trust in God in temporal and eternal needs, in sufferings, dangers, abandonments. Let us trust even when it seems to us that God has abandoned us, when He refuses to comfort us, when He does not listen to us, when He weighs us down with a heavy cross. It is then that one must trust God the most, for this is the time of trial, the time of experience through which every soul must pass"; see Kosicki, *Ufność i miłosierdzie*, 71.

[24]   Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 22.

the spiritual life.[25] Lack of trust is like a dark cloud that is a barrier to the rays of the sun so that they cannot illuminate and warm the earth. Likewise, all the gifts and graces of a merciful God will not penetrate a person's soul if he or she does place the obstacle of lack of trust.[26]

Blessed Michael Sopocko also outlines the causes and consequences of the lack of trust in God. He identifies self-love distorting the true image of God as the greatest obstacle to the spiritual life. For the sake of man, the Creator allows a certain amount of suffering, which this man often refuses to accept and, full of self-love, desires the satisfaction of all his desires. When he does not receive this, he sinks into sadness, discouragement and moves away from God. In this case, a renewed act of trust in a merciful God is helpful.[27] The above statements, are largely preachy. This is due to the fact that the Father Sopocko aims not only to elaborate the subject dogmatically, but also to present it from the pastoral side, for the spiritual benefit of the readers.[28]

The cause for the lack of trust, according to Sopocko, is also due to the problems of the time. He first mentioned man's increasing trust in his own strength, wisdom, inventions and all worldly goods.[29]

The second cause is sin and human weakness. Being imperfect himself, man also attributes imperfection to God, creating an image of the Creator in the likeness of creation. Such views detract from the glory of God and are detrimental to man himself.[30]

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25 "The anchor is a symbol of trust. Often the soul – like a ship at sea in a storm – loses everything that constitutes its strength, beauty and value, the mast of faith is shattered, the rudder of love is broken, and all the possessions of good deeds are covered by billows [...]. But the soul is not lost if it catches on the anchor of trust in the all-powerful Divine Mercy." (Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 25); St Faustina used a similar symbol in her *Diary* (no. 283): "I want to love You As no human soul has ever loved You before; and although I am utterly miserable and small, I have, nevertheless, cast the anchor of my trust deep down into the abyss of Your mercy, O my God and Creator!"

26 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 26; Sopoćko, "Miłosierdzie Boże względem grzeszników," 481.

27 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 192–193; "Trust is an encouragement and a reassurance always reconcilable with all the calamities and trials of life [...]. It detaches us from ourselves, weak and miserable, to fill us with new strength. Nothing facilitates the fulfilment of hard tasks more than trust". (Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 2); Wygralak, "Ojcowie Apostolscy," 170–171.

28 Raising a subject of lack of trust, the Professor, for pastoral purposes, quotes the words of St Faustina in one of his articles, and since he does so extremely rarely, it follows that he considered them important. "But he who trusts not in God but in himself [...] places obstacles to Divine Mercy, as the Lord Jesus said to Sister Faustina: «Tell souls not to place within their own hearts obstacles to My mercy, which so greatly wants to act within them. My mercy works in all those hearts which open their doors to it. Both the sinner and the righteous person have need of My mercy. Conversion, as well as perseverance, is a grace of My mercy. The graces of My mercy are drawn by means of one vessel only, and that is – trust. The more a soul trusts, the more it will receive»" (Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 133).

29 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 198; Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 133.

30 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 200; Sopoćko, "Najskuteczniejszy motyw ufności," 327; Sopoćko, *Precz z nieufnością,* 27–28; "We imagine a God who is changeable, moody like us, harsh and troubled like us, etc. Well, by thinking and acting in this way, we insult God and do ourselves a great disservice." (Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 200).

Lack of trust in the Creator is also born out of seeing Him only as a harsh, just Judge. Because of this, people live in a fear that does not allow a proper, loving and trusting relationship with the Father to develop. They then have no warmth towards God, which does not allow them to trust Him as a merciful Father.[31]

Another cause of the lack of trust is badly experienced remorse. Sopocko states that "the magnitude of our past sins should not take away our trust despite the burden of these sins, which is great, greater than we imagine. For by them, we have risen up against the Most High Lord, we have grieved the Holy Spirit, we have crucified Christ anew, we have defiled His Blood – but a hundred times greater is the Divine Mercy."[32] In this context, he also raises the subject of despair, showing that it is a sin against the Holy Spirit, closing off the way for acts of the grace of God.[33]

Looking at the problem of the lack of trust in modern times, it seems that its causes are only partly the same. Man still firmly believes in his own abilities and the power of technology. However, he does not see God as a strict judge, tends to disregard His laws and commandments, and often does not believe in His existence at all. The contemporary signs of the times that threaten faith, hope and trust were pointed out by Pope John Paul II in his teaching. Among his many documents, the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, dedicated to the Divine Mercy, is an example. There, he cites the widespread progress of science and technology, social injustice, sin and human weakness as phenomena characteristic of his era. All of this raises anxiety and can be a cause of lack of trust towards God (cf. *DiM* 10–14). Pope Francis also repeatedly identifies the problems of the modern world in his documents. He states, among other things, that the cause of sadness, helplessness and confusion can be attributed to enormous developments in the field of technology, which people are unable to keep up with, and to social and economic injustice, especially affecting the poorest (cf. *EG* 52).

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[31] Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 199–200.

[32] Sopoćko, *Precz z nieufnością*, 23.

[33] Sopocko (*Precz z nieufnością*, 24) writes on the subject of despair as follows: "True, the sin is too great to be forgiven, it is all the greater because from it come other sins, closing the way to the Heart of God, drying up the source of His grace. But such a sin is not the one we committed in the past, which we often think about, but the one we commit now, and such a sin is our lack of trust and perhaps even despair for salvation. That's right! Lack of trust and despair is the sin against the Holy Spirit, and as long as one indulges in it, this sin becomes irremediable, because it closes the way for the act of God's grace." Cf. Sopoćko, *Precz z zuchwalstwem*, 28; Szałkowska, *Tajemnica Miłosierdzia*, 127–128.

2. Attributes of Trust

Sopocko elaborates on the attributes that perfect trust should have based on Scripture, citing mainly the words of the psalms.[34] He writes that it is to be, above all, supernatural, complete, pure, strong and persevering.[35] The first attribute of perfect trust is its supernaturalness. This means that trust flows from God's grace and is based on God. The sin is overconfidence, relying only on one's own abilities, talents, prudence. God, in the face of such an attitude, may withdraw His help and thus reveal man's weakness and vulnerability.[36] Such trust in oneself puts up a dam that does not allow Divine Mercy to act in the human soul.[37] Thus, one can see that the Professor was in favour of maintaining a balance between using human abilities and relying on God's action.[38]

Another attribute of trust is perseverance and inner strength. They help to guard against pettiness and audacity in the spiritual life. In the case of pettiness, a person loses the courage to act in a good way and falls into evil. Audacity, on the other hand, leads to sin by recklessly exposing oneself to temptation, counting only on God's action without one's own effort.[39] It is also wrong to take on tasks that are beyond a person's strength and to which he or she has not been called by God.[40] Here Father Sopocko warns against a presumptuous and irresponsible trust in Divine Mercy, calling it a sin against the Holy Spirit. It consists of deliberately breaking God's and the Church's commandments with the hope that, after all, the good God will forgive it all. The same happens when a person puts himself in danger of committing a sin, assuming that God in his mercy will protect him from that sin.[41]

A properly formed trust should be combined with the fear of God. This fear is born in man as a result of knowing his weaknesses.[42] The professor writes about four types of fear: slavish, servant, incipient and filial. In the first case, man fears sin

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34 For example: Ps 2:12; 117:9; 110:10; 146:11; 119:5. Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 193–196; Sopoćko, "Ufność a bojaźń Pańska," 320.

35 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 193; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 15; Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 29; Sopoćko, "Uroczystość Trzech Króli," 394; Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 21; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 5; Sopoćko, *Godzina święta*, 60; Szałkowska, *Tajemnica Miłosierdzia*, 113–118.

36 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 193; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 15; Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 22.

37 Cf. Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 133; Here Father Sopocko (cf. *The Mercy of God*, III, 194) referred to examples from the Bible, to Saul and Solomon, who ended badly because they trusted too much in themselves.

38 "Trusting in God, we do not rely only on human means, for in this world the greatest forces and treasures will not help unless God himself supports, strengthens, comforts, teaches and guards. While it is necessary to choose the means we consider necessary, we must not rely on them alone, but place all our trust in God." (Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 194); cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 27–28.

39 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 194; Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 26, 28–29; Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 22.

40 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 29; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 16; Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 22.

41 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 18–29.

42 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 195; Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 29; Sopoćko, *Godzina święta*, 101; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 16; "For our sake, trust should be combined with fear, which is the result

because of the punishment that may befall him from God. In the second, he does not want to offend his Creator with a sin that might deprive him of heaven. Such fear already has some connection with faith and trust, and is sufficient to be included in the Sacrament of Penance. Another type of fear the Blessed calls incipient due to the fact that, alongside the fear of punishment and the marks of trust, there is the beginning of the love of God. Filial fear, the most perfect one, consists in man's fear of offending the Father in heaven because of his love for Him. Such fear is a gift of the Holy Spirit, prompting man to humble himself before God. It is combined with perfect contrition, which takes away sins outside the Sacrament of Penance in the absence of the possibility of entering into it. This fear stimulates the greatest reverence towards God, love and boundless trust in Divine Mercy. Father Sopocko points out that trust bears fruit when it is combined with any of the last three types of fear mentioned. In his spiritual development, however, the Christian should strive for filial fear.[43] Christian trust has two essential features: it is unwavering because of Divine Mercy and combined with fear, because of man's weakness.[44] Fear combined with trust becomes humility and courage. Trust, on the other hand, in conjunction with fear, is strong and humble,[45] "so trust by fearing, fear by trusting."[46]

The virtue of trust is also linked to repentance and conversion, "to each of us a moment of mercy is appointed, a moment of rising from sin and doing penance. Woe to the soul that is unaware of this time of mercy."[47] Trusting in the goodness of God without renouncing sin is called delusion by Father Sopocko. Such an attitude brings punishment upon man because Divine Mercy is not the same as impunity. We see that the Blessed warned against overconfidence that excludes penance. For such an attitude leads to sin against the Holy Spirit, and "to sin with trust in Divine Mercy is the greatest misfortune."[48]

In the sources analysed, it is also stated that trust should be combined with a longing for the life to come in union with Jesus, in his Kingdom, for seeing the promises of God and thus be an impulse to work and offer oneself completely to God. However,

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of knowing our wretchedness. Without this fear, trust becomes conceit, fear without trust becomes pettiness" (Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 5–6).

[43] Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 195; Sopoćko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 29–30; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 16–17; Sopoćko, "Ufność a bojaźń Pańska," 320–322; Sopoćko, *O święto Miłosierdzia Bożego*, 9–11.

[44] Cf. Sopoćko, "Ufność a bojaźń Pańska," 322.

[45] Cf. Sopoćko, "Ufność a bojaźń Pańska," 322; Father Sopocko (*The Mercy of God*, III, 195) used here, as in many other places, an analogy between the truth concerning the spiritual life and the surrounding world: "For a sailing boat to sail, it needs the wind and a certain weight to submerge it in the water so that it does not capsize. So we too need the wind of trust and the weight of fear. Without trust we fall into frigidity, with fearlessness we crash against the rock of conceit"; cf. Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 5–6.

[46] Sopoćko, "Ufność a bojaźń Pańska," 322.

[47] Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 23; cf. Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boże względem grzeszników*, 6; Sopoćko, "Ufność a pokuta," 324; Szałkowska, *Tajemnica Miłosierdzia*, 125–126.

[48] Sopoćko, "Wykonało się," 13; cf. Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boże. Studium*, 18–19.

even this trusting longing is to be in accordance with God's will, full of humility and based on repentance and self-development.[49]

The professor also writes about the connection that exists between trust in a merciful God and mercy towards people. These considerations can be found in the letters he addressed to the members of the newly formed religious congregation.[50] However, his notes can be used for the spiritual growth of every Christian, not just the consecrated person. According to Father Sopocko's thought, a properly understood trust in a merciful God assumes active mercy. He himself puts it in the following words: "He who trusts in a merciful God does not remain a passive mere recipient of favours, but will endeavour to perform acts of mercy."[51] He also writes to the sisters that one way of performing acts of mercy is to call people, especially those who are suffering, to trust in the mercy of God. The new motto to be adopted by this emerging congregation: "Jesus, I trust in you" is compared by Father Sopocko to a plough that should plough through the whole of the pain filled world, thus becoming a solace and a cure for it.[52] The above statements show that Sopocko does not limit the attitude of trust only to man's relationship with God, but also implies an openness and sensitivity to the spiritual well-being of others. The above statements are part of the tradition of the Church's teaching, where an attitude of mercy towards our neighbour is strongly emphasised alongside all forms of worship towards God.[53]

3. Effects of Trust

In creating a systematic description of the virtue of trust, the Professor also points out its effects in the Christian life. It is based on the word of God, which is typical for his way of writing.[54] The first effect of trust is that it brings glory to the Creator Himself. "Nothing brings God's omnipotence so much glory as that God makes omnipotent those who trust in Him."[55] This omnipotence of people of which he writes stems from the very existence of an attitude of trust. In contrast, the creature's

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49 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 196; Sopoćko, *O ufności*, 6; Sopoćko, *Terapia smutku*, 3.

50 Letters from Czarny Bór addressed to the first members of the congregation of which Father Sopocko was the founder. Currently, the Congregation of the Sisters of Merciful Jesus.

51 Sopoćko, "Miłosierdzie Boże ufającym Jemu," 20.

52 Cf. Sopoćko, "Wykonało się," 10.

53 This is exemplified by the papal teaching of recent years: John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 14; Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, nos. 187–196; Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, nos. 10, 12.

54 Such a passage is, for example, Jer 17:7–8, which in the translation cited by Father Sopocko begins with the words: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose trust the Lord is..."

55 Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 193.

boundless trust in the Creator is an affirmation of His Omnipotence, which multiplies God's glory.[56]

The subsequent effects of trust, although linked to the glorification of God, are already more about the person himself. Trust gives the strength and fortitude needed to overcome life's difficulties. Sopocko uses his typical wording here, calling this virtue "a tribute to Divine Mercy, which mutually gives the trusting person the strength and fortitude to overcome the greatest difficulties."[57] So the consequence of trusting in a merciful God are the graces needed to overcome obstacles and difficulties. It is real trust that removes sadness, despondency and is the cause of joy even in the most difficult times of life.[58]

A consequence of an attitude of trust is also the particular kind of consolation that a person experiences at the moment of departure from this world. It is a difficult and painful moment, and it is often at this time that lack of trust and despair creep into the soul. Encouragement is then needed for the dying person to place their trust in the mercy of God.[59]

According to the Blessed, trust ensures eternal reward. It is linked to sorrow for sins, which is in turn a prerequisite for justification. Justification, on the other hand, can be obtained both in the Sacrament of Penance and through perfect contrition combined with a determination to receive the Sacrament of Penance as soon as possible. The Professor concludes his considerations by stating that "no one would have aroused perfect contrition if he had not had trust in Divine Mercy."[60]

According to the Blessed, trust paves the way for the other virtues. He cites in his writings a short story. "There is a legend of how all the virtues decided to leave the earth, stained by numerous misdeeds, decided to return to the heavenly homeland. When they approached the heavenly gates, the doorkeeper let all of them in except trust, so that on earth the poor people would not fall into despair amid so many temptations and sufferings. In view of this, trust had to return, and with it all the other virtues returned too."[61] This legend is evidence of Sopocko's pastoral writing

56 Sister Faustina wrote a similar thought in her *Diary* (no. 548): "My daughter [...] Your duty will be to trust completely in My goodness, and My duty will be to give you all you need. I am making Myself dependent upon your trust."
57 Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 197; cf. Sopoćko, "Odpowiedź nasza," 22; Sopoćko, "Ufność a Miłosierdzie Boże", 189–190; Sopoćko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 26.
58 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 198; Sopoćko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 26; Sopoćko, *Godzina święta*, 100; Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 14–15; Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 133–134; "Joy is one of our greatest needs. What light is to a plant, air to an animal, and water to a fish, so is joy to man. It is the ozone for bodily, spiritual and supernatural life – it is a balm, soothing wounds, it is an invaluable social factor. Well, trust in Divine Mercy is the source of such joy, for it lifts up the tormented soul and makes the cross of life lighter and more pleasant" (Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 133).
59 Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 199–200; Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 134–144.
60 Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 27; cf. Sopoćko, *Wielbijmy Boga*, 14.
61 Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 198.

style and, at the same time, a confirmation that in his theological thought the virtue of trust is the basis of human spiritual development.

Heroic trust can lead to extraordinary events in the spiritual life. The professor puts this thought in an original way, stating that "trust works miracles because it has God's omnipotence at its service."[62] He gives as examples the miracles worked by God through Moses (cf. Exod 4:16), the healing of the lame man by the Apostles John and Peter (cf. Acts 3:7), and other passages from the Bible.[63] The above statement can be interpreted as referring to man's personal, very deep relationship with God, where the basis is selfless trust. It is trust that causes God to act with extraordinary generosity.

As a fruit of trust, Father Sopocko also mentions inner peace, the source of which can only be God.[64] He uses biblical imagery here. "Just as a child peacefully falls asleep in its mother's arms, fearing nothing, so the soul that trusts in Divine Mercy always remains balanced, fearing nothing, because it knows that sooner a mother forgets her child than God those who trust in Him. This is why Christ the Lord, appearing to the Apostles after the Resurrection, greeted them with the words: *Peace be with you*, for they trusted in him greatly."[65] Sopocko here shows the Son of God as revealing the Father. Just as an attitude of trust in the Father creates peace, so the Disciples receive the gift of peace from Christ on the basis of trust in Him. We find similar thoughts in the teaching of John Paul II, for example in the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*, where Christ is the one who reveals the mercy of the Father (cf. *DiM* 1).

The above issue of the effects of trust is partly pastoral in nature. This is how Father Sopocko described them. Indeed, one of the aims of his study was to demonstrate the fundamental importance of trust in Christian spirituality and to encourage believers to adopt this attitude.

4. Trust and the Devotion to Divine Mercy

A separate topic in Father Sopocko's writings is the trust described in the context of the revelations of the merciful Jesus to Sister Faustina. This issue is present in articles written prior to the *Notification* on the devotion to Divine Mercy.

Among other things, the professor emphasises in his writings the event in the Cenacle when Christ appeared to the Apostles and encouraged them to remain in peace

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[62] Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 198.
[63] Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 26- 27; Sopoćko, *Godzina święta*, 101.
[64] Cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 198; Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 26; Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 134.
[65] Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 134.

and trust. This description refers to the image of the merciful Saviour (known today as the "Jesus, I trust in you" painting). "The well-known Image of the Divine Mercy shows us Jesus at that very moment of his appearance to the Apostles in the Cenacle, on the evening of the Resurrection, and whoever venerates this image and trusts in the Saviour will experience unbroken peace."[66] It can be seen here that the Professor embeds the devotion to Divine Mercy in the Bible.

The Blessed also writes about trust in the context of the motto: "Jesus, I trust in you." This was probably inspired by Christ's revelations to Sister Faustina.[67] The considerations for this motto are of a different nature to the views on trust described above. Those referred largely to God the Father; in these, the centre is Jesus.

Sopocko derives the truthfulness of the invocation "Jesus, I trust in you!" from Scripture: "Immediately he spoke to them and said, «Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid»" (Mark 6:50; cf. Matt 9:2; John 16:33).[68] Drawing on the Word of God, he concludes that the most trustworthy is Jesus Christ – God-man. "It is a Safe Guide that is «the Way and the Truth and the Life». He has already led more than one generation to the goal He has indicated, and He will lead safely anyone who trusts in Him endlessly."[69]

In the act of "Jesus, I trust in you!," Father Sopocko sees salvation for everyone, especially for the sinner. He writes that particular trust in Divine Mercy is needed by those who experience inner turmoil and suffering because of their sinful past and the resulting remorse.[70] In this act, he also sees help and defence for the temptations to come. He writes that when one is overwhelmed by temptation, it is important to remain calm and firmly say "Jesus, I trust in you!"[71]

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[66] Sopoćko, "Skutki ufności," 134; cf. Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, IV, 26; Sopocko proved the theological correctness of the image by referring to the biblical description of the scene from the Cenacle (John 20:19–23). He showed that Jesus in this image looks as he did when he entered the Cenacle.

[67] In one of these revelations, the Saviour instructed the painting of the now world-famous image with the inscription "Jesus, I trust in you!". Sister Faustina (*Diary*, no. 47) wrote: "In the evening, when I was in my cell, I saw the Lord Jesus clothed in a white garment. One hand [was] raised in the gesture of blessing, the other was touching the garment at the breast. From beneath the garment, slightly drawn aside at the breast, there were emanating two large rays, one red, the other pale [...]. After a while, Jesus said to me, «Paint an image according to the pattern you see, with the signature: Jesus, I trust in You»"; cf. Sopoćko, "Miłosierdzie Boże względem grzeszników," 483; Sopoćko, *Miłosierdzie Boże źródłem radości*, 11.

[68] "Because they all saw him and were terrified. Immediately he spoke to them and said, «Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid»" (Mark 6:50).

[69] Sopoćko, "Jezu, ufam Tobie!," 131, cf. 132; Sopoćko, *Terapia smutku*, 13.

[70] In his writings, Sopocko often gives pastoral advice. Among other things, in the context of excessive remorse, he writes: "It is here that it is necessary, at the very beginning, to remove all doubts, to overcome within oneself fears and anxiety as the most dangerous temptations, to overcome with this superior act «Jesus, I trust in You»" (Sopoćko, "Wykonało się," 11); cf. Sopocko, "Miłosierdzie Boże źródłem prawdziwej radości," 162–163.

[71] Cf. Sopoćko, "Wykonało się," 14.

The Blessed's writings contain elements from his personal life, showing his trust in God. In one of his letters to the Sisters of the congregation he founded, he confessed:

> I trust firmly that all the actions of my life will be found in eternity except the sinful ones which Jesus annihilated in the Sacrament of Penance and will forgive them, as he forgave the sinful life of Magdalene, the denial of Peter, the perverse persecution of Saul of Tarsus, as he forgave Augustine, as long as I repent as they did. The last stone of the evil that has already passed should be for me the foundation stone for the new edifice of holiness "Jesus, I trust in you!"[72]

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When analysing Father Sopocko's writings on trust, it is important to remember the aim he set for himself. He intended to elaborate the issue theologically, but also to show its pastoral significance. Hence, there are many expressions, descriptions and examples intended to serve the spiritual development of the reader. From the analysis of his writings presented above, it is clear that:
1. He bases his considerations on trust on the Word of God, which he analyses.
2. His studies are rooted in traditional theology, and their novelty lies in incorporating this traditional thought into the development of the devotion to Divine Mercy and giving it an existential form.
3. He emphasises that the object of trust is Divine Mercy, and it is this virtue that is the basis of a well-understood spirituality of mercy.
4. He proves that trust is the essence of the devotion to Divine Mercy.
5. He enumerates and elaborates the qualities of trust. Such elaborations are lacking in the theological literature.
6. His writings were inspired by the spiritual experiences of Sister Faustina. As a continuator of her mission, he was responsible for the scientific elaboration of the topic of Divine Mercy. However, he could not refer directly to the revelations of Jesus to his penitent, as their credibility had not yet been recognised by the Church. All this posed a considerable difficulty for him.

Father Sopocko's thought is not only part of traditional theology and Church teaching but is also reflected in contemporary teaching. John Paul II writes about trust

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[72] Sopoćko, "Wykonało się," 11; In several other places the Blessed also wrote about trust, giving his deliberations a personal touch: "When sickness strikes me, or disability strikes me: Jesus, I trust in You! When slander taints me and saturates me with bitterness: Jesus, I trust in You! When friends abandon me and hurt me in speech and deed: Jesus, I trust in You!" (Sopocko, *The Mercy of God*, III, 196); cf. Sopocko, "Jezu, ufam Tobie!," 132.

in his documents, placing the human Redeemer at the centre, as the one in whom one can place hope (cf. *RH* 1). Benedict XVI presents this thought in *Spe Salvi*, emphasising that "Man's great, true hope which holds firm in spite of all disappointments can only be God—God who has loved us and who continues to love us «to the end»" (*SS* 27). Pope Francis, on the other hand, addresses the issue of trust in God in the exhortation *Christus Vivit*, writing in it of the great love of the Creator, in whom it is worth trusting: "you can find security in the embrace of your heavenly Father, of the God who first gave you life and continues to give it to you at every moment" (*CHV* 113). As can be seen, this topic is always relevant and developed in Church documents.

Looking at Father Sopocko's rich, multi-faceted literature, topics still worthy of scholarly study seem to be those related to, among other things, new forms of the devotion to Divine Mercy: the Image of the Divine Mercy and Divine Mercy Sunday, as well as the issue of suffering.

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Women Witnesses to the Risen Lord

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Abstract: Under Jewish law, the witnessing of Jesus as resurrected must occur by the third-day after death. Later witnessing can be corroborative, but the third-day witnessing is crucial. In Matthew and John, the sole percipient witnesses on the third-day are women, plural in Matthew, a single woman in John. This seems to cast doubt on Jesus' resurrection because in Greek, Roman, and Jewish culture, women were ineligible as witnesses or were considered vastly inferior as witnesses to men. Celsus inveighed, "Who saw this? A hysterical female!" Communicating to outsiders, having women witness casts aspersions on Jesus' resurrection making Christianity appear unthreatening to the imperial order. However, for Jews aware of the celebrated exception in the Pharisaic/rabbinic oral law/tradition that accepted women's testimony in the circumstances found in the gospels, having specifically women witness makes their testimony more credible than had the witnesses been men or any combination of men and women. Women witnessing the risen Lord fits within the interstices of the Law, so that, not just human testimony, but the Law lends its imprimatur endorsing Jesus.

Keywords: *Agunah*, genre, novel, resurrection, testimony, third-day, witness, women

In Matthew's and John's gospels, the sole percipient witnesses to Jesus' resurrection on the crucial third-day after death are women/a woman. Yet, in the Mediterranean and Near Eastern world, women were not permitted as witnesses or at least were considered vastly inferior as witnesses to men. Therefore, a plain surface reading suggests the witnessing of Jesus' resurrection by specifically women is inferior and suspect.

This article answers the mystery of why women witnesses. In post-colonial Bakhtinian polyglossia, different constituencies in the audience hear/read the same words differently; the text has one (erroneous) plain surface meaning for dominants (hostile outsiders) and another (correct) esoteric hidden transcript/meaning for subalterns (Jews).

In the first century, there developed an enormous body of recondite, specifically Jewish, oral law in which, in certain pertinent circumstances, the testimony of women was accepted—archetypically in the context of widows' remarriage, to prove whether someone they knew/know well, archetypically a husband, was alive or dead. Thus, for outsiders not appreciating this new enormous body of Jewish oral law, having women witnesses seems to trivialize the resurrection, making Christianity non-threatening to Rome.[1] But, for subaltern Jews, women witnesses invoke

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1   Simmonds, "*Sub Rosa*," 733–754 (734–735); Melzer, "On the Pedagogical Motive," 1015–1031; Ahl, "The Art of Safe Criticism," 174–208.

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the beloved vaunted Jewish Law/tradition, giving Jesus' resurrection the great endorsement and imprimatur of *the Law*. Ironically, in an exception that proves the rule (of gendered witnessing),[2] in respect of Jesus' resurrection, from a Jewish perspective, specifically women's witness was superior and more credible and convincing than alternatively having as witnesses men or any combination of men and women. Women were *expected* to be the percipient witnesses to Jesus' resurrection.

As a corollary: having *the* Law endorse Jesus, Matthew and John endorse the Law—which is the Petrine (Jerusalem church) Jewish law-reverent position in contrast to the Pauline Gentile law-free position.[3] This latter topic is too vast to discuss here. Suffice it to state, while Judaism traditionally placed enormous emphasis on the importance of widows' remarriage—in the stories of Tamar and Ruth, for instance, Paul favored celibacy preferring that widows not remarry (1 Cor 7:8). Some Pauline passages may be considered anti-women.[4] Paul has all male resurrection witnesses (1 Cor 15:3–7). In Acts 6:1–7, providing for widows was a surprisingly early and important dispute in the Jerusalem church, in a controversy between Hellenist and Hebrews, focused on the role of the disciples, whether as waiters serving widows food or in prayer and preaching.[5]

Matthew's redactor, compiler, and editor, and in some places author, conventionally called M, is the author of the special M material generally not found in the other gospels or the rest of the New Testament. M uses Tannaitic legal allusions (of tradition/oral law) in stunning profusion.[6] In the instance of the witnessing of Jesus' resurrection, John does so as well. Matthew and John also use classical allusions. Their allusions are so specific—like fingerprints—that they reveal authorial intent. Via Callimachean allusions, the text interprets itself to the perceptive reader/hearer. Reader response is channeled to the subaltern esoteric/hidden meaning *the author intended*.[7]

For a pertinent example of this allusive methodology, for a millennium and a half in the West, Mary Magdalene was considered a reformed sexual sinner. In 1969 the Church rehabilitated her (finding she had not been a sexual sinner after all), and in 2016 made her an apostle—was this a new modern revisionist development reacting to ascendant feminism, or is it equally perhaps a return to the old original stratum, the Mary of original Christianity, before a misogynistic perspective

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2   In a top-down, big picture, "Greek" *deductive* analysis, a remote numerically/statistically inconsequential exception is irrelevant. In a bottom-up, detail-oriented, "Jewish" *inductive* analysis, the strikingly incongruous remote/minor exception is highly relevant. Simmonds, "Judas and Joseph," 147–179, esp. 149–150.

3   Simmonds, "Judas and Joseph," 147–148, 177–178.

4   Simmonds, "Judas and Joseph," 148. Pauline statements that some have considered anti-women include 1 Cor 11:7–10; 14:33–35; 2 Cor 11:3; Eph 5:22–24; Col 3:18; 1 Tim 2:9–15; 1 Pet 3:1–7.

5   Pao, "Waiters or Preachers," 127–144. Ferdinand Christian Baur suggested Acts tries to reconcile Petrine and Pauline Christianity.

6   Simmonds, "*Sub Rosa*," 748–753; Simmonds, "Judas and Joseph," 149–150.

7   See Dinkler, *Literary Theory*, 19–29, 120–129; Simmonds, "Judas and Joesph," 148–149.

took hold? This article answers that question. The allusions discussed herein tell us what her first-century contemporaries thought Mary was like.

This article deals first with Matthew, then with John. First, discussing the Jewish law of women witnesses and its then contemporary importance. Next, as a literary foil, these evangelists disparage competing witness of men, doubting or silent disciples and lying bribed guards. Women's witnessing was an appearance tradition, and Jewish law does not lend its imprimatur to an empty tomb. An appearance tradition is the original stratum.

Matthew's husband-wife motif conjures up Jesus and Mary in a physical, bodily, romantic marriage or fiancé relationship—in the specific archetypal background context of leniently allowing widows to remarry. More so than marriage, remarriage has individual and physical connotations. Thus, already in Matthew, Mary Magdalene and Jesus are portrayed in an individual human context, in addition to more broadly a spiritual communal context. John evidently understood Matthew's husband-wife motif because John copies it but "translated" for a non-Jewish audience *unfamiliar* with the Jewish law of women witnesses. Thus, John uses Greek (romantic) novel genre which also (like Matthew) has a husband-wife motif (one understandable by non-Jews). Even more than in Matthew, invoking novel romance, John depicts Mary and Jesus as human individuals, not only spiritually, communally, or allegorically.[8] Not only is Mary more broadly the mystical/allegorical bride of Christ, she is a unique specific female individual human being witness to a specific event at a specific time and place.

1. On the Third-Day

In Pharisaic/rabbinic/tannaitic law and custom the first three days following death were "understood to have a special quality" such that "the unique status of the first three days is beyond question."[9] Absent unusual circumstances, not found in the gospels, that might produce a delay in decomposition, identification of the deceased had to occur by the third day after death (*m. Yebam.* 16.3; *b. Yebam.* 120a3 and n. 16).[10] Under normal circumstances, by the fourth day, the corpse would have begun to decompose (*b. Yebam.* 120a3 and nn. 16–18; John 11:39).[11] An identification of a corpse that had (in some measure) decomposed was highly problematic, such that legally

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8   See Pope John Paul II, *Return to the Subject of Human Love.*
9   Kraemer, *Death*, 123–124; Basser – Cohen, *Matthew*, 707.
10 All citation to the Babylonian Talmud are to the dual English/Hebrew (and Aramaic) Schottenstein Edition, ArtScroll Series published by Mesorah Publications, Brooklyn, New York. Based on the classic Vilna Shas, ArtScroll is the first and only translated, unabridged, fully annotated Bavli.
11 Kraemer, *Death*, 21.

speaking, it would have been out of the question for the Messiah/Jesus to be identified solely outside of the crucial three day window.

The Pharisaic/rabbinic rules requiring identification of a deceased person by a witnessing of the corpse during the three days after death are paralleled in the Pharisaic/rabbinic tradition that a resurrection of the body (outside of the general resurrection) occurs on the third day after death, prior to the commencement of decomposition.[12] Peter in Acts 2:31–32 and Paul in Acts 13:35–37 state that Jesus' body did not decompose.

There was the notion that the soul hovers around the body until the third-day; that until the third-day even the soul is not sure that the body is dead and clings to the hope of reentering the body.[13] Only "from the third day is death irreversible; until that point, it is always possible that the soul will find its way back into the body."[14] Thus, under Jewish law and tradition, the identification of Jesus as resurrected has to occur specifically on the third-day.

Moreover, it was common public knowledge that Jesus said he would rise from the dead on the third-day (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34; Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:46; 1 Cor 15:3–4).[15] As corroboration, Matthew has the priests *and Pharisees* tell Pilate that Jesus announced publicly, and it became well known, that "after"[16] three days he would rise again (27:62–63). Putting Jesus' prediction of his resurrection on the third-day in the mouths of his enemies, the priests, and his learned opponents, most capable debaters, and favorite debate partners,[17] the Pharisees, significantly bolsters the credibility of Jesus' prediction.[18] As further evidence that resurrection had to occur by the third-day, in Matthew, the guards secured Jesus' tomb for three days, after which the peril (that Jesus might resurrect) was avoided/obviated (27:64; *Gos. Pet.* 29).[19]

These third-day traditions, combined with the Pharisaic/rabbinic notion of actual full bodily physical resurrection, and that identification had to occur prior to decomposition—meant that the witnessing of the resurrected Jesus on the third-day has an importance incomparably greater than any subsequent identification or witnessing. Thus, it is extremely important to note that, in both Matthew and John,

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12 Hos 6:2 ("on the third-day he will rise us up, and we shall live in his sight") is used repeatedly in rabbinic exegesis for the notion that resurrection of the dead will occur on the third-day. See Kraemer, *Death*, 84; Neusner, *Hosea*, 15, 44–45, 53, 138; McCasland, "The Scriptural Basis," 124–137; Wijngaards, "Death and Resurrection," 226–239.

13 Kraemer, *Death*, 125

14 Kraemer, *Death*, 84.

15 Heil, "The Narrative Structure," 424.

16 The Greek preposition μετά means "after" or "with" the third-day. Any difference between "on" or "after" is "actually insignificant." "The third day is the significant one." The Talmud also debates whether "until" means to include the last stated period or not. Kraemer, *Death*, 156, n. 6.

17 Simmonds, "Woe to You . . . Hypocrites!," 336–349.

18 Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 587 ("officially certified").

19 Heil, "The Narrative Structure," 428; Kraemer, *Death*, 83.

the only people to see Jesus "on the third-day" (during the crucial three-day limitations period calculated the Jewish way from dusk to dusk) are women.[20]

Under Pharisaic/rabbinic law, the other later eyewitness identifications of the risen Lord (by men outside of the three-day limitations period), may bolster the women's testimony, but by themselves, the later testimony beyond the third-day (by men) is insufficient. In Matt 28:16–20, Luke 24:36–45, and John 20:19–23, Jesus appears to the disciples as a group. In Matthew it is at some unspecified time, but presumably much later than "the third-day" because the meeting is on a mountain in Galilee. In Luke and John, the meeting is on the third-day, but only calculated the Greco-Roman way from dawn to dawn (Pliny, *NH* 2.77), rather than calculated the Jewish way from dusk to dusk.[21]

The witnessing in Luke on the Road to Emmaus is interesting. The two travelers see but do not recognize Jesus. Recognition comes in the evening (perhaps/seemingly falling in the next day computed the Jewish way). Under rabbinic law, in Matthew and John (and perhaps in Luke), *the* crucial third-day testimony under Jewish law of Jesus' resurrection comes from women, and famously women alone.

2. Famously, Women Were Not Permitted as Witnesses

In Jewish law, as a rule, only two, free, Jewish men could be witnesses (*b. Shev.* 30a2;[22] John 8:18). Women were *the* paradigmatic category of persons who could *not* be witnesses.[23] Indeed, not only in Jewish society, in the ancient Mediterranean world in Greek and Roman society as well, whether in court proceedings or informal reporting of events, women were conventionally regarded as light-minded,[24] fickle,

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[20] Computed in the Jewish manner by the day beginning at sunset (Matt 28:1–10, 17; Mark 16:1–11; contrast Luke 24:1, 13, 21, 29, 33; John 20:1, 19).

[21] On the reckoning of hours in John's Gospel, see Kubiś, "Roman versus Jewish," 247–280.

[22] Cohn, "Witness," 115–116.

[23] Daube, "Witnesses," 415–416 ("standard case of unfitness") (all citations to Daube are to Collected Works); Josephus, *Ant*. 4.8.15 (209) ("on account of the levity and boldness of their sex"); Josephus, *C. Ap.* 2.24.201; Cohn, "Witness;" *b. Shev*. 30a1–3 and n. 2 (As a technical matter of rabbinic law, a woman never has the legal classification of a witness, merely occasionally her testimony is accepted as though she were); Wenger, *Chattel or Person?*, 120–126; Maccini, *Testimony*, 63–97; Ilan, *Jewish Women*, 163–166; Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 257–261. In Greek and Roman law of the time, with rare exception, women were not permitted as witnesses. Discussed in van Hout, "Gender and Authority," 201–220; Brundage, "Juridical Space," 147–156.

[24] The ancient Greeks had a word, γυναικάριον, for a light-headed, foolish woman. In classical Greek invidious misogynistic stereotype, women were said to have minds of dogs, κύνεος νόος. Franco, *Shameless*, vii, 147, 161. In Rome, the stereotype was of a superstitious old woman (*anus*, adj. *anilis, anilis superstitio, animi leves*) who lacks courage, moderation, and steadiness, with a feeble "light" or "weak" mind, who trembles, weeps, and worries consumed with fear and anxiety, a distinction between "manly minds" and "old-womanly fears." Gordon, "*Superstitio*," 76–77, 87–91. Among all ancient societies discussed

flighty, unsteady, changeable, lacking in self-control, and unreliable, while masculine acting men were regarded as of sound mind, rational, self-controlled, weighty, thoughtful, and reliable—a contrast between women's *levitas* versus men's *gravitas*.[25] Sophocles says, "a woman's oath, he writes on water" (Frag. 649). *Varium et mutabile semper femina* (Vergil, *Aen.* 4.569–570), brought forward as *La donna e mobile, qual piuma al vento* (Verdi, *Riggoletto*). In 1 Cor 14:34–35 (see also 11:3–16), Paul relates that women are not to speak in church, but should be subordinate. If they want to learn they should ask their husbands at home.

Thus, whether in a legal setting or informally, even if the testimony of women were to be accepted, it would seem that women's testimony would be suspect and considered vastly inferior to men's. Indeed, that women were key witnesses of Jesus' resurrection proved embarrassing. Celsus derided the claim of Jesus' resurrection: "Who saw this? A hysterical female" (Origen, *Cels.* 2.55).[26]

Moreover, having exclusively women as witnesses seems unnecessary. In the first place, the presentation need not be gendered. In Acts 13:30–31, Paul preaching on the Sabbath in a synagogue says that the risen Jesus "for many days was seen by those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses to the people." Moreover, there were other prominent accounts in which the witnesses are exclusively male. Thus, Paul recounts that Jesus appeared first to Peter, and then to the twelve, and then to more than 500 brothers at once, and then to James and all the apostles (1 Cor 15:3–7). The *Gospel of Peter* has a great many exclusively male witnesses, both Jewish and Roman, present at the moment of resurrection/ascension. The women arrive after Jesus has left. Hearing Jesus had risen, they depart, become frightened, and flee.

Caesar would not have had women witnesses. A senior senator testified under oath to the Senate that, at Augustus' cremation, he had witnessed Augustus' body ascending to heaven.[27] The Senate pronounced Augustus divine. Though the testimony was a man's, Augustus' widow, Livia, was involved paying him a million sesterces.

In Mark 16:8, the women flee, trembling and bewildered, telling no one for they were afraid. In Luke 24:11, the women relate what they had seen and heard, but the men regard the women's words as idle tales and they were not believed. Not so in Matt 28:10, 16: the women do as they were instructed, and were believed because the disciples follow the instruction relayed to them by the women by going to Galilee

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here women's status was lowest in classical Greece, and higher in first century Rome and Israel. Among the ancient Etruscans and Egyptians, women had a much higher status than the rest of the Mediterranean world.

25   Gaius 1.190 (*levitas animi*, frivolity of mind); Aeschylus, *Ag.*, 475–500 (gossip, baseless rumor). Women are easily swayed, literally, women's minds are light upon them. See also *b. Kid*. 80b2 and n. 17; *b. Shab*. 33b3 and n. 26 (in this case, women are more likely to succumb under torture); 1 Cor 11:3.

26   Setzer, "Excellent Women," 261.

27   Beard – North – Price, *Religions of Rome*, 208–209.

to meet Jesus. Likewise, in John 20:18, the woman tells the disciples that she has seen Jesus and relates what he told her to tell them.

Nevertheless, whether in positive or negative parallel portrayals, in the canonical gospels and the *Gospel of Peter*, women play prominent roles in the events of Jesus' resurrection. Women (or a woman) go to Jesus' tomb, find the stone removed, meet an angel or angels, or in Mark and Luke a man or men, and so on. Claudia Setzer suggests that the tradition of women's involvement was so early and firmly entrenched that none of the canonical evangelists felt free to entirely eliminate it.[28]

3. Why Women? The Answer Is Both Natural and Legal

There are two reasons for the prominence of women in the Passion narratives. In the first place, it is entirely natural and plausible to find women "at the foot of the cross" as seen, for example, in Rizpah at the foot of the crosses of seven sons of Saul—in the premier crucifixion story in the Hebrew Bible (2 Sam 21:1–14), or the woman of Ephesus story in Petronius' *Satyricon* 110.6–113.4. In Mark 14:27–28 and Matt 26:31–32, Jesus predicts that when the shepherd (himself) is stricken, the flock (his followers) will scatter (derived from Zech 13:7), but that later when he is risen, they will gather together again in Galilee. Fulfilling Jesus' prediction, after Jesus' arrest, Jesus' Jewish male followers flee (except Peter, who, denies Jesus three times, also flees, and Judas, who kills himself). With Jesus' male followers gone, in Matthew particularly, women take the fore (center stage) as halakhic women witnesses.

In the ancient Near East, the identification of people, and most especially deceased persons, had a distinctly female paradigmatic context. There was a long history of women's testimony allowed for the identification of (actual or presumed) deceased loved ones (or persons believed to be dead but who were alive), such as a child,[29] or especially a husband,[30] or other close (often male) friends or relations.[31] Because of women's greater physical intimacy with children and adults, including members of the opposite sex[32] (than men usually have with each other), and their in-

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28   Setzer, "Excellent Women," 259, 268.
29   The classic example of otherwise disqualified testimony by women identifying a loved one is, or course, the Judgment of Solomon. There, not only were the two women disqualified because they were women, they were doubly disqualified because of their bad character as harlots. See *b. Shab.* 24b2–25b2; *b. Shev.* 301, n. 4.
30   *b. Yev.* 87b3 and n. 2; see generally 87b–88b; Levy, "The Agunah," 53–58; Roth, "Widow," 4–7, 9, 14, 17–18, 22, 24–25; Paterson, "Divorce and Desertion," 161–170; Holtz, "To Go and Marry," 244–245.
31   The classic example from Homer's *Odyssey*, returned home disguised, Odysseus is recognized by only one person, a woman, his childhood nurse (19.428–454). See Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 1. Alluding to the low status of women witnesses in classical Greek tradition, Odysseus was only recognized by his old nurse and his dog.
32   Basser – Cohen, *Matthew*, 709.

timacy among other women and knowledge of "women's matters," as wives, mothers, nannies, nurses, and caregivers, women were considered suited to identify certain close individuals.[33] As well, prosaically, women tend to outlive men. No one knows a man as well as his wife.

In Pharisaic/rabbinic law, there was very extensive and early legal development as to when a missing husband might be considered dead, and what happened if the presumed dead husband returned after his wife's remarriage.[34] (Judging from Homer's suitors, the returned husband motif was serious.) This was an especially important issue with respect to a widow's right to remarry and recover her dowry from her husband's relations,[35] and whether she was subject to the rules of levirate marriage.

Because of the *agunah* ("chained woman")[36] problem that a women might be prevented from remarrying (in this case, where her husband had died, but proof from male witnesses was lacking,[37]) at an early date, the sages/rabbis relaxed the rules of witnessing in the specific exceptional case to establish a person's (archetypically a husband's) death, so as to allow testimony by the wife herself (developing to permit hearsay and even the testimony of any—even Gentile—woman) (*b. Yebam.* 121b3 and nn. 26–27; 122a5–122a6 and nn. 37–44, 51–53; 122b3), but concomitantly they created dire consequences for a wife who remarried when her husband was alive (*b. Yebam.* 116b5 and n. 41; 122b2 and nn. 14–15). The rationale was that a person claimed to be dead, but who was alive, was likely to return (*b. Yebam.* 115a3 and n. 19), and that people do not lie about any matter that is likely to be revealed (*b. Yebam.* 93b2 and n. 19). Thus, if a wife were to testify falsely that her husband had died, and he was alive, she would likely be exposed by his return, resulting in her complete ruin, which militated towards accepting her testimony (*b. Yebam.* 87b3–5 and nn. 19).

These early rules are found in *Mishnah Yebamot* (*Yevamos*) especially chapters 15–16 but elsewhere also and in the compilation of "house disputes" between Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel of *bo bayom*, "on that date" (c. ad 84) ('*Ed. General Introduction*, 3a1(1.12), 8a1–2 (6.1), 9b1 and n. 2 (8.5); *b. Ber.* 27b1–28a2).[38] The historicity

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33   Recall Antigone caring for her father, while her brothers rejected him. See also 1 Tim 5:3–8.
34   Roth, "Widow"; e.g., Middle Assyrian Laws para. 36, 45–46 in Roth, *Law Collections*, 165, 170–172; Council of Quinisext (Trullo), 93.
35   *b. Yev*. 116b5 and n. 40; Roth, "Widow," 1–26. Evidence of this tradition is found perhaps in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Davies – Taylor, "On the Testimony of Women in 1Qsa," 223–235 (she may testify "against" her husband).
36   In the context of a divorcee needing a get to remarry, the *agunah* problem continues in Orthodox Judaism to this day. Berger, "Rabbi Simcha Krauss," A17.
37   Due to short life spans, the danger of male occupations involving travel, and the young age of women and the higher age of men at marriage, there were many young widows desirable for remarriage and childbearing. Stol, "Women," 132.
38   Brewer, "The Use of Rabbinic Sources," 292; Basser, "Gospels," 112 and n. 2; Basser, *The Mind Behind the Gospels*; Basser, "Planting Christian Trees," 107 ("antiquity and continuity of Rabbinic modes of thought are to be appreciated and validated by the study of New Testament"); Basser – Cohen, *Matthew*, 711

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of these later accounts may perhaps be bolstered by their involving significant rulings in which (unusually) Bet Hillel gave in and agreed with Bet Shammai (*m. Yebam.* 15.2–3; *b. Yebam.* 116b2, 116b5).

The Mishnah (c. 200 CE) is a compilation taken from prior sources, some quoted verbatim.[39] *Mishnah Yavamot* obviously had extensive prior development evidenced from the many and painstakingly elaborate sub-rules and sub-exceptions, such as which categories of persons might not be allowed to controvert the wife's witness, including mother-in-law,[40] daughter of mother-in-law, co-wife, husband's brother's wife, husband's daughter (*m. Yebam.* 15.4) and for purposes of levitate rules the order of deaths of a son and husband (*m. Yebam.* 15.8). Bavli tractate *Yevamot*, incidentally, is famous for being among, if not *the*, most complex tractate of the famously labyrinthian complex Talmud.[41]

4. A Legal Category: Halakhic Women Witnesses

It is extremely difficult, nearly impossible to explain to Western readers (educated in the originally Greek Socratic philosophical tradition) the importance of Jewish/rabbinic law. In the first place, particularly among Protestant scholars,[42] "legalism" became "the very definition and the all-sufficient condemnation of Judaism."[43] In modern anti-Semitic racist thought, late Second Temple Judaism reached evolutionary degeneracy, reduced to sterile empty ritual devoid of feeling. On the contrary,

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("M.Yeb. 15.4 affirms that women could give testimony about presumed dead"); Gilat, "Yevamot," 324; also Thomas, "The Fourth Gospel," 175 and n. 49 ("pre-Yavnean"). Some accounts of the victories of the Pharisees against the Sadducees are heavily apocryphal. For example, *b. B. Bat.* 115b1–16a1.

39   Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, 6, 103, 113–114, 116.

40   Pope John Paul II (*Mary Was Witness*, no. 1) wonders why Jesus' mother is not recorded as having witnessed Jesus' resurrection speculating she might have been perceived (by resurrection deniers) as "too biased." It is because the Jewish law of women witnesses considered a possible tension between mothers-in-law and fiancés/daughters-in-law such that presenting Jesus' mother as a witness would be unhelpful to support Magdalene's witness and would not be the paradigmatic case (wife) and so unhelpful to allude to the Law endorsing Jesus' resurrection. Two witnesses are as good as a 100 (*b. Yebam.* 88b5, 117b2). A group of women might not qualify because of possible rivalries and conflicts between them (*b. Yebam.* 117a2–3 and n. 19).

41   Gilat, "Yevamot," 324; *b. Yebam.* xiviii ("formidable").

42   Baumgarten, "Marcel Simon's 'Versus Israel,'" 467, n. 12 (in the eyes of Protestant scholars "legalism" viewed as "the worst of all possible religious defects"); 470 ("a mania for sterile casuistry, and of pedantic formalism, for all of which the Talmud provides abundant evidence"); Pinkard, *Hegel*, 585 (Hegel believed that Judaism would and should have vanished from the world stage except for "tenacious unnecessary legalisms"); Jackson, "Legalism," 1–22.

43   Moore, "Christian Writers on Judaism," 252 ("None of the learned adversaries of Judaism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, though they knew the literature immeasurably better" espoused these later anti-legalism theories); Gerdmar, *Roots of Theological Anti-Semitism*, 385 and n. 67.

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that era witnessed the greatest flowering of rabbinic/Talmudic exegesis in history, the time of the greatest of the greatest of all time, the leading Tannaim, Hillel, Johanan ben Zakkai, and Akiva.

Putting aside prejudice, Western academic thought tends to deduction, focusing on the big picture, the rule, axiom, unity, and coherence in the question: What is the law, the rule? However, more important than extensive similarity between Matthew's account and Jewish law is the way the law operates, the proverbial "weight" of the law, both metaphorically and even, for the sake of simplicity, taken quite literally, the sheer physical volume/weight of words/paper as though placed on a balance scale, proverbially, the quantity of spilt ink. Or, in those times of oral traditions, mental and oral exercise.

Close in time, in both the Jewish and Roman legal systems, two great competing schools developed that debated legal issues, often involving what might seem abstruse, arcane, recondite, legalistic minutia: Hillel and the Pharisees versus Shammai and the Sadducees in Jewish law and Labeo and the Proculians versus Capito and the Sabinians in Roman law.[44] Alan Watson finds extremely puzzling the importance Roman law attached to the opinions of such unpaid expert jurists who held no official position and whose opinions often conflicted.[45] The same could be said of the Jewish sages. Meanwhile, Roman and Jewish intensely legal orientation is foreign to rationalistic Greek thought and culture.[46]

Operating under a different criterion of relevance than Western academic thought, Talmudic (Pharisaic/rabbinic) thought tends to induction,[47] focusing on "the granular," "minutia," unusual details, particulars, specifics, the different, statistically insignificant, odd-man-out, sit-up-and-take-notice unusual—*the (remote) exception (that proves the rule), not the rule*.[48] Never harmonizing texts.[49]

Thus, thinking in this inductive way, the general rule assuredly was that only two, Jewish, free men could be witnesses. However, according to David Daube, the rabbis needed, but could not find, scriptural support for women's exclusion from testimony.[50]

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44   Zeitlin, "The Halaka," 32; Stein, "The Two Schools," 8–31.

45   Watson, "Roman Law," 609.

46   Which is why we have the Greek New "Testament" instead of the more appropriate New "Covenant;" covenant does not translate from Hebrew and Latin into Greek. See, Mickiewicz, "Theologization," 751–769 (esp. 762–763 and n. 41). The Greeks did not have (or had to a much lesser extent) sacred immutable treaties and covenants. In modern international law this is the difference between *pacta sunt servanda* and *rebus sic stantibus*. Law played a much greater role in Jewish and Roman culture than Greek. Simmonds, "Christianity and the Imperial Cult."

47   Jacobs, *Studies in Talmudic Logic*, 9–10, nn. 3–4; Silberg, *Talmudic Law*, 19–21; Maccoby, *Philosophy*, 191–196; Moscovitz, *Talmudic Reasoning*, 75–90; Sion, *Judaic Logic*, 18–20, 135–136, 196–200, 252.

48   See Feeney – Heit, *Inductive Reasoning*; Daube, "Two Tripartite Forms," 389–410.

49   Pertinent here Luke has Mary Magdalene exorcised of seven demons (8:2). That should not be read into Mark, Matthew, or John where it does not appear (cf. Mark 16:9) unless there is a demonstrably good reason to do so. Harmonizing makes for shoddy error prone exegesis and scholarship.

50   Daube, "Witnesses," 417.

Thus, in rabbinic law the disqualification of women is on technical textual interpretation, not women's supposed lack of credibility.[51] The reason given is that Scripture uses the masculine form. However, Scripture uses the masculine form in cases where both sexes are referred to.[52] Nevertheless, while scriptural support was slight, historical support was strong and longstanding. In Mesopotamian tradition, "the only legal capacity that a woman never had was to be a witness."[53]

Thus, "no one bothered to provide a well reasoned basis" for the two male witness rule.[54] Hence, the actual physical volume or weight of Jewish law requiring that witnesses be male was minuscule and negligible compared to the enormous physical volume and weight of law for the exceptions that allowed for women's testimony to be accepted (though technicality, formally, they were still not witnesses[55]). The rule that permitted only male witnesses seemingly was so clear (or conversely so flimsy) as to not warrant or encourage comment. Conversely, to create a major exception to such a clear, but largely unsupported rule, the volume of pages (or in an oral tradition the amount of words and thought) on the exception was enormous.

While there were a number of different exceptions that permitted women's testimony (e.g., *b. Ned.* 91a2; *b. B. Qam.* 114b2–3), witnessing by women for the purpose of establishing whether a person was alive or dead was by far by sheer volume or weight the foremost, indeed archetypal exception to the two, free, Jewish, male witnesses rule.

Thus, on the surface, women were the paradigmatic category of persons not allowed to be witnesses. At the same time, in Jewish readers'/hearers' precondition/predisposition, they were the paradigmatic category of persons, who in the exceptional and archetypal circumstances found in the gospels *were expected* to be the percipient witnesses.

This enormous amount of legal background and development meant that the women witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (whose testimony fit within this vaunted legal exception to the male witness rule) were not merely women, who acted as reliable witnesses—women whose testimony in certain circumstances was as good as men's. They were a highly *developed legal category* of halakhic women witnesses,[56] who, for that reason, their testimony was superior to men's. An enormous legal edifice stood behind ("had their back" of) women's exceptional testimony, while no comparable edifice of law stood behind men's testimony. Due to the comparative

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51   Maccini, *Testimony*, 95.
52   Deut 19:15–21; Cohn, "Witness," 115; Daube, "Witnesses," 416; cf. *b. Shev.* 30a1–3 and n. 18.
53   Stol, "Women," 136, 140.
54   Daube, "Witnesses," 417.
55   This demonstrates the inherent vacuity/ambiguity of nouns versus the expressiveness of verbs.
56   Moscovitz, *Talmudic Reasoning*, 6; Saiman, "Legal Theology," 74 (an ownerless ox is not an ox; an ox is an animal to which the laws of "ox" apply, a halakhic ox). Eye, tooth, ear, cheek, horn, hoof are all halakhic categories. Simmonds, "Indirect Causation," 641–686; Simmonds, "Measure for Measure," 123–172.

paucity of law requiring exclusively men's testimony, there was no specific legal category of halakhic male witnesses, except, where applicable, lying *zomamim*.[57]

In sum, Jews knowledgeable in Pharisaic/rabbinic law and method would recognize the allusion to the celebrated legal exception permitting women's witnesses. In the inductive system of rabbinic law, Matthew's women witnesses are presented to fit within this most notable and celebrated legal exception, which enshrines these women's testimony within the mantel of *the Law*, with the Law, as it were, *bearing witness* to and corroborating these women's testimony. Which would not be the case had the witnessing been by men or any combination of men and women. Women witnesses qua gender is a literary device. By reason of their gender, the Law is a corroborating witness to these women's witness. From a Jewish perspective, having all women witnesses to the crucial first and only sighting on the third day, was exactly what the story called for. Jewish Law gave its stentorian roar of approval.

Moreover, though the classic fact pattern was of women (or a woman) testifying that a person was dead, the reverse could apply, that a person thought dead was alive. An interesting instance in rabbinic law similar to Matthew's narrative is women's testimony that, "He lives." Matthew's exceptional case is similar to the "novelty" (extreme exception) where a man testifies that a woman's husband is dead, but two women, testify that he lives, we are to believe the women over the man.[58] Thus, the testimony of the women in Matthew is similar to that testimony which in the Talmud is the great exception, the novelty, where we believe women over a man—where the women say, "He is not dead, he lives"—we believe their testimony over a man's testimony that he is dead.

5. An Appearance, Not Just an Empty Tomb

Mark is thought to have an empty tomb, not an appearance, ending. This is because the women did not see Jesus and being afraid did not tell the disciples the message about meeting Jesus in Galilee (16:8). However, the disciples went to Galilee. In 14:28, Jesus prophesied that after his death, he and his disciples will meet

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57 *Zomemim* must suffer the fate that would have befallen the falsely accused (Deut 19:18–21). The elders in the Susanna story are the classic case of *zomemim*. There is considerable Pharisaic/rabbinic legal development on the law of *zomemim*.

58 *b. Yebam.* 117b3. Usually, unequivocal reliability is only afforded to two male witnesses (*b. Yebam.* 115a4 and n. 29). And, two or more women witnesses have the status of one male witness (*b. Yebam.* 117b). Matthew goes further than the Talmud where it is one man versus two women. Conceivably, because they are not named and due to their common indemnification by the priests, the guards as a group might be considered as a single witness. In a group, infirmities within the group can affect the entire group (*b. Mak.* 6a1–3). Also, if asleep, the guards never saw Jesus resurrected, and only said that his corpse was stolen, not mentioning whether it subsequently became alive or not, which does not precisely contradict the women.

in Galilee. In ancient writing style, if Jesus prophesied something, it happened. The Galilee meeting is emphasized by repetition, mentioned twice, first by Jesus, second the women at the tomb are instructed to *remind* the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee (16:7). Thus, even without the women's reminding them, the disciples may have remembered and followed through. Therefore, Mark implies resurrected Jesus appeared to his disciple, just after the end of the text.

Mark seems to contain traces/vestiges of the halakhic women witness tradition—an appearance tradition. Mark has the same women as witnesses to the first three related sequential events, (1) death, (2) burial, (3) empty tomb (15:40–41, 47; 16:1). Matthew has the same women witness those three events—plus, in addition (4) Jesus resurrected (see also Luke 23:49, 55; 24:10). Having the same women witness each of the sequential steps, bolsters their credibility—more than had the steps in the sequence been witnessed by different sets[59] of witnesses (*b. Yebam.* 114b5, 121a5b1–122b1; *b. Sanh.* 86a4 and nn. 39–41). In the law, this is called "qualifying" the witness or "laying the foundation/predicate," "chain" for introducing their testimony into evidence. Thus, having the *same* women witness sequential events serves a legal/halakhic purpose. Since Mark has these same halakhic women witness the first three steps of the sequence (death, burial, empty tomb), Mark seems to use the halakhic women witnesses motif.

Paul, who wrote prior to Mark, has an appearance. Therefore, an appearance tradition predates Mark. Paul's formulation of it: to more than 500 brothers at once (1 Cor 15:4–7), is a Romanism. The number 500 references the Roman decimal system (ref. the *legis actio sacramento*, for example) unlike the Jewish (Egyptian and Near Eastern) sexagesimal system (ref. thirty pieces-of-silver, for example); in both cultures, the first fraction, half, was auspicious.)[60] Therefore, Paul's Romanization presupposes and translates an earlier Jewish appearance tradition.[61]

In Paul, the appearance tradition is gendered as exclusively to men. The *Gospel of Peter*, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all have scenes of exclusively women and exclusively men. All this gender segregation presupposes a reason for it—which is the Jewish law of specifically women witnesses. This body of law required witnessing that the person witnessed is *seen* to be alive or dead, not just disappeared. There is no halakhic empty tomb or standing alone halakhic empty tomb witnesses. The empty tomb is not a women's issue[62] Pharisaic/rabbinic law does not corroborate (lend its imprimatur to) women witnessing just an empty tomb. The empty tomb is important; it is in all four gospels, but its importance is as part of a sequence/evidentiary chain leading to the appearance.

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59   They have to witness the events together, not "this one from here, that one from there" (*b. Mak.* 6b2–3).

60   Simmonds, "Judas and Joseph," 173.

61   Origen observed Paul frequently couches his messages in the cultural milieu of those whom he addresses (*Comm. Jo.* 10.5).

62   Cf. Osiek, "Women," 217.

Witnessing of Jesus dying, buried, and resurrected is obviously dramatically superior and more satisfying than a mere empty tomb. Certainly, one cannot picture Caesar's apotheosis as an empty tomb. Moderns may like the empty tomb, but for the ancients, an empty tomb without an appearance is woefully insufficient.

6. Matthew's Doubting Male Witnesses

Matthew contrasts women's superior versus men's inferior witnessing as a literary foil to emphasize the excellence of the women's testimony. When the women meet Jesus they worship him believing in him (28:9). In inverse parallel, the men do the same when they meet Jesus, however, while the women believed, Jesus' male disciples doubted (28:17). (The phrase can mean "some doubted," a theme enlarged upon in John's figure of doubting Thomas, or it can mean all harbored some doubts.) This believing women/doubting men motif is not coincidental. Parallel episodes with a difference, draw extra attention to/emphasize (*significatio*) the difference, between the women's and men's witness, producing the doublet of believing women versus unbelieving (or less believing) men.

However, Matthew's construction of male doubt is not real but contrived as a literary foil. The men's doubt is sandwiched in a chiasmus ABA between their belief. A: the women told the men the instruction the women received (twice, first from the angel, second from Jesus). The men believe the instructions—because as instructed, they went to Galilee to meet resurrected Jesus. Since they believed the instruction to meet the resurrected Jesus, therefore, they were preconditioned and predisposed to believe in Jesus when they saw him. B: yet meeting Jesus they doubted. A: Immediately following their doubt, they are given the Great Commission, which in context as the end of the gospel suggests they believed and followed it doing as they were commissioned. Thus, the men's doubt is sandwiched between their belief.

A: believe message, go to Galilee.
B: doubt it is him.
A': believe Great Commission.
A and A' (men's belief) equivocate B (men's doubt): in concentric form of balance the men believed. They are evidently called doubters to make the point/literary foil of superior women witnesses.

7. Matthew's Lying Male Witnesses

Matthew sets up a further starker male inferior/female superior witness contrast of lying counter-testifying male witnesses, the guards, who with Pilate's permission, the chief priests and Pharisees post to guard Jesus' tomb. The chief priests and elders (but not including the Pharisees) bribed the guards to testify that Jesus' corpse had been stolen by his disciples while they, the guards, were asleep (Matt 28:12–13). That they were asleep amusingly/ridiculously impeaches them. If they were asleep, they would not have seen what they said they saw. Guards were strictly liable to produce the person or object they were commissioned to guard; failing which, they had to "pay" for the missing prisoner by taking their prisoner's place and suffer his same fate, the *zomamim* principle.[63] Liability was strict. For their failure to guard Jesus' corpse, the guards would have to take Jesus' place in the tomb. No guard would ever admit that he had been sleeping. Not an excuse, a sentry sleeping was an indictment. Thus, Matthew presents an exceptional case where, not only are we to *believe* the testimony of women, but we are to *disbelieve* the competing but false testimony of men, the bribed lying guards.

8. Unarmed Women Defeat Men-At-Arms

The testimony of the women "defeating" the testimony of men may allude to (what may be) the reason why women were not allowed as witnesses—their disqualification from combat—that primordially witnessing was associated with a physical fight, and the ancient notion that competing witnesses challenged each other's truthfulness producing insult, which could be challenged in combat.[64] In medieval times, anyone exempt from fighting could not be a witness. Even youthful robust male clergy forbidden to shed blood could not be witnesses in lay courts—to "prevent the appearance as witnesses of those who could not be compelled to accept the combat."[65]

Indeed, according to Daube, the role of trial by combat/battle in the law of witnessing is reflected in the famous requirement of two witnesses—based upon the understanding that in combat two will defeat one.[66] Normatively, an offended litigant or witness might challenge one witness to fight, but not two together. Daube also points

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[63] Daube, "Lex Talionis," 215 (substitution). In *Antigone*, Creon charges the guard with finding the culprit or facing death. The same rule is alluded to in Acts 16:25–31 and Petronius' Woman of Ephesus story.

[64] Daube, "Transferred," 397; Daube, Witnesses," 411–412; also Katz, "Testimonia ritus Italici," 183–217 (*testis* means both testicle[s] and witness).

[65] Lea, *Superstition*, 101–104; Olson, "Of Enchantment," 109, 120 (women, aged, or crippled could not engage in trail by battle).

[66] Daube, "Transferred," 397.

to the requirement in Deut 19:17 that witnesses "stand up" as related to rising to do battle.[67]

Reflecting the trial by battle motif, in Matthew, in metaphoric martial combat, the women do not just defeat men, but the truly exceptional case—unarmed women defeat men-at-arms.[68] In Mark 16:8, the women cower in fear and amazement, trembling and distracted, they are alarmed. In Luke 24:4–5, the women are fearful and bewildered. Not in Matthew 28:8–10: the women are not bewildered or weak. Initially afraid, but overjoyed, the women are instructed twice (by an angel and subsequently Jesus), "Do not be afraid." Enthusiastically, the women *run* to tell the disciples.

The fear of the women (in Mark and Luke), Matthew transfers to the guards, who are so scared they shook and looked as though dead (28:4).[69] Thus, in a role reversal, the women are stereotypically strong like men; the men are stereotypically weak like women.

Traditionally, a weak person called to testify could require that a champion be provided to fight in their place.[70] Hence, one would expect stereotypically weak women might have a champion to fight for and defend them, but it is the male guards who have a champion to defend them (28:14). Not just bribed, the guards are promised protection/indemnified by the chief priests and elders.[71]

These evident/apparent/seeming allusions to the reason for the disqualification of women's testimony based upon trial by combat reflect a long tradition in antiquity of contrasting weak but amazingly powerful/strong women challenging men-at-arms. The most famous example is Sophocles' *Antigone*, which also involves the burial of a loved one, inept, allegedly bribed male guard-witnesses, and a contest between spiritual and temporal authority, with an outwardly weak but inwardly strong woman battling against guards.

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67   Daube, "Witness," 411–412.
68   The theme is found in Achilles Tatius' *Leucippe and Clitophen* 6.21–22: "Watch a new contest: a single woman competes with all the engines of torture and wins every round. . . I am unarmed, alone, a woman. My one weapon is my freedom. . . If you try to set it on fire, you will not find the fire hot enough." In an ancient biblical context, this theme may be found in the story of Deborah in Judg 4:17–22 in which an obvious sexual role reversal of rape in war, a woman nails an enemy military commander to the floor (*b. Yebam*. 103a4).
69   Setzer, "Excellent Women," 263–264, 266–267.
70   Lea, *Superstition*, 101–104.
71   The indemnity may reference to Roman law, that the priests are acting like Romans. Reference the sophisticated use of indemnities in the area of women's property/inheritance in the Babatha Archives.

9. Lying Men

Finally, on the subject of male witness stereotypes, *gravitas* aside, stretching from the resourceful Odysseus, Greeks had a "merry rogue" tradition that reveled in clever lying and deception.[72] The most (in)famous line in ancient tragedy, Euripides' Hippolytus confesses, "My tongue did swear, not my heart" (649–651). "Greeks to whom an oath is a joke, evidence a plaything" (Cicero, *Flac.* 9–10, 12).[73] Josephus lied to his troops (*J.W. 3.8*). Cicero threw dust in judges' eyes (Quintilian, *Inst.* 2.17.21).

Greeks (Athenians) and Jews, but not Romans, had the legal procedure of the oath to avoid testifying (ἐξωμοσία, *Shevu'as ha' Edus*)—alluded to in Peter's trice-denial of Jesus, that the person called to testify lacks knowledge to testify to. "I don't know what you are talking about" and twice "I do not know the man" (27:70–74). Peter may not have been (fully) culpable (unintentionally he forgot his promise to Jesus—until reminded by the cock's crow, or in Mark, it crowded again). Nonetheless, previously lying three times under oath might detract from Peter acting as the/a percipient witness. Having Mary be a repentant sinner might/would also detract from her credibility.

The most famous male witnesses—and, as *zomemim*, *halakhic* witnesses—are the lecherous elders in the story of Susanna and the Elders, hilariously embellished in the Talmud (*b. Sanh.* 93a3–4). The maleness of the witnesses/elders is emphasized by their gendered sexual crime against a woman and in the bawdy innuendo of Daniel's cross-examination.

10. John Follows Matthew

Turning from Matthew to John. Matthew and John are considered the least alike among the canonical gospels: except in their resurrection scenes.[74] Notice, John does not need a resurrection scene because the crucifixion is so glorified, giving latitude for John's resurrection scene to resemble Matthew's.[75] In both, women (or a woman) meet an angel or angels (Matthew has two women, one angel; John one woman, two angels) and then meet Jesus. Both have angel(s) rather than a (young) man/men (in Mark and Luke). In both, actors repeat an identical phrase, first the angel(s) and then Jesus tell the women—"do not be afraid" in Matthew, "why do you weep" in John. In both, the women seeing/recognizing Jesus, grab (or attempt to grab) ahold of him,

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[72] Parker, *Miasma*, 186; Dillon, "By Gods," 141; Titus 1:12.

[73] Erskine, "Greek Gifts," 33–45.

[74] Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, 137, 147; Barker, *John's Use of Matthew*, 25–26 (Neirynack), 38, 41, 47, 130; Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus*, 247 and n. 196.

[75] Bauckham, "The Gospel of John," 670–674, 685–687; Smith, *John*, 19–31, 212–214, 230–236.

he tells them/her not hold him and instructs them to go and tell his "brothers" a message. Both Matt 28:10 and John 20:17 use the word "brothers"/brethren, only used here in John.[76] In both, the women/woman faithfully, enthusiastically, and convincingly report Jesus' appearance and message. In Matthew, the two women run to tell the disciples; in John, the two men run to the tomb. In Matt 28:13, the guards are bribed to say there was a tomb robbery. In John 20:2, 13, 15, Mary suspects a tomb robbery.

11. Like Matthew, John Alludes to Jewish Law

If, as stated above, by having women witnesses, Matthew invites incredulity/disbelief, by having just one woman witness, John invites still more. Ordinarily, in Pharisaic/rabbinic law, two women witnesses were incomparably better than one (a two women witness rule analogous to the two male witness rule). However, as with Matthew's legal allusions, John seems to reference a celebrated exception in the Pharisaic/rabbinic law of women's witness that allowed for one witness rather than the customary two.

The *Mishnah* and both Talmuds relate that in the Yavneh period, only *one sage* in Eretz Israel, Yehudah ben Bava, permitted women's remarriage based on the *testimony of one witness*. However, visiting Babylon, Akiva received a tradition from Nechemyah of Bet Deli that previously Gamaliel the Elder (Gamaliel I) had allowed women to remarry on the testimony of one witness. In Acts, Gamaliel I defends Jerusalem's Christians (5:34) and taught Paul (22:3).

Akiva discussed the report from Babylonia with Gamaliel II (Gamaliel I's nephew now ascended to his uncle's position), who, delighted, exclaimed now there were *two* authorities (*m. Yev.* 6.7; 16.7; *b. Yev.* 115a3 and n. 18; 122a4–122a6 and nn. 44, 51–58, 122b3). Gamaliel II seems to suggest an analogy between two sages' authority as superior to the authority of one—with the authority of two witnesses as superior to one—humorously in this case supporting the law of *one* witness.

Gamaliel II's more prominent brother-in-law, Eliezer, was, or was thought, a Christian or Christian sympathizer.[77] Gamaliel II and his wife's (Eliezer's sister) haggadic dispute over *women's* inheritance rights (citing Matt 5:17–18 where Jesus endorses the Jewish Law) is the closest match between the Talmud and New Testament (*b. Shab.* 116b).

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76 Schnackenburg, *John*, 319 (comes from a source which agrees with Matthew).
77 Neusner, *Eliezer ben Hyrcanus*, 252–264; Basser – Cohen, *Matthew*, 593. Acts 15:5; 21:20 indicates there were many Pharisees in the church.

12. Mary Conducts an Investigation

 At some stage of Jewish legal development, a line of thought held, allowing the testimony of one witness was a rabbinic dispensation, and one witness would not be believed without her/him having conducted an investigation (*b. Yebam.* 84b4–5 and n. 26; 87b3 and n. 5; 88a; 91a4 and n. 36; 92a1–2 and n. 8; 93b3; 94a4). Mary seems to conduct an investigation as would fulfill this Jewish legal requirement. In a "searching motif,"[78] in a crescendo, Mary consults in ascending order of prominence the two disciples, two angels, and finally, the supposed gardener/Jesus.[79]

Rudolf Bultmann calls John's Mary foolish.[80] Prematurely, without looking into the tomb, she impulsively jumps to a mistaken conclusion that there has been a tomb robbery and persists in her foolishness interrogating the "gardener."[81] However, Mary is ironically prescient. Someone has removed the body, and whom she comes to suspect, confront, and accuse, ironically, the "gardener" did it. However she got there, her search proved productive. The credibility of Mary's witness hinges, not on whether Mary had originally been "foolish" or not, but it fitting within the interstices of *the Law*.

13. Like Matthew, in John, Female Witnessing Is Superior

Like Matthew, in John, Mary's female witnessing is superior to the male witnessing—of Peter, the beloved disciple, and doubting Thomas. The motif of competition in John is found in the footrace between the beloved disciple and Peter. John's Peter has a lesser role than the beloved disciple. Reprimanded by Jesus, doubting Thomas is obviously inferior (21:20).

As between Mary and the beloved disciple, it has been widely believed that John favors the beloved disciple while marginalizing Mary—that the beloved disciple, not Mary, is John's perceptive witness.[82] However, in John, Mary's witness is superior to the beloved disciple's.

At the empty tomb, the beloved disciple "sees and believes" (21:8), but the next verse says he did "not yet know/understand the scripture that Jesus must rise from

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78   Schnackenburg, *John*, 316.
79   Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 1009.
80   Bultmann, *John*, 686. Notice, however, that Mary is completely fearless. Mary assumes a dominant role interrogating. The gardener would have jurisdiction over the garden containing the tomb. Charles Dodd (*Historical Tradition*, 148) perceives a psychological dimension.
81   Schnackenburg, *John*, 308; Bultmann, *John*, 683. On the Old Testament allusions here see Kubiś, "The Creation Theme," 398–400 and especially 402.
82   Maccini, *Testimony*, 232; Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, 9; O'Brien, "Written That You May Believe," 284–302.

the dead" (20:9), which necessarily lessens the value of his seeing and believing.[83] Unlike Mary, the beloved disciple does not see or speak with the angels or Jesus, which are obviously important events for a percipient witness in weighing her testimony. The subjective undisclosed faith of the beloved disciple is unconnected to the action. The beloved disciple does not even witness: he does not report or testify to anyone what he has seen and believed. He simply leaves and goes home (20:10, cf. Luke 24:12). Doubting Thomas at least in the end bears witness. Not reporting/bearing witness, the beloved disciple's witness is clearly inferior to that of Mary *apostolorum apostola*, who does report and is believed. And, her report is heard and believed not just by the disciples but (breaking the literary fourth wall) by us.

One reason the superiority of Mary's testimony in John is obscured is because in novel genre the recognition scene is the literary climax, and John has a most beautiful and arresting recognition scene, with which we associate Mary, so beautiful that we cannot get it out of our minds. However, John's true literary climax is not its recognition scene, as in novels, but Mary's dramatic witnessing/messaging *apostolorum apostola*, "I have seen the Lord." Mary's exclamation is repeated by the disciples, producing an emphasis by repetition, indicating importance (20:18, 25).

14. John Uses Romance Novel Genre

Matthew is the most Jewish of the gospels. John, on the other hand, seems largely directed to a non-Jewish audience.[84] Hence, Matthew's Jewish women witness motif is largely meaningless for John's audience. Nevertheless, following the tradition in Matthew, John evidently wants to indicate that the percipient witness is a woman, and her testimony is credible. To do this, John has to portray Mary in a then contemporary literary genre understandable by a non-Jewish audience—one which contrary to prevailing misogynistic stereotype esteems women as credible. There is only one such genre available, Greek romance novel genre.

Greek romance novel genre is excellent for the purpose because it (1) exalts the status of women giving Mary's witness unique credibility, and like Matthew (2) uses the husband-wife motif, and (3) involves the motif of witnessing that a loved one (typically a spouse or fiancé) thought dead is alive. On the downside, however, Greek romance novel genre is often, perhaps almost inherently, fantastical and fictitious, and therefore for a canonical gospel must be used sparingly, if at all.

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83   Bonney, *Caused to Believe*, 149–150. On the understanding of "scripture" in this verse see Kubiś, "Zechariah 6:12–13," 168–186.

84   Simmonds, "Caiaphas." A major theme in John is that Christianity is not threatening to Rome ("My kingdom is not of this world").

Classical mainland Greek culture was frequently misogynistic. But, Greek novels were later (early Roman period) and not from mainland Greece but from the post-Alexander ex pat Greek diaspora. In these novels, well-born "Greek" women were accorded equal status with their men (above the colonial natives). Not light-minded, novel heroines were brave, intelligent, often educated and literate, heroic, incredibly resourceful, deeply religious, and indomitable. They were also extraordinarily beautiful and romantically desirable (with men just seeing them falling in love with them), but entirely virtuous, anxious/desirous for sex, but only with the one and only man she loves/adores, within the bonds of matrimony.[85]

John's scene is also similar and alludes to the Song of Songs (garden, search, hold).[86] Manifestly, many readers/hearers where and when Matthew and John were written and first received must have thought that Jesus having a fiancé, a romantic partner was unobjectionable and agreed with their prior understanding of Mary's role. But notice, portraying Mary and Jesus as the lovers of Song is insufficient for her witness to be credible. That required making her a stereotypical Greek novel heroine. And, this was done by the unmistakable, most characteristic scene of romance novel genre: non-recognition turning to recognition accompanied by heart-wrenching (tear-jerking) dialogue. Ordinarily, naturalistically, that Mary at first did not recognize Jesus and mistook him for the gardener (prior inconsistency) would weaken Mary's credibility. But, ironically, prior non-recognition is a literary device that identifies her as a novel heroine, which makes her incomparably more credible. In Song, there is no non-recognition. The protagonists are a couple deeply in love, who despite knowing each other so well, yet initially do not recognize each other. Their initial non-recognition is because they think the other has died or permanently disappeared (also absent in Song).

Notice the similarity between John's Jesus-and-Mary's romantic recognition scene and contemporary Chariton's romantic recognition scene in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* (8.1).[87] She: weeping. He: "Don't be frightened lady, whoever you are. You shall have the husband you want." Instantly, recognizing his voice, Callirhoe throws off her face covering, they both cry out: "Chaereas!" "Callirhoe!"

In John, She: weeping. He: "Why do you weep? Whom do you seek?" She: "Sir, If you have carried him off, tell me where, and I will (raise/lift up) take him away." (Alluding to women's weakness, can she believe, a weak woman, she can summon

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85 Reardon, "General Introduction," *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 2 ("Virginity or chastity, at least in the female, is of crucial importance, also fidelity to one's partner").

86 On the use of Song of Songs in the Gospel of John see Cambe, "L'influence," 13–19; Winandy, "Le Cantique," 166–173; Roberts Winsor, *A King is Bound in the Tresses*; McWhirter, *The Bridegroom Messiah*, *passim*, esp. 96–98; Fehribach, *The Women*; van den Eynde, "Love, Strong as Death?," 901–912, esp. 905–906; Beavis, "Reconsidering Mary of Bethany," 287–288; Villeneuve, *Nuptial Symbolism*, 120–189; Kubiś, "The Old Testament Background," 512–514 (on John 19:5).

87 Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 111.

enough strength to carry Jesus' body!?) Evidently overwhelmed by her devotion, Jesus blurts out, "Mary!"[88] Her non-recognition instantly turning to recognition, in unison Mary exclaims (in Hebrew/Aramaic) "Rabbouni" (diminutive, "sweet/beloved teacher," "Master-mine"[89])!

Thus, written in novel romance genre, John's Mary and Jesus are presented stereotypically as deeply in romantic love, bonded together, *promessi sposi*.[90] John has other episodes where Jesus interacts with unexpected familiarity with individual women, the flirtatious sexual innuendo discoursing with the Samaritan woman at the well (4:4–42)[91] and Martha's sister Mary anointing Jesus feet with nard and drying them with her hair (12:3).[92]

Luke's Road to Emmaus story uses novel genre non-recognition/recognition with heart-wrenching dialogue but not of the romantic type. Addressing the *unrecognized* Jesus: "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the events that have transpired?" (24:18). Ironically, it is they who do not know—that he, to whom they speak, knows them best.

15. Husband and Wife Motifs Are Inescapable

Adeline Fehribach points out that John "portrays Mary as the wife of Jesus seeking her husband."[93] Fehribach says Mary represents the "entire faith community." This is a macro level communal mystical-bride motif. It is impossible to ignore the macro communal level. All Hittite-Assyrian form treaties and covenants were predicated on fictive family relationships, father-son, husband-wife, loving brothers. The new covenant, "written on heart" is in husband-wife form (Jer 31:31–33). Origen recognized (*Comm. Matt.* 14.19), probably from discussions with Caesarea's Jewish sages (who understood the influence on Matthew of the Pharisaic/rabbinic abolition of the *sotah*/suspected adulterers ordeal), that Matthew uses the husband-wife motif with Jesus as husband and the Jewish people as wife/suspected adulteress (and

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88   It is sometimes thought that Jesus reveals himself to Mary out of compassion for her tears. But, Jesus' response is to her statement that she will take him away. Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments, *The First Witness of the Resurrection* (June 3, 2016).

89   The diminutive of master/rabbi does not translate well into English, a diminutive poor language.

90   Adeline Fehribach ("The 'Birthday' Bridegroom," 115–118) suggests that the reason John has one woman rather than two is in order for John's non-recognition/recognition scene to more closely follow the standard romance plot of Greek novels.

91   Kot, "Jesus and the Woman," 615–636.

92   Beavis, "Reconsidering," 281–297; Beavis – Kateusz, *Rediscovering the Marys*, *passim*.

93   Fehribach, *The Women*, 146.

Barabbas as suspected paramour).[94] Thus, the communal dimension is unmistakably present in the text (not just later gloss). Jesus' message to Mary "to my Father and to your Father; to my Lord and to your Lord" is the formula of and related to the husband and wife covenantal form, "I shall be your God; you shall be my people," also used by individuals, as in Ruth 1:16, for example. Nor can one ignore the nuptial motifs. Jesus is called and portrayed as the bridegroom.

Just because Jesus is portrayed at macro level, as husband in a communal covenant with the entire people as his wife, does not preclude Jesus also being portrayed at a micro literal level as the individual husband or fiancé of one woman, Mary. Matthew and John both draw on the motif of women witnesses identifying whether a loved one, in the archetypal case her husband, is alive or dead. Matthew's *agunah* and John's novel heroine allusions imply Mary and Jesus were an individual couple, affianced, engaged, committed to each other. Her intimate knowledge of him—romantic knowledge is exceedingly intimate—is what makes her such a reliable witness of him.

Song of Songs (very popular in that day, most associated with Akiva, who owed his success to and adored his wife) was viewed macro as between God and his people while at the same time micro sensually between individuals. Over time, the bride of Song was associated with John's Mary, including by Hippolytus, Gregory the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux, and John of the Cross. Pope John Paul II regarding Song (that John alludes to) points out that both meanings are present, the human, individual, sensual as well as the communal. Because Mary Magdalene was associated with the bride of Song, and the recognition by John Paul II and most modern scholars that Song has a sensual human individual dimension, the same consideration should be given to Mary Magdalene and Jesus. Just as the bride and groom of Song can read as human lovers, Mary and Jesus can read as individual human lovers. The mystical bride can have a flesh and blood human bride counterpart or component. And, Jesus too can be a human sensual bridegroom as well as a spiritual bridegroom. The communal/spiritual and individual/sensual husband and wife motifs are not mutually exclusive but comfortably coexist/are not in conflict and may be synergetic. This, of course, may not be much like Pauline preaching of the inferiority of *sarx*, "flesh" or Origen's exclusively allegorical view of Song. However, we are dealing here with the specific context of exclusively *women* witnessing Jesus' resurrection *on the third-day*.

Augustus and Roma (reference their colossal statues in Herod's harbor Temple at Caesarea, for example) is a contemporary parallel communal husband-wife theme.

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94 Simmonds, "His Blood," 50; Simmonds, "*Sub Rosa*," 747. Matthew has Jesus offer his blood defined as the blood of the covenant and his people unwittingly accept it on that same fateful Passover day. Moses made the Mosaic covenant by putting the blood of the covenant on the people (Exod 24:8). Indeed, the landing of the blood represented the acceptance of blood sacrifices.

At the same time, the imperial cult exalted Augustus' individual wife, Livia, and their family (reference the *Ara Pacis* or Judean coins with her image, for example).

16. Romance Novel Genre Often Seems/Is Fictitious

Since, the romantic love of Greek romance novel genre reasonably approximates the *agunah* husband/wife motif, in the circumstances, John's is a good translation—achieving John's purpose of (for its non-Jewish audience) elevating Mary's credibility. However, Greek novel genre tended to the fantastic, fictitious. Indeed, over time, Christian Greek novels became increasingly fantastic/fictitious, as in, for example, Thecla defended by a lioness in *Acts of Paul and Thecla* or the talking dog and plethora of recognitions in *Ps.-Clem. Hom*. And, novels' elevation of women met with hostility. Tertullian inveighed against Greek novels as leading women to demand leadership roles in the Church, remarking Thecla's preaching and baptizing hardly comports with Paul's command that women not speak at all (*Bapt.* 17).

If novel genre is inherently fictitious, employing it, John risks winning the battle (boosting Mary's credibility) but losing the war (damaging the credibility of Jesus' resurrection). Having women witnesses, already Matthew and (still more) John, invite disbelief (make their gospels seem harmless to Rome) but are rescued and made credible by their hidden transcripts referencing Jewish law. However, using romantic Greek novel genre, John has gone too far and risks being handcuffed a prisoner of genre. Somehow, John must escape quickly.

17. John's Escape—From Novel to Epic

 John escapes by a favorite Johannine literary device—genre bending, jumping from one genre to another, to be successful usually a closely related genre.[95] In this case, Jesus is/was a novel hero; abruptly Jesus becomes instead an epic hero. Novel genre and epic genre are related—in the story of long-lost but returned Odysseus unrecognized by Penelope, for instance.

No longer romantic novel hero, but instead epic hero, in John, Jesus in archetype is Aeneas in Vergil (Hector in Homer) in one of the most iconic scenes in all literature—Aeneas/Jesus telling Dido/Mary not to try to restrain/detain him (hold him

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95   Attridge, "Genre Bending," 3–21, esp. 20 (John plays with generic conventions; makes literary forms do things not natural for them); Larsen, *The Gospel of John*, 13–14, *passim*; Kubiś, "The Literary Form," 121–145.

back, cling to him). Aeneas/Jesus sincerely loves Dido/Mary, and were the choice his own to make, he might/would joyfully remain with her. But, Aeneas/Jesus cannot remain with her because he is duty-bound to complete "the quest"—his divinely fated mission that he committed to.[96] Vergil's Aeneus leaving Dido presented a feminist debate between the positions of male and female.

The phrase μή μου ἅπτου in John 20:17 was (poorly) translated into Latin as *noli me tangere*, in English, "Do not touch me." (Rarely found in translations today.) Some have thought resurrected Jesus was not fully human, but if the resurrected Jesus appearing to Mary is not human, that poses witness credibility/reliability issues. In a stock trope, in Luke 24:40–43, to proves he is human, Jesus eats food, which gods/spirits/angels do not (or rarely) do.[97] Grabbing ahold of someone was thought a reasonably good way to tell whether or not they were just a spirit. From John's allusions to Song, Matthew, and Greek romance novels, we know in John, Mary is in the act of grabbing ahold of Jesus.

John's word ἅπτου ('touch/hold'), only in John here (20:17), has sexual overtones, found, for example, in 1 Cor 7:1, "it is better a man not *touch* a woman." Matthew's parallel uses κρατέω, which does not have a sexual meaning (28:9). Because of the sexual overtones, in ribald humor, John's Latin (not so much the Greek) "do not touch me" can suggest that Jesus is sexually timid/frightened. But, that is impossible because in these verses John portrays Jesus in the stereotypes of romance novel hero and then epic hero, who stereotypically are not squeamish about sex with the heroine, they seek it, and since Jesus is written in these stereotypes, we have no leeway to read him differently. We know stereotypically Jesus desires sexual union with Mary. He only leaves Mary, as Aeneus did Dido, reluctantly because of a higher duty/destiny, to fulfill fate's decree.

Alluding to Vergil, John presents Christianity sympathetically to Rome. Earlier, John alludes to another iconic scene from Vergil—Caiaphas' speech in John is modeled on Juturna's speech in Vergil.[98]

18. Mary *apostolorum apostola* Is in Drama Genre

Epic genre was useful to exit novel genre, but though better, epic genre is still somewhat fictitious and unstable. Jesus going to his father cannot be fully analogized to

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[96]   See, e.g., Šubrt, "Jesus and Aeneas," 10–17. Dido, incidentally, is a widow, who vowed not to remarry, until Cupid shot her.

[97]   In Seneca's *Pumpkinification*, Romulus in heaven is unable to give up his Roman favorite, turnips.

[98]   Simmonds, "Caiaphas," 6–17. In Vergil, Turnus' sister and charioteer; in mythology, raped by Jupiter (Rome), distraught desiring death, Juturna was "compensated" with immortality. Juturna's inverse parallel, Palinurus, the helmsman/coxswain of Aenas' ship, became compared to Jesus.

Aeneus sailing for Italy because, instead of going to his father right away (sailing for Italy), Jesus makes several more earthly appearances, including one that evening. Also, Mary cannot be fully analogized to spurned, "abandoned woman" Dido—because like an Aeneus figure (and un-like a Dido figure) Mary is commissioned for great things.[99] So John jumps genres again, this time to classical Greek drama genre, related to epic another easy transition. Thus, Mary *apostolorum apostola* is not written in (fictitious) novel or epic genre. "I have seen the Lord!" is a classical Greek drama messenger speech (extremely common and highly effective) by an eye-witness, first-person narrator, in historical present, reliving a memory as experienced first-hand, conveying an air of vivid realism far better than simple narration.[100] The messenger replaces the narrator. Messenger speeches often concerned whether persons were alive or dead. Messenger speech drama genre removes us from the fiction danger, and after Mary *apostolorum apostola*, John transitions from messenger speech to reliable *bios* genre narration that we conventionally expect for the canonical gospels.

Classical dramatic allusions were highly regarded and characteristic of the Second Sophistic. John previously used a classical allusion in the exchange between Jesus and Pilate that evokes the exchange between Dionysos and Pentheus in Euripides' *Bacchae* (Origen, *Cels.* 2.33–34).[101] *Bacchae* also has one of antiquity's foremost messenger speeches (recounting Pentheus' death). Matthew also uses a classical allusion in its Pilate scene.

Conclusion

There has been an enduring mystery why in Matthew and John so important a function as the witnessing of Jesus' resurrection on the crucial third-day is filled by women and exclusively women, when, as a rule, women were not allowed as witnesses or were considered inferior as witnesses to men. By fitting within a vaunted exception of Pharisaic/rabbinic law, acting like an enormous band shell, *the Law* echoes, amplifies, radiates, corroborates, endorses, and lends its imprimatur to their/ her testimony, making it better than had the same testimony come from men or any

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99 Brown, "Roles of Women," 693 and n. 14 (citing Rabanus Maurus); Vatican decree *The First Witness of the Resurrection* (also citing Rabanus Maurus). The greatest of the great Carolingian scholars, Rabanus Maurus was sympathetic to Judaism and consulted with the Jewish scholars of Mainz, which had a leading yeshiva. Saltman, "Rabanus Maurus," 45–46. Consulting with the Jewish sages Rabanus Maurus is like Origen, who gaining invaluable insights into the meaning of New Testament texts, such as, pertinent here, the husband-wife motif.

100 De Jong, *Narrative in Drama*, passim.

101 Simmonds, "His Blood," 61–62.

combination of both men and women. The excellence of women's testimony is contrasted in literary foils with doubting or silent male disciples and lying bribed guards.

Remarkably, John alludes to the same, very specific, recondite Pharisaic/rabbinic oral law of women witnesses as Matthew, and like Matthew, contrasts Mary's superior female witnessing with the inferior male witnessing of Peter, Thomas, and the beloved disciple. Because the Jewish legal motif was hardly understandable for a non-Jewish audience, John initially "translates"/presents Matthew's Jewish *agunah* witness theme in Greek romance novel genre.

Stereotypically, uniformly, novel heroines were sexually virtuous. Portrayed in Greek romance novel genre, necessarily John's Mary has the stereotypical attributes of novel heroines. She is highly physically desirable and desired, but super sexually virtuous. Since she is written in stereotype, we have no leeway to view her otherwise. Certainly Mary was not conceivably a former sexual sinner. Novel heroines never are. A novel then an epic hero, Jesus is equally keen for Mary, but like Aeneus and other epic heroes, Jesus must complete the quest. John then goes to messenger speech drama genre for Mary *apostolorum apostola*.

The Pharisaic/rabbinic women witness tradition was an appearance not a disappearance/empty tomb tradition. Paul has a Romanized appearance tradition, apparently modeled on an earlier Jewish appearance tradition. Hence, an appearance tradition preceded Mark's empty tomb. Moreover, Mark's redundant legalistic/formalistic repetitions of the same women witness in sequential steps of witnessing: death, burial, and empty tomb, and the double reference to meeting resurrected Jesus in Galilee, imply a post-text Markan appearance. Only as part of an overall *appearance* story does the female gender of the witnesses vouch for their credibility.

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Verbum Vitae

Eremitic Life Formation in the Light of the Statutes of Tarragona and Regensburg and the Indications of the Polish Bishops' Conference

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Abstract: The article presents the issue of formation for hermits, which is currently experiencing a specific heyday in the Church. Recently, more and more people have chosen one of the forms of individual consecrated life as their vocation path. Therefore, the life of the hermit is very popular. In order to take up this specific path of life, one needs an appropriate formation that will allow the future hermit to be correctly formed. In the article, the synthesis contains three selected documents: *Hermit Life in the Tarragona Archdiocese. Statutes*; *The Basic Order of Hermit Life in the Diocese of Regensburg* and *The State of Hermits. Auxiliary Materials for the Church in Poland* and an appendix to this document: *Selected Pastoral Guidelines for Consecrated Hermits*, which have a valuable full view of formation for this form of consecrated life. These documents are not only to be understood through their application in Can. 603 of the *CCL*, the spiritual and legal elements, but also unique elements inscribed in the history and spirituality of a given region, are indicated, which can serve the entire community of the Church and constitute a valuable source of the exchange of experiences on the subject of formation.

Keywords: hermit, formation, consecrated life

One of the sayings of the Desert Fathers is, "The beginning of salvation is to know oneself."[1] Self-knowledge, the knowledge of our strengths and weaknesses, is an important aspect of life. Self-knowledge empowers us to make decisions, ensuring our development in harmony with ourselves. Human life is a series of choices. Every day we make minor or major decisions that determine our existence. Therefore, choosing a way of life, a vocation with which man can fully realize himself is of great significance. Preparatory formation paves the way for pursuing a vocation, especially for religious life. Beata Zarzycka believes, "The aim of formation is to develop a higher quality of religious life and the maturity of personality."[2] Good formation makes the one who has been called aware of the specifics of the life taken up and the role in the Church.

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[1] *Apoftegmaty*, 226. It is a saying of Abba Evagrius; the Polish text reads, "Początkiem zbawienia jest poznanie siebie samego"; cf. "To go against self is the beginning of salvation" in *The Desert Fathers*, 153.

[2] Zarzycka, *Osobowość*, 22.

The Second Vatican Council triggered a growing interest in individual forms of consecrated – also eremitic – life. The Church seriously concerns herself with the formation of hermits. As for individual forms of consecrated life, each diocese offers a different understanding and implementation, not excluding the elements characteristic of the eremitic identity defined in Can. 603 of the Code of Canon Law. Dioceses or whole countries can adopt formation statutes. In this article, I wish to present an overview of the formation of hermit life in the light of three selected documents: *Hermit Life in the Archdiocese of Tarragona. Statutes*[3] published on January 10, 2006, by the then Archbishop of Tarragona, Jaume Pujol Balcells; *Grundordnung eremitischen Lebens im Bistum Regensburg* [Basic Rules for Hermit Life in the Diocese of Regensburg] published *ad experimentum* on January 17, 2008, by order of the then Bishop of Regensburg, Gerhard Ludwig Müller,[4] and a document approved by the Polish Bishops' Conference: *Stan pustelnic i pustelników. Materiały pomocnicze dla Kościoła w Polsce* [The State of Hermits. Auxiliary Materials for the Church in Poland] and an appendix to this document by Rev. Henryk Śmiarowski: *Niektóre wskazania duszpasterskie dotyczące konsekrowanych pustelników i pustelnic* [Selected Pastoral Guidelines Concerning Consecrated Hermits]. The indicated documents provide a better understanding of what this formation should look like and what stages it should consist of, which cannot be omitted when admitting the candidate to the eremitic life. The article aims to synthesize the most important legal and spiritual elements (requirements, formation stages, and the diocesan bishop's role), allowing us to see the specificity of formation for this form of consecrated life. Thanks to them, we will be able to discover the importance of proper formation for future hermits fully.

1. Requirements

In approaching the topic of eremitic formation, at the outset, it is necessary to indicate the requirements that the candidate must meet to apply for starting proper formation. The documents from Poland and Germany include the greatest number of requirements, as opposed to the Statutes of Tarragona, with far fewer and less precise requirements. In terms of human requirements, the candidate for the eremitic life must

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[3]   The document comes from my private archives and was given to me by courtesy of the Archdiocese of Tarragona in two language versions: Catalan and English.

[4]   The document comes from my private archive and was given to me in the original language (German) courtesy of the Diocese of Regensburg. All passages of this document given in English are by Marcin Połomski. The document has not been officially approved in the Diocese of Regensburg (although it still serves as an auxiliary material), but it deserves attention due to its rich content.

be a member of the Roman Catholic Church.[5] This is emphasized in Polish and German statutes. The candidate should be at least 35 years of age, and the German document even provides an age limit of 50 years. Of course, dioceses have the right to "set their own age limits."[6] The candidate must be in good health, both physically and mentally. The future hermit should be a sexually integrated person, steadfast in work, and able to cope with emotions and problems. Life in the desert is not an easy path; it requires of the hermit a great and constant work on himself, "perseverance in spite of difficulties and solitude."[7] Therefore, it is crucial for the person concerned to be examined by a psychologist and a physician and submit a relevant certificate. The Statutes of Regensburg point out another important aspect, "A person who is in any way addicted, whether by drugs, alcohol, or any other substance, may not be admitted to start formation."[8] The candidate must also be single, although members of an institute of consecrated life or a society of apostolic life, as all three documents insist, are not excluded.[9] The consent of the competent superior is then required. The Polish guidelines state only that divorced persons may also become hermits, but only with an appropriate dispensation from the diocesan bishop and under certain conditions, "the other party does not claim marital rights, either in civil or canon law, and the children have reached full legal capacity and are independent."[10] Anyone interested in taking up the eremitic life should also have their financial affairs in order since the hermit is required to maintain the hermitage according to the tradition of the Desert Fathers. The candidate must therefore indicate the type of work that will ensure their subsistence and the ownership of the hermitage – whether it belongs to the hermit, the diocese, or other natural or legal persons. It is also vital to settle social obligations (e.g., health and pension contributions). According to the Tarragona document, the bishop should discuss this matter with the hermit making sure that the commitments undertaken are not burdensome for anyone.[11] The candidate should also submit a written statement from the parish priest, spiritual director, or someone who knows them well and can provide the necessary facts about their spiritual life.

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5   The Code of the Eastern Churches promulgated in 1990 distinguishes between two forms of eremitic life. In the light of Can. 481, the first one concerns, a hermit who "is a member of a monastery *sui iuris* who has given himself or herself totally into heavenly contemplation and who is totally separated from people and the world." In the Eastern Church, this means a hermit in the full sense of the word. However, according to Can. 570, "Particular law can establish other kinds of ascetics who imitate eremitical life, belonging or not to an institute of consecrated life" (*CCEO*).

6   *Stan pustelnic*, 2.

7   Müller, *Grundordnung*, 20.

8   Müller, *Grundordnung*, 20.

9   Looking at the experience of the Church in Poland, Spain, and Germany, this phenomenon is quite common. For example, most Polish hermits were previously members of institutes of consecrated life and even diocesan priests.

10   *Stan pustelnic*, 2.

11   Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 9.

Invariably, the spiritual requirements remain crucial. The documents often bring the candidate's motivation into focus, providing a number of obstacles that do not fit into the spirituality of the desert, with the candidate's attitude to the world coming to the fore. The hermitage cannot be an escape from the world, people, and responsibility. The hermit is not a fugitive who despises their neighbors and hates the whole world. Although living in the world, the hermit is not of the world and, with their prayer, stands at the heart of the Church,[12] surrounding it with a heart full of love, understanding, and wisdom acquired precisely in the experience of the desert. "Through prayer, the future hermit shares the sufferings of the People of God and announces the coming of the Kingdom of God with their silent preaching."[13] The eremitic life, as the Tarragona document interestingly puts it, is not a temporary cure for people who are lost, immature, unstable, or dissatisfied with life.[14] It is a call from the Lord Himself who calls a man to this specific form of consecrated life. The candidate should have inner peace and freedom because "All men seek peace first of all with themselves. That is necessary because we do not naturally find rest even in our own being. We have to learn to commune with ourselves before we can communicate with other men and with God. A man who is not at peace with himself necessarily projects his interior fighting into the society of those he lives with, and spreads a contagion of conflict all around him."[15] Another obstacle may be spiritual pride, haughtiness, or the inability to accept the authority of another person. The candidate should also not be motivated by the desire for an easy and average way of life, only outwardly poor and lonely, or the desire to stand out in society. It is essential to verify that the person concerned does not have a romantic vision of life that does not in any way fit in with eremitic spirituality. The candidate must remember that the only motivation for going into the desert should be Christ Himself and the desire to follow Him perfectly in silence, solitude, and prayer. The candidate interested in formation for the eremitic life should love God above all else and embody piety, deep prayer and devotion to the liturgical life, and public involvement in the life of the Church. The candidate must go to confession regularly, participate daily in the Eucharist, read the Scriptures, and recite the Liturgy of the Hours. All this should testify to the spiritual maturity of the candidate, immersed in contemplative prayer, silence, solitude, the austerity of life, poverty, and chastity. The requirements are of great importance because the eremitic life remains a specific form of consecrated life; it is difficult and demanding but also extremely beautiful, inscribed in the centuries-old tradition of the Church. These demands should discourage any pseudo-hermits.[16]

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12   Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 3.
13   Müller, *Grundordnung*, 20–21.
14   Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 7.
15   Merton, *No Man*, 121.
16   Of course, the Church allows free or independent hermits. This is clearly expressed by Can. 920 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, "Without always professing the three evangelical counsels publicly,

2. Initial Formation

The candidate, having collected the necessary documents, submits them along with a written request, a curriculum vitae,[17] and the baptismal and confirmation certificates to the diocesan bishop or his delegate.[18] Next, the documents are reviewed, and the candidate is interviewed. Afterward, the bishop decides to accept or reject the application. If the application is accepted, the initial formation begins. This often consists of two stages, although each country has its specific characteristics. For example, in the Diocese of Regensburg, the initial formation is divided into three stages. In the first stage, the candidate is placed in a chosen monastery to test their vocation. "This stage serves as an introduction to the consecrated life and may use elements of the religious postulancy with the necessary modifications."[19] The stay in the monastery should not last one year; it can be one or three months. This practice is especially important for lay people with no previous experience of consecrated life. This stage seems very reasonable in the whole process of formation since it allows the candidate to learn the richness of the consecrated life in the community, drawing from the experience of monks and nuns. In Poland, this stage is not included, but it is part of the first stage of formation in the Archdiocese of Tarragona; however, it is not separated into separate stages. During their stay with the religious order, the candidates deepen their theological knowledge and form themselves in ascetic practices and prayer. Of course, this stage can take place outside the monastery. The first stage of initial formation in the Archdiocese of Tarragona and Poland is very similar. It lasts three years,[20] takes place outside the hermitage, and is guided by the diocesan bishop or his delegate. During this time, the candidates stay in their own environment and

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hermits 'devote their life to the praise of God and salvation of the world through a stricter separation from the world, the silence of solitude and assiduous prayer and penance.'" The eremitic life, however, does not then take on a canonical form and therefore has no legal status. Nowadays, there are many such hermits, but unfortunately, in most cases, they arouse controversy and ambiguity, and the Church does not approve of their activity. For example, Poland has recently seen two such cases in the diocese of Czestochowa: the activities of Sr. Bruna of Mary and Rev. Daniel Galus from the hermitage in Czatachowa were denied the approval of the Church.

17   The Polish document provides detailed information on what should be included in the curriculum vitae. In addition to personal information, the document should include a biography with family relationships, events that have strongly influenced the candidate (e.g., the death of a loved one), and information on how the candidate lives now and how they envision their life in a few years. Also, the guidelines recommend including information related to their spiritual and sacramental life, theological education, and spiritual goals. The candidates must also describe their health, strengths of character, and attitudes towards family, friends, and the world. It is, of course, essential to refer to the eremitic life itself, the motivation for taking up this vocation, the vision of life, and financial independence.

18   This is the most common practice. The bishop appoints a delegate who, in his name, is responsible for the eremitic life in the diocese concerned. The Archdioceses of Tarragona and Regensburg, as well as most dioceses in Poland, have such delegates.

19   Müller, *Grundordnung*, 22.

20   In Poland, it can be extended to five years; the first stage applies only to the lay faithful.

undertake intellectual, psychological, and spiritual formation. In the intellectual formation, it is very important to know the spirituality of the Desert Fathers, the history of eremitic and monastic life, Sacred Scripture, theology, the various schools of spirituality, and "the documents of the Magisterium of the universal and particular Church."[21] The intellectual formation is naturally adapted to the candidate's knowledge and experience. Special attention is paid to the person's psychological formation, "If one runs away from the world and one's neighbors, one cannot run away from oneself. In the face of natural horizons and in the limited field of action, one's own 'I' emerges. It often becomes restless and especially imposes itself on the mental consciousness. Inactivity is annoying. Loneliness and silence increase distraction. The movements of the soul and their powers, thoughts, images, feelings, and impressions awaken quickly, and impose themselves with such insistent and sometimes even painful sharpness that they almost obscure the supernatural realities which the soul expects to contemplate in itself and in God. The soul, while in the desert to find God, often finds only itself."[22] The hermit must be mentally strong, balanced, and able to cope with extreme emotions, silence, and solitude. This formation is critical because the hermits must not concentrate on themselves but on God. Hence, at this stage, the care of an experienced and wise spiritual director is a must, as both documents emphasize. The Archdiocese of Tarragona also points out that it is helpful to meet with hermits at this stage to draw on the richness of their life in the desert. The spiritual formation of the candidates should deepen their prayer life and be a time of listening to the voice of God in silence and solitude. The candidate should attend the Eucharist daily and often participate in the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. At this stage, the candidate should also find a suitable place to lead the eremitic life; the hermit, however, may also live in a city.[23] During this stage of formation, regular meetings with the bishop or his delegate are essential in order to help the hermit discern their vocation. The meetings should take place in a fraternal atmosphere, facilitating sharing of experiences and insights. This stage is different in the Diocese of Regensburg – after the time spent in the monastery, the candidate attempts to live in the hermitage, in solitude, doing work that would not drown out their chosen way of life. The introduction of the candidate to the hermitage should be a modest ceremony without the participation of the faithful. It should "begin with a solemn celebration of Vespers, after which the would-be hermit, assisted by the local parish priest, will be led into the hermitage." This stage ends with a temporary profession for a period of three years.

After the appropriate education and discernment in Poland and Tarragona, the second stage of initial formation takes place: an attempt to live in the desert.

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21 Śmiarowski, *Niektóre wskazania*, 5.
22 Maria Eugeniusz, *Chcę widzieć Boga*, 419.
23 This practice is very popular in Germany (Leenen, *Współcześni pustelnicy*).

In Poland, this lasts five years,[24] while in the Archdiocese of Tarragona, it usually lasts three years. In Poland, the vows are renewed every year for five years, in Tarragona for three years, and in Regensburg for three years. The second stage in Poland and in the Archdiocese of Tarragona is the same as the third stage of initial formation in the Diocese of Regensburg. In the second phase, the hermit has the task of creating a rule of life to follow. It should take into consideration the elements of eremitic identity contained in Can. 603 (1) of the *CCL*, "In addition to institutes of consecrated life, the Church recognizes the eremitic or anchoritic life by which the Christian faithful devote their life to the praise of God and the salvation of the world through a stricter withdrawal from the world, the silence of solitude, and assiduous prayer and penance." The hermit must indicate how they personally understand these elements. The rule may also draw inspiration from the richness of other religious rules or from other writings on spirituality. Prayer should occupy an important place in the rule since the hermit turns the whole day into prayer.[25] The rule should specify the time given to prayer, the types of prayer, and the ascetic practices to be undertaken. The rule must also define how the three evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience are to be pursued. Additionally, since the hermit earns their living and is not dependent on the diocese or parish, the hermit needs to specify the type of work, the source of subsistence, and the ownership of the hermitage. The rule must also define the hermit's contacts with the world, family, and friends. The hermit should indicate when and for what reason they will leave the hermitage, whether they will use the telephone or the Internet. Furthermore, hermits may receive people who want spiritual advice, which should also be specified. The rule must include a reference to the relationship between the diocesan bishop and a spiritual director; it must regulate the time for rest. The hermit should attach to the rule a detailed daily schedule, which may change with the liturgical periods of the Church. The diocesan bishop approves the rule.

In the second stage of initial formation, the hermit enters a deepened life in the desert, experiencing the hardships and everyday activities of this form of life. At this stage, the hermit may still resign from this way of life, which should be the fruit of long reflection and discussion with the spiritual director and the bishop. A written request should be then submitted to the bishop. Resignation can also be made after perpetual profession; in this case, a dispensation is needed. Finally, the bishop may expel the hermit if the latter has seriously infringed on the beliefs of the Church or their vocation of the eremitic state.[26]

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24 It can be shortened to four years.
25 Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 4.
26 A hermit may also be removed for committing offenses against life, liberty, and the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, as mentioned in canons 1397, 1398, and 1395 of the Code of Canon Law.

3. Perpetual Profession

The stages of initial formation culminate in the solemn perpetual profession in the hands of the diocesan bishop. Therefore, the eremitic life is subject to legal norms, as indicated in Can. 603 (2) of the *CCL*, "A hermit is recognized by law as one dedicated to God in consecrated life if he or she publicly professes in the hands of the diocesan bishop the three evangelical counsels, confirmed by vow or another sacred bond, and observes a proper program of living under his direction." The profession should take place in a cathedral, as the Polish and German documents indicate, or in a parish church where the hermitage is located, as the Spanish statutes emphasize. Both cases are justified since the eremitic life is an event for the entire local Church community. Hence the perpetual vows can occur in a cathedral or other important church in the diocese. On the other hand, the vows made in the parish where the hermit lives emphasize their bond with that local community. All the documents also permit perpetual profession to occur in the hermitage itself. The Statutes of Regensburg and Tarragona do not specify the rites or wording of the hermitic profession, while the documents from Poland provide very valuable information in this regard. The hermits draft the vows themselves, which are to be approved by the bishop. They should be written in the first person and begin with an invocation of God. The hermit should include a reference to their rule of life, define the time of the profession (temporary/perpetual), "ask for the bishop of the diocese to accept the profession, ask for the bishop's blessing for their ministry in the Church, include the place and date of his profession."[27] If the hermits wish, they may also invoke their patron saints. The vows should be handwritten, with the signature of the hermit, the diocesan bishop, and two witnesses. As all documents indicate, the hermits may wear an appropriate monastic attire,[28] which will testify to their vocation, and use the abbreviation OVE (*ordo vitae eremiticae*) after their names.

4. Continuous Formation

The aforementioned documents do not devote much space to continuing formation, even though it is of utmost importance. They only state that "the hermit is obliged to continue their spiritual and intellectual (theological) formation until the end of their life"[29] as indicated by all three statutes. The perpetual profession does not end the hermit's formation because the whole Christian life should be devoted to striving

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27 Śmiarowski, *Niektóre wskazania*, 7.
28 However, it is not a religious habit.
29 *Stan pustelnic*, 6.

for holiness and constant development. With all their strength, the Desert Fathers emphasized that temptation must be expected till the last breath.[30] Therefore, it is important to be constantly vigilant and to control the body, thoughts, and desires. This is a difficult challenge because the desert is, above all, a decision of the heart. "Many solitaries living in the desert have been lost because they lived like people in the world. It is better to live in a crowd and want to live a solitary life than to live in solitude and long all the time for company."[31] Continuous work on oneself, however painful and difficult it may be, is the means to a deeper surrender to Christ. As Thomas Merton wrote, "We cannot be ourselves unless we know ourselves. But self-knowledge is impossible when thoughtless and automatic activity keeps our souls in confusion."[32] The work on oneself, therefore, should be well thought out, under the watchful eye of a spiritual director and a constant confessor. The hermits must remember that they have entrusted their entire life to God, He is their Friend and Master. Only by constantly looking at Christ will the hermit be able to properly perform their vocation and love God with "an undivided heart" (*VC* 21). The continuous formation aims at deepening the inner life and finding in the experience of the desert the glory of Jesus Crucified and Risen (*CCC* 921). It should include the constant reading of Sacred Scriptures, the documents of the Magisterium, the works of the saints, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Everyday work and keeping the hermitage tidy and in good order, which teaches humility, patience, and simplicity, are also essential for continuous development. All these aspects are also crucial for maintaining psychophysical balance. Permanent formation should also include the psychological one. As Andrzej Muszala points out, "Loneliness brings with it certain dangers. A woman is affected by it slightly differently than a man."[33] Women hermits should pay attention to their sphere of feelings, emotions, and the experience of the hormonal cycle. On the other hand, men must emphasize putting the sexual sphere in order or not falling into idleness and sloppiness. This does not change the fact that the indicated aspects, although specific to a particular group, may apply to any gender. For example, controlling one's sexuality is challenging for both women and men. Hermits should always retain inner freedom.

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30   *The Desert Fathers*, 148; *Apoftegmaty*, 131. "Anthony said to Poemen, 'Our great work is to lay the blame for our sins before God, and to expect to be tempted to our last breath.'"
31   *The Desert Fathers*, 10; *Apoftegmaty*, 473. Amma Syncletica.
32   Merton, *No Man*, 125.
33   Muszala, "Formacja do życia pustelniczego," 6.

5. The Role of the Diocesan Bishop

The diocesan bishop plays an important role in the whole process of eremitic life formation. The mentioned statutes bring the duties of the bishop into focus, as well as the bishop's responsibility for the proper development of eremitic life in his diocese. A hermitic vocation is a specific form because it enjoys great autonomy and freedom. The hermit has an influence over many aspects of the formation itself or of later life. However, "by the power of his authority, the bishop helps to recognize the authenticity of the vocation and to discern it carefully."[34] The diocesan bishop, it must be noted, remains the legitimate superior of the hermit. The bishop discerns the candidate's vocation to the eremitic life, supervises their formation, approves their rule of life, and allows and takes the vows. The hermit is obliged to meet regularly with the bishop; the meetings should be conducted in a friendly atmosphere and offer an opportunity to share experiences and mutual support. The hermit is also obliged to submit annual reports and accounts of managing the hermitage and financial matters to the bishop. As the Statutes of Tarragona state, this is important to discern whether poverty is practiced in the proper evangelical spirit.[35] The documents also state that the hermit cannot change the place of residence without the bishop's permission. The bishop's role in the eremitic life should spring from the spirit of paternal concern[36] and should also be exercised in this way.

Conclusions

The above analysis of the documents issued in Poland, Tarragona, and Regensburg clearly shows what the hermit life formation should look like and what elements cannot be omitted from it. First, it is important to set the appropriate requirements for the candidates, which are imposed by the specifics of this life. The requirements, whether purely human or spiritual, allow for the full recognition of the candidate, which will be valuable not only for those responsible for formation in the diocese but also for the person concerned. The main place here is, of course, the motivation guided by the aspirants because at the beginning of the formation, it can be determined whether a given person is actually called to be a hermit or whether their decision is only a misguided attempt to escape from the world, oneself and the desire to lead a comfortable life devoid of the spirit of the desert. Carrying out the next stages of formation, up to the perpetual profession, as shown in the presented documents,

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34   Müller, *Grundordnung*, 19.
35   Balcells, *Hermit Life*, 9.
36   *Stan pustelnic*, 5.

is a highly tedious and lengthy process that takes many years. What is needed here is extraordinary prudence and patience so that these indicated stages run in a spirit of sacrifice, prayer, growth in faith, and confirmation in the undertaken path. It must be remembered that a great responsibility rests with the diocesan bishops. They must be the promoters as well as the guardians of this individual form of consecrated life. Many dioceses still lack the relevant statutes and aids that are valuable to bishops. Hence, it is worthwhile to produce more documents helping bishops discern the life of a hermit in an appropriate understanding of its spirituality and role in the Church. It must not be forgotten that this responsibility also rests on the hermits themselves because the formation of hermit life is essential in order to be able to fully discover the beauty and phenomenon of the life that they have chosen. "Therefore, this discovery of ourselves is always a losing of ourselves – a death and a resurrection […] The discovery of ourselves in God, and of God in ourselves, by a charity that also finds all other men in God with ourselves [...] is the realization that 'I live now not I but Christ liveth in me.'"[37] This is what formation in eremitic life is supposed to achieve. The hermits come to self-knowledge in order to lose themselves, to die every day for everything that is not God. In this total *kenosis*, the hermits will be able to give themselves fully to Him whom they loved above all things. The hermits are to rediscover this truth every day. Finally, it is worth taking a closer look at the document recently published by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life: *La forma di vita eremitica nella Chiesa particolore. Ponam in deserto viam (Is 43, 19). Orientamenti*. The indications given by the Congregation should be incorporated into the above-mentioned statutes and adapted to them.

Translated by Monika Szela

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37   Merton, *No Man*, XV.

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Verbum
Vitae

Conversion in the Fourth Gospel

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Abstract: The essence of the proclamation of the Good News is a call to conversion, which seems absent from the Fourth Gospel due to the lack of any direct reference. The biblical idea of conversion is first expressed there by a call to believe in Jesus as the Son of God; then by the repeated motif of coming out of darkness into the light, approaching and discovering (accepting) the truth; being born of God and the Spirit, approaching Jesus, testifying about him, accepting and following him, and finally glorifying God. This study aims to present this multi-faceted process, whose framework is outlined by John, first in the prologue to his Gospel and then developed in the narrative. The same order is applied in the individual stages of this analysis employing a synchronic approach, which enables the readers to derive the edifying call to turn to Jesus and follow him to gain eternal life from the final, i.e., canonical, version of John's text.

Keywords: conversion, faith, the Fourth Gospel, Jesus Christ, John

Contrary to the Synoptic Gospels, the Fourth Gospel is the only one that does not include a direct call to conversion. Nor does it contain such terms as μεταμέλομαι (to regret), μετανοέω (to change your mind),[1] or μετάνοια (a change of mind), which express this biblical idea. Despite the insufficiencies indicated, John's text does not omit the subject of conversion, which has not been explored in detail until today.[2]

In the Fourth Gospel, the idea of conversion is expressed by a call to have faith in God's Son, to turn to Him, and to imitate Him.[3] The use of the verbs πιστεύω (to believe)[4] and στρέφω (to turn away)[5] in John's work implies a change of the approach

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[1]   The verbs used in the LXX correspond to Hebrew נחם (to change an intention, to regret). More on the frequency and meaning of the aforementioned terms in the New Testament can be found in Tosato, "Per una revisione," 3–45.

[2]   The unsatisfactory results of studies into the concept of conversion in John's Gospel were mentioned by Despotis, "From Conversion," 99, although the subject had been dealt with before by Mollat, "Ils regarderont Celui," 95–114; Cothenet, "La conversion dans le IVᵉ Évangile," 55–71; Witherup, *Conversion*, 74–87; Cothenet, *Exégèse et liturgie*, 143–159; Ramsey Michaels, "Baptism and Conversion," 136–156; Roberts Gaventa, *From Darkness to Light*, 130–138; Peace, *Conversion*, 353; Malina, "Zagadnienia etyczne," 296–313; and Despotis, "Exploring a Common Background," 105–144.

[3]   Cf. Malina, "Zagadnienia etyczne," 303.

[4]   The noun πίστις (faith) does not feature at all in the Gospel of John. On the contrary, in the Gospel of Mark, a call to have faith is preceded by a clear indication that the recipients of the Good News should change their mind: μετανοεῖτε καὶ πιστεύετε ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ (1:15).

[5]   In the LXX, this term (along with its derivatives) usually corresponds to the Hebrew verb שוב. Cf. Tosato, "Per una revisione," 13, n. 15.

and actions expressed using other terms than mentioned above. This fact, which enables the extension of the study perspective, thus determines the purpose of this analysis to explore the expression of the idea of conversion in the Fourth Gospel along with its Old Testament context of turning to God. The program-like nature of John's prologue, compared with the narrative and speeches included in it,[6] justifies the primacy of the abovementioned text in the analysis. Another subject of the study is the pericopes of the Fourth Gospel, in which the testimony revealing the identity of Jesus,[7] introduced in the hymn about God's Word, encourages its addressees to believe in God's Son and evokes their positive response or opens up the prospect of change, indicating the conditions required for it to happen and last.

1. John's Prologue and the Biblical Concept of Conversion

John's prologue about the Word plays a key role in introducing and developing the subject of conversion in the Fourth Gospel. The image of life (ζωή) presented there is the light (φῶς) of people shining in darkness (σκοτία) and not overcome by it. Based on an identical contrast, it develops the biblical vision of the struggle between good and evil and the ability to overcome it thanks to God's intervention, turning to Him following the example set by the righteous and accepting God's wisdom.

According to the Old Testament, God is not only the creator of light (Gen 1:3), separating it from darkness (1:4), but also the One that – as stated in Ps 107[106]:14 – brings his people forth from darkness and the shadow of death, i.e., slavery. Although the text does not say that liberation leads to light, the psalmist's use of *hendiadys* and, above all, the verb "to bring out" leads us to assume – under the biblical dichotomy – that this is the purpose of Israel's historical journey. Divine intervention changes not only the living conditions of the people but also affects their spiritual life. The decisions made as part of it, confirmed by the preservation of the covenant and the change of direction, determine to a significant extent the further development and prosperity of the people (Neh 1:5; Ps 119[118]:1–3; Sir 15:15–17). However, faithfulness to the covenant made with God is, above all, characteristic of a just man's life, embodied by the predecessor of Jesus in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel.

In the spiritual profile outlined by the fourth Evangelist, his mission is entirely subjugated to the task of instilling faith in the addressees of the testimony to the light (1:7). The appearance of Jesus' predecessor on the scene of salvation events

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6   Cf. Cothenet, *La chaîne des témoins*, 20; Kim, "The Literary and Theological Significance," 424.
7   Numerous publications dedicated to the testimony in the Fourth Gospel include Hindley, "Witness in the Fourth Gospel," 319–337; Boice, *Witness and Revelation*; Beutler, *Martyria*; La Potterie, "El concepto de testimonio," 269–298; Trites, *New Testament*; Simpson, "Testimony in John's Gospel," 101–118; Ledwoń, *Świadectwo Ojca*.

is a reference to the activity of the biblical figure of the righteous arising as light to dawn for the upright (Ps 112[111]:4). It needs to be noted that despite the apparent dependence on light, John has his own identity. In the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, it is expressed by being sent from God (1:6) and the testimony to the light (1:8, 19).[8] These two qualities make it possible to recognize the biblical origin of the mission performed by John, his ability to walk in the light (cf. Job 29:3), and follow wisdom (cf. Sir 51:15; Qoh 2:13). The Old Testament personification of the latter value (see Wis 7:29–30; Prov 9:1–6[9]) is the announcement of God's embodied Word (1 Cor 1:24),[10] which in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel is described as not known or accepted by all (John 1:10–11; cf. 1 Cor 1:21), but those who have faith could see the glory of the Father in the Father's Only Son (1:14) not overcome or not surprised[11] by darkness (1:5), even when he was lifted on the cross and drew everyone to himself (12:32; 19:37). The fact that Jesus does not become overcome by darkness corroborates the Evangelist's testimony about him. The last mention of darkness appears in the story about the arrival of Mary Magdalene to Jesus' tomb (20:1). Darkness seems to recede as the woman discovers the truth about the resurrection of the One she expected to find at the burial place. The stone removed from the tomb (20:1), cloth and the burial clothes lying there (20:5–7), the arrival of angels (20:12–13), and finally, the dialogue with the resurrected Lord (20:14–17) unambiguously confirm that Jesus is the light of the world (8:12)[12] present among people (12:35). It will not leave the believers in darkness (12:46), by bringing them peace (cf. 14:27[x2]; 16:33; 20:19, 21, 26), it can lead them, just like the frightened disciples in a boat, safely to the shore (6:21).[13]

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8   Cf. Harris, *Prologue and Gospel*, 49; Wróbel, "Świadectwo," 225–226.

9   In this passage from the Book of Proverbs, it is not only the personification of Wisdom that is significant but also the invitation to participate in the feast. It serves as an invitation for the addressees to change their way of life, to abandon the path of sin offered by foolishness. Thus following the voice of Wisdom is an expression of the personal conversion of those invited to be her guests. On the other hand, the food offered by Wisdom is a foretaste of what is to come for the people participating in the banquet, which the Lord himself will prepare for those who have trust in him and rejoice in his salvation. (Isa 25:6, 9). According to God's promise, it will happen to the one who, by doing penance, not only abandons evil deeds but also undertakes works of mercy in their place. Then his gloom shall become like midday (Isa 58:10), and the Lord will always guide him and satisfy his thirst in parched places (Isa 58:11).

10   Cf. Szymik, "Słowo Boże," 101.

11   Cf. Grochowski, "Światłość w ciemności świeci," 131.

12   The image of Jesus as light is present already in Matt 4:16, where the Evangelist refers to the Isa 9:1 prophecy explaining the importance of Christ leaving Nazareth and going to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali (4:13–15), "the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen."

13   In the cited story about Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee (6:16–21), the reader's attention is drawn to the external aura of the event. The information about the darkness which had grown when the disciples went across the Sea to Capernaum (6:17) is preceded by the mention of their going down to the sea in the evening (6:16). The noun ὀψία used to denote this time of day appears in the Fourth Gospel only one more time – in the narrative about the meeting of the disciples with the resurrected Lord (20:19). What

If the discovery of the truth about the resurrection of Jesus coincides with the receding darkness and awakens the disciples' activity, it can become the image of the transformation occurring during conversion. Undoubtedly, the first stage of this process in the Fourth Gospel is the activity of John the Baptist at the Jordan. It marks the final stage of the story of salvation, which prepares the world to receive the true light, heralds the fulfillment of the messianic promises,[14] and reconciliation with God by the remission of sins (2:23).

2. A Call to Conversion and Ways of Its Implementation

The prophecy of Isaiah concerning making a highway for God (see Isa 40:3–4),[15] cited in indirect speech in the four Gospels, links the presentation of the mission of John the Baptist, which is to accept the coming of Christ. This message in the Gospel of John is not only in the shortest version but is also devoid of the New Testament addition in the form of a call expressing the idea of conversion. On the other hand, it is the most clearly articulated in the Gospel of Matthew, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (3:2). It is reinforced by the firm encouragement to "Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance" (3:8) and the confession "I am baptizing you with water, for repentance" (3:11). In contrast, Mark and Luke briefly mention the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins preached by the predecessor of Jesus (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).[16]

In the Synoptic Gospels, Isaiah's prophecy is a commentary on the appearance of John the Baptist; however, in the Fourth Gospel, it is the essence of the statement

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both scenes share is the situation of the disciples being afraid. But the unexpected arrival of Jesus and His message to them, "It is I. Do not be afraid" (6:20) and "Peace be with you" (20:19) brings a change of their position – "but the boat immediately arrived at the shore to which they were heading" (6:21) and "The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord" (20:20). The change of the situation for the characters of the evangelical narrative which occurs in these texts resonates with the image of the change of fate for the chosen people due to God's intervention perpetuated by the Old Testament (cf. Ezek 34:10, 27).

14   Cf. Grasso, *Il Vangelo di Giovanni*, 77.

15   Cf. Malina, *Chrzest Jezusa*, 342. Also, Mark the Evangelist attributes the short phrase "Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you" to Isaiah as a reference to the prophecy in the Book of Malachi (LXX) "Now I am sending my messenger and he will prepare the way before me; And the lord whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple; The messenger of the covenant whom you desire – see, he is coming! says the LORD of hosts" (3:1). Santi Grasso (*Il Vangelo di Giovanni*, 76, n. 120) and Artur Malina (*Ewangelia według świętego Marka*, 75) also indicate a possible relationship between the biblical quote in Mark's Gospel and Exod 23:20.

16   Contemporary Polish translations (Biblia Tysiąclecia, Biblia Edycji Świętego Pawła) render the phrase βάπτισμα μετανοίας εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν, which is identical in both texts, in a similar way, the difference being the preposition εἰς which is translated alternatively as "on" or "for."

by Jesus' predecessor himself to the priests and Levites,[17] "I am the voice of one crying out in the desert, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as Isaiah the prophet said" (1:23). The answer to the question about the reason for John's baptism subsequently given to the Jewish envoys from Jerusalem leaves no doubt that its purpose is to reveal Christ present among those gathered at the Jordan (1:25–28). The later indication of Him as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29, 36) resonates excellently with Isaiah's message about salvation and the announcement of the revelation of God's glory.[18] Focused on the proclamation of consolation to the people, the biblical prophecy to which John the Baptist refers does not take up the theme of Israel's conversion but presupposes it. This is evidenced by the call for the people to turn to God (Isa 21:12;[19] 30:15;[20] 45:22;[21] 46:8; 55:7[22]), repeated several times in successive chapters of the Book of Isaiah. His coming to Zion as the Redeemer, on the other hand, is the natural consequence of Israel's turning away from ungodliness (Isa 59:20) to follow the way of the Law, which is light (Ps 119[118]:105; Prov 6:23). Although the allegation of its unawareness is combined in the Fourth Gospel with the harsh condemnation of the crowd by accusing Pharisees (John 7:49), it is they who become the addressees of Jesus' allegation that they do not believe the writings of Moses (5:47). The reason for this, according to Christ, is that His opponents have not heard the voice of the Father, nor have they seen His form (5:37). The genesis of this problem, considered by Jesus in the second part of the apologia after the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (5:31–47), is indicated earlier in John's prologue.

Employing a positive example of those "who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God" (1:13), the Evangelist indicates faith as the domain of people who are not guided by the considerations of the body, its sensuality, and desires limited to the earthly way of reasoning, but by openness to God's Word. Moreover, Jesus himself, in his dialogue with Nicodemus, points out to his interlocutor the necessity of being born again (γεννάω) of water and the Spirit, not only as a condition for living according to this supernatural gift but also for entering the kingdom of God (3:5–8). The two elements of rebirth mentioned by Jesus are a clear allusion to God's promise in Ezek 36:25–27 to make a new

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[17] Santi Grasso (*Il Vangelo di Giovanni*, 76) notices that in the narrative of John's Gospel, the addressees of the statement directed to the envoys from Jerusalem are also all those listening to or reading the text.

[18] A clear promise of salvation can be found in the version of Isaiah's prophecy cited in the Gospel of Luke: "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (3:6).

[19] The Hebrew text contains a clear call to conversion expressed with the plural form of the verb שוב. The LXX ignores this theme completely, replacing it with the encouragement to search expressed in the second person singular form: ζήτει.

[20] Currently, the HB word שובה (return) is rendered by the verb ἀποστρέφω (revert) in the LXX.

[21] Instead of the common HB term שוב, there is the verb פנה (return, direct).

[22] In the last two cases, the equivalent of שוב in Hebrew is the Greek word ἐπιστρέφω (reverse) in the LXX.

covenant with Israel.[23] It presupposes a complete reorientation of the people's lives, which God is to initiate by sprinkling water on Israel to cleanse it of all corruption and all idols. Communicating to the addressees the promise of a new heart and a new spirit, finally taking away from them the heart of stone and giving them the heart of flesh, complete the work undertaken by God, whose motive is to sanctify the name of the Lord (3:22) and to reveal His holiness to the people (Ezek 36:23). However, the ultimate goal is to establish a relationship with Israel – "you will be my people, and I will be your God" (36:28), which coincides with the return to the land of ancestors. There those who lost the relationship due to unfaithfulness to the covenant, the recipients of the promise of a new one – adopted by God – will establish it anew, observing the Lord's ordinances (36:27). In contrast to the announcement in Ezekiel, the purpose of the change – defined by Jesus as being born again – is not an earthly inheritance (36:24, 28) but participation in the kingdom belonging to Christ, which is not from here, not from this world (see 18:36).[24] Inheriting it can only be the consequence of the transformation effected in man, which, on the one hand, involves breaking with sin, with evil deeds, and therefore abandoning, refraining, or turning away from all that is an expression of the love of darkness (3:19) and human praise (12:43). On the other hand, keeping the commandments of Jesus (14:15), remaining in him (6:56; 15:5), in his word (8:31; 15:7), in his love (15:10), and bearing fruit that will remain (15:16) and be revealed in the hour of the resurrection of life (5:29). Thus, it can be assumed that the references in the Fourth Gospel to being born of God or the Spirit fully correspond to the biblical idea of conversion. At the same time, they express the condition typical of the one who has believed in the Son as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29; 3:18).[25]

The abovementioned Spirit plays a leading role in the conversion process. As the Paraclete (15:26) – Defender, Advocate, Comforter – announced to the disciples in the farewell address, the Spirit of Truth is to prove the sin of the world, the righteousness which is Christ's legacy and the condemnation of what is contrary to Him (16:8), guiding the disciples of Jesus to all truth (16:13).[26] This knowledge

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23 Beutler, *Das Johannesevangelium*, 137.

24 The aim indicated is entirely convergent with the message of the Synoptic Gospels.

25 This idea of conversion is developed similarly by the author of the First Letter of John. In the hagiographer's view, the first example of the transformation occurring in man as a result of his birth from God is the attitude of a righteous person (1 John 2:29), the one who does not sin and in whom the seed of God remains (3:9). He expresses the transformation that has occurred in him by the fact that knowing God makes him listen to Him (4:6). However, the most certain confirmation of this birth is the Christocentrically motivated love for God and one another (4:7–8; 5:1). It is expressed in the fulfillment of the commandments (5:2–3) and the faith that conquers the world (5:4). Living according to it ensures the protection of the One born of God, i.e., the Son of God who protects man from evil (5:18). More information on the indicated identification of the figure of the One born of God in 1 John 5:18 can be found in Giurisato, *Struttura e teologia*, 639; Fabris, *Lettere di Giovanni*, 117.

26 Cf. Johnston, *The Spirit-Paraclete*, 91.

aims to preserve the believers from error, saving them from losing their unity with the Father and the Son, and, through the activity of the Spirit, it also strengthens the testimony of the disciples through which others can believe (17:20).

Although salvation results from God's initiative, the offer addressed by Him to people requires a clear response from the addressees.[27] Nathanael sets a positive example of it. Christ speaks of him as a true Israelite in whom there is no duplicity (1:47). His sojourn under the fig tree (1:48), symbolically expressing the Law and considered a place to reflect upon it in the rabbinic tradition,[28] suggests that Nathanael, awaiting the fulfillment of the messianic promises,[29] is also heir to the blessing given to the sons of Jacob (cf. Gen 28:13–15; Sir 44:23),[30] thus a symbol of new Israel.[31] Encouraged by Philip to come and see "the one about whom Moses wrote in the law" (John 1:46), Nathanael is an expression of seeking and striving to do God's will (cf. 7:17). The promise made to him by Jesus that he would see more than what he had already experienced is interesting in this context. Linked directly to it and related to the Son of Man, the image of angels descending and ascending upon him (1:51), which alludes to Jacob's dream (Gen 28:12), makes it possible to understand that its fulfillment will be a veil-free viewing of the glory of God in Christ.

The outlined characteristics of Nathanael set him radically apart from the Jewish elites of Jerusalem. Their fundamental problem with the access to and acceptance of John the Baptist's testimony to Christ is not only the distance separating them from where John was baptizing[32] but also the lack of proper disposition of the heart and the will[33] and seeking praise from one another (5:44). In addition to the lack of auditory and visual perception on the part of the Jews, these are further obstacles, the removal of which makes it possible to straighten the path for the coming of Christ and recognize the Lord in Him.

In the Fourth Gospel, knowledge (γινώσκω) means not so much the acquisition of knowledge as an approximation to the truth, the acceptance of it (3:21), and entering a personal relationship with what is to be known (13:35; 14:7; 17:8).[34] This results in faith in Jesus (2:11), liberation (8:32), and finally eternal life (17:3). To achieve it,

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27   This is also the case for the addressees of the aforementioned promise of the new covenant in the Book of Ezekiel. Although God is the one who intends to lead them out of the foreign peoples and into the land of their ancestors, Israel itself must make the decision to follow the path set out by Him.

28   Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 83.

29   Cf. Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 111.

30   Cf. Fabris, *Giovanni*, 164.

31   Cf. Mędala, *Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 1–12*, 339.

32   The distance between Jerusalem (located 1,165 m above the level of the Dead Sea and 770 m above the level of the Mediterranean Sea) and Al-Maghtas (located 385 m below the level of the Mediterranean Sea), which is traditionally considered the place of Christ's baptism, is about 33 km as the crow flies.

33   This is also one of the key barriers to recognizing Jesus Christ as God's Son and Savior. See Paciorek, *Ewangelia umiłowanego ucznia*, 176.

34   Cf. Bultmann, "γινώσκω," 711.

it is not enough to study the scriptures (5:39) because, being one of the testimonies to God,[35] they refer the reader to the incarnate Word of God (5:40). Therefore, it is necessary to turn to Jesus, whose word is purifying (15:3). The role of bearing witness to Him is assigned to John the Baptist, who is called by Christ "a burning and shining lamp" (5:35). The purpose of his brief testimony is not to focus on himself but illuminate the path that leads to Christ, indicating him as the Son of God (1:34). John's fulfillment of his mission is confirmed by the reaction of the two disciples accompanying him at the Jordan, who, hearing him say of Jesus: "Behold, the Lamb of God" (1:36), follow Him (1:37). Being prepared to listen to John the Baptist at his "school" opens the way for them not only to see the environment in which Jesus lived (1:38–39) but also to enter it and then remain in it (1:39).[36] This is how the idea of "pitching of the tent" (σκηνόω) of the Word (see 1:14) in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel, where the tent is the place for the further formation of the disciples in the love of God (6:69; 16:26; cf. 1 John 4:16) and dwelling in light (12:46),[37] is developed. The aforementioned love is the foundation of the relationship between God and man as well as man and God. The state of human freedom and capacity for perception, sensitivity to the testimony to God, and readiness to seek and acknowledge the truth depend on it.[38]

Accusing the Jews of not having love (5:42), Jesus is alluding to the message of a prophecy directed against the hardness of hearts,[39] which was common throughout biblical history. They first require a profound transformation in the people, which begins with a positive response to the Lord's call by the mouth of prophet Joel for the people to turn their hearts towards God (Joel 2:12). The divergent attitudes adopted by the protagonists of John's Gospel towards the Father's testimony about the Son show how the biblical idea of conversion is realized and the consequences of its rejection. At the same time, they express the actual spiritual condition of the said protagonists of the Gospel narrative, either open or closed to the hope of eternal life offered in Christ (3:16, 18, 36).

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[35] Along with the Law, works (including signs) of Jesus, and God's speech. See Ledwoń, *Świadectwo Ojca*, 251.

[36] Cf. Ledwoń, "Wychowanie," 44.

[37] An excellent illustration of the situation of moving away from the light, i.e., Jesus, in the Fourth Gospel is the last episode of the scene in which the traitor is exposed in 13:30. The Evangelist's comment that "it was night" (ἦν δὲ νύξ) when Judas left the cenacle having eaten the morsel is clearly contrasted with the following comment by Jesus about the Son of Man being glorified, and God being glorified in him, which may be naturally associated with brilliance (cf. Ezek 1:28) and light (cf. 2 Cor 4:4).

[38] Cf. Heschel, *The Prophets*, 244.

[39] In this context, the Old Testament refers to, among others, a wicked (Prov 26:23), devious heart (Ps 101[100]:4), a stubborn heart (Sir 3:26–27), the duplicity of the heart (Sir 1:28), a stubborn and rebellious heart (Jer 5:23, Zech 7:3), an uncircumcised heart (Jer 9:25), and the heart of stone (Ezek 36:26).

3. Eternal life as a Result of Conversion because of Faith in Jesus

Those who are open to the hope of eternal life in the Fourth Gospel include Christ's disciples (2:11), the Samaritan woman and the inhabitants of Sychar (4:1–42), the courtier and his family (4:46–54), the man blind from birth whose eyes were opened by Jesus (9:1–39), as well as those going back across the Jordan (10:40–42), and the witnesses to the resurrection of Lazarus (11:45). Regardless of the circumstances surrounding their encounter with Jesus, all these protagonists of the Gospel narrative make direct auditory and visual contact with him. However, the context of their lives changes radically: the disciples witness for the first time the revelation of Christ's glory at the wedding feast of Cana (2:11), the Samaritan woman returns to the town telling everyone about her encounter with Jesus (4:28–29), the inhabitants of Sychar receive him with enthusiasm (4:30, 39–42), the royal official asks for health for his dying son (4:49, 51–53), and finally, the blind man gains the ability to see (9:7). Most significantly, however, all those going across the Jordan (10:42) and many witnesses to the resurrection of Martha and Mary's brother in Bethany (11:45) profess their faith in Christ (2:11; 4:29, 39,[40] 41–42, 53; 9:38; 10:42; 11:45). A corresponding reaction in response to His intervention is missing from the narrative about the healing of the lame man at the pool of Bethesda (5:1–18), the scene of Christ's encounter with the woman brought to Him and caught in adultery (8:1–11), as well as the episodes involving Nicodemus (3:1–21; 7:38–42, 45–53). What might be the reason for this?

On the one hand, the attitudes of the first two characters saved from a tragic fate (the lame man from being crippled and the adulteress from being stoned) reveal an inability to read and understand the work of Jesus, shared by many eyewitnesses of the signs he performed.[41] However, on the other hand, these life events aim to provoke a reaction from those who oppose Christ and do not believe in him.[42]

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[40] Santi Grasso (*Il Vangelo di Giovanni*, 240) rightly notes that the Samaritan woman, like Nicodemus or the lame man at the pool of Bethesda, does not profess her faith to Jesus. It must be said, however, that despite the absence of an explicit declaration similar to that made in the Gospel by the man blind from birth after his healing, the woman's activity among the Samaritans reflects the transformation that occurred in her life. Reporting on her encounter with Jesus, the Samaritan woman poses the rhetorical question, "Could he possibly be the Messiah?" (4:29), which must have been perceived by the listeners as a confirmation of the woman's faith since they say to her later, "We no longer believe because of your word; for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the savior of the world" (4:42).

[41] Cf. Mullins, *The Gospel of John*, 170.

[42] After healing the lame man on the Sabbath and revealing that Jesus is the performer of the miracle, the Jews begin to persecute him (5:16). The aim also becomes to kill Jesus because "he also called God his own father, making himself equal to God" (5:18). In contrast, in the narrative about Christ's encounter with the woman caught in adultery, the reaction to Jesus' words that he who is blameless should cast the first stone, the congregants go away one by one (8:9). According to Robert Maccini (*Her Testimony is True*, 40) the healing of the lame man fulfills the role of a judicial paradigm that brings about a legal division between those who, like the disciples, recognize the Father's testimony to Jesus and those who reject it.

The attitude and role of Nicodemus are completely different. In John's Gospel, this Pharisaic Jewish dignitary (3:1) and teacher of Israel (3:10) exemplifies the process of maturation in faith:[43] from questioning Christ, pointing out the Law as the guarantor of Jesus' righteous judgment to the Jewish elite, to his active participation in the preparations for his burial and in the burial itself. The considerable amount of myrrh and aloe mixture brought by Nicodemus to anoint the body of the Crucified One indicates the recognition of His royal dignity. By accompanying Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus tacitly fulfills the demands of the truth and thus approaches the light of faith (cf. 3:21).[44] Although the author of the Fourth Gospel does not call him a disciple, next to Joseph, who remains in hiding, he becomes a type of disciple maturing in his role[45] which changes his way of thinking, draws closer to Jesus and finally, by way of facts, accepts him as the Lord.[46] This element is also absent in the attitude of the man healed at the pool of Bethesda and the woman caught in adultery. In the case of these two, however, the experience of grace (even unconscious) becomes the moment that leads them from the path of helplessness to the path of hope, opening up the prospect of a new life[47] free from disability (the lame man) or the threat of death (the adulterous woman). This is justified by Jesus' words, "Look, you are well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may happen to you" (5:14),[48] uttered in the temple to the healed man, and "Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin anymore!" (8:11), spoken to the woman caught in adultery. The absence of the demonstration of faith in Christ on the part of the two above-mentioned protagonists does not preclude it in the future.[49] A person's conversion is not determined by human judgment, which is only partial, but by an inner transformation which, in the light of the Fourth Gospel, Christ alone knows best whether it has occurred.

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43 Cf. Grochowski, "Nicodemus," 669.

44 Cf. Vignolo, *Personaggi del Quarto Vangelo*, 125–126.

45 Francis Moloney (*The Gospel of John*, 97) is more critical in his evaluation of Nicodemus, describing him as "a character who demonstrates a partial faith," and Stanisław Mędala (*Ewangelia według świętego Jana. Rozdziały 13–21*, 261) states explicitly that "Nicodemus is a disciple insofar as he recognizes Jesus as coming from God, whereas he has no understanding of Jesus' salvific mission and actual participation in the life offered 'from above.'"

46 Cf. Grochowski, "Nicodemus," 669. According to Beverly Roberts Gaventa (*From Darkness to Light*, 133) the figures of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea presented by the author of the Fourth Gospel are used to invite the concealed disciples of Jesus to reveal their faith and leave the synagogue.

47 Cf. Ridderbos, *The Gospel According to John*, 291.

48 According to Xavier Léon-Dufour (*Lettura dell'Evangelo*, 383) through this statement, Jesus does not establish a link between sin and illness but between health and a life free from sin. The observation of the cited exegete is also justified by Jesus' words on the cause of the blind man's blindness, "Neither he nor his parents sinned; it is so that the works of God might be made visible through him" (9:3).

49 Referring to the forgiveness Jesus bestowed on the adulterous woman, Antoni Paciorek (*Ewangelia umiłowanego ucznia*, 324) states that it is meant to reinforce a future change in her life.

An excellent example of this can be found at the beginning of John's text, in the narrative about Jesus' sojourn in Jerusalem during Passover (2:23–25), where the Evangelist informs the reader of Jesus' restraint towards the Jews who believed in him (2:23–24).[50] On the other hand, when addressing them in Capernaum, after the multiplication of bread, Jesus reproaches them for not seeking Him (ζητέω)[51] because of the signs they had seen but because they had satisfied their hunger (6:26). Also, their expressed desire to do the works of God turns out to be apparent (6:28), which is clearly indicated by the Evangelist's description of the reaction to Jesus' eucharistic speech manifested by some of his disciples who left and walked no more with him (6:66). However, the Evangelist's most radical judgment of the unbelief of the Jews, which closes them to the hope of eternal life, is made after Jesus enters Jerusalem (12:37–43), citing in 12:40 the prophecy of Isaiah (6:10), "He blinded their eyes and hardened their heart so that they might not see with their eyes and understand with their heart and be converted, and I would heal them."

The verb στρέφω (to turn away) used in this paraphrase of the Old Testament message occurs three more times in John's Gospel in addition to 12:40: once in the scene of Jesus' encounter with John the Baptist's disciples (1:30) and twice in the narrative about Jesus' encounter with Mary Magdalene, who arrived at the empty tomb (20:14, 16). In the first case, the subject of analyzed action is Jesus, who, having noticed the two disciples following him, turns around and asks them what they are looking for. In the other two cases, the subject of the action expressed by the verb στρέφω is Mary Magdalene, who, having turned towards the stranger, recognizes in him the risen Jesus. None of the three depictions is related to conversion, yet the verb στρέφω used in these texts determines the change in the course of events and the situation of the characters in the Gospel narrative. The relationship established with Jesus stimulates them to make a testimony about him. The disciples enthusiastically share their acquired conviction of finding the announced Messiah (1:41), the One about whom Moses wrote in the Law and the Prophets (1:45). And Mary Magdalene goes to the "brothers" to announces that Christ has risen from the dead and is ascending to his Father and God, who is also their Father and God (20:17–18). The disciples and Mary share the readiness to follow Jesus and seek Him out, not like the Jews, i.e., for personal gain (6:26), but for Him alone.

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50   Similar remarks by the Evangelist are absent with regard to the healed man at the pool of Bethesda and the woman caught in adultery.

51   The term indicated may express the biblical idea of conversion when the activity it defines is the establishment of a relationship with Jesus aimed at discovering his identity (1:38) and worshipping God (4:23; 7:18). The seeker is also Jesus (4:27), whose activity focuses on fulfilling the Father's will (5:30; 8:50), and the disciples (13:30; 16:19). Repeatedly in the Fourth Gospel, however, the seekers of Jesus are his opponents (7:34, 36) who intend to exterminate him (5:18; 7:1, 11, 19, 20, 25; 8:37, 40; 11:8, 56) or capture him (7:30; 10:39; 18:4, 7, 8; 19:12) and, seeking their own glory (5:44), distance themselves from the source of eternal life (8:21).

In this context, Peter holds an unambiguous position and, after hearing Jesus' eucharistic speech and the question to the Twelve Disciples whether they wish to depart, too, confesses: "Master, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and are convinced that you are the Holy One of God" (6:68–69).[52] Peter's radical statement is not merely due to the lack of an alternative (many have departed from Jesus, albeit without a stated purpose) but a personal relationship with Jesus based on faith and knowledge and the link between the testimony to the Son and Christ, who was teaching and performing signs (see 1:41, 45; 2:11). This capacity, however, does not apply to all in the narrow circle of disciples, as indicated by Jesus' question, "Did I not choose you twelve? Yet is not one of you a devil?" (6:70).

The identity of the disciple mentioned by Christ and described using the term διάβολος[53] is revealed by the Evangelist, who in 6:71 states that he is Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot ("the man from Kerioth"). The name of Judas' father is mentioned twice more by the author of the Fourth Gospel in the scene revealing the traitor at the Last Supper (13:2, 26).[54] He omits it, however, in the account of the feast of Bethany, where Judas depreciates Mary's act of anointing Jesus' feet with spices and wiping them with her hair (12:3) by asking why the precious oil of the nard was not sold to the poor (12:4). In each of these scenes involving Iscariot, he is presented both in contrast to Jesus and the protagonists of the narrative of the Fourth Gospel in a close relationship with him: the friends of Christ and his other disciples led by Simon Peter. The spiritual profile of the betrayer of Jesus in John's text consists not so much in his Judaean provenance[55] (common to the vast majority of Christ's adversaries, by the way) but his entanglement in sin by stealing contributions from the money bag (12:6), which is synonymous with his love of darkness (3:19) and not having Jesus (12:8). An expression of separation from Him is Judas' exit from the cenacle after eating the piece of bread Jesus gave him (13:30). An important element in the narrative about this event is the information concerning the circumstances. John the Evangelist states that it was night (νύξ). In addition to the place, the same time of the action occurs five more times in the Fourth Gospel.

The night accompanies Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, who calls him a teacher coming from God (3:2) and the Evangelist's recollection of the event (19:39). According to Nicodemus, the proof of Jesus' close relationship with God is the signs

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52 The Synoptics recall a similar confession made by Peter in the narratives of Jesus' stay with the disciples near Caesarea Philippi: Matt 16:13–20; Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–21.

53 Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni*, 343, n. 8, provides the etymology of the term διάβολος defining it in the following way "'colui che si mette di traverso' per ostacolare il disegno di Dio all'opera nel mondo, nella storia e nella vita stessa del Figlio."

54 The Evangelist alludes to the person that betrayed Jesus in the question of the beloved disciple, "Master, who is the one who will betray you?" (John 21:20).

55 Apart from Judas, the closest group of Jesus' disciples came from Galilee.

he performed.[56] It should be noted that, as one of the elements of the Father's testimony about the Son in John's Gospel, they belong to the light (1:7–8) and naturally concern the day (ἡμέρα), which is the proper time for the performance of the works of God (9:4; cf. 11:9).[57] Its opposite is night. Jesus also alludes to it when he answers the disciples' question about the reason for the man being blind from birth (9:4) and later explains the reason for his return to Jerusalem despite the threat posed by the Jews (11:10).

In the first of the two cases, Christ presents the night as a reality that is yet to come (ἔρχεται), and its occurrence will not allow anyone (οὐδείς) to act (ἐργάζομαι). In the second, the night provides an opportunity to stumble. Because Jesus works in the light of day, He is in a continuous relationship with the Father, and nothing can prevent him from fulfilling the task entrusted to him by God (5:17; 6:30). But why does Jesus announce earlier the impossibility of taking action, and what kind of activity is being referred to here?

The lexis of John's Gospel makes it possible to conclude that it is a question of deeds done in God (3:2). In addition to Jesus, the subjects of the action expressed by the verb ἐργάζομαι in John's Gospel are also the addressees of the Eucharistic discourse, among them Jesus' disciples who have to look after the imperishable food (6:27) and desire to do the works of God (6:28; 9:4). As they all enter the night, which is an expression of the loss of their direct relationship with Jesus, they become incapable of undertaking the works mentioned. A perfect example of this is the scene of fishing at night in the Fourth Gospel (21:3).

The narrator observes that despite their efforts, the disciples caught nothing, exposing the fruitlessness of a community devoid of reference to the crucified and risen Lord. However, the disciples' sojourn there at night nevertheless turns out to be different from Judas'. Their situation changes with the arrival of the morning (πρωΐα),[58] preceding Jesus' appearance on the shores of the Sea of Galilee (21:4). The motif of the disciples' failure to recognize the Risen One, which is marked in the post-ascension narrative, is significant here.[59] It determines the nature of their subsequent action. It is not based on the fishermen's knowledge or mastery of the work on a lake, nor their personal experience, but their trust in the words of – as yet unrecognized – risen Jesus. Having heard that they have nothing to eat (21:5), He instructs them to

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[56] Defining signs, Peter Riga ("Signs of Glory," 402) states, "The signs of Christ in the Fourth Gospel are both miracles and discourses, and taken together they constitute one revelation."

[57] In other places, the Fourth Gospel uses the term ἡμέρα to denote a day in the sense of a 24-hour period (1:39; 2:1, 12, 19, 20; 4:40, 43; 5:9; 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 7:37; 8:56; 9:14; 11:6, 9, 17, 24, 53; 12:1, 7, 48; 14:20; 16:23, 26; 19:31; 20:19, 26).

[58] In the Old Testament, the morning is the time of special divine actions (see Num 9:21; 2 Sam 23:3–4; Ps 46[45]:6; 65[64]:9; 90[89]:14; 92[91]:3). See Paciorek, *Ewangelia według św. Jana*, 218.

[59] Just like in the scene depicting the encounter of the resurrected Jesus with Mary Magdalene on the first day of the week (20:11–17).

cast the net on the right side of the boat (21:6). The abundant fish exhausts the qualities of a sign, confirms the divine identity of the protagonist and his relationship with the Father, who cares for his children through the Son (cf. 21:5). Unconditional trust in the words of Jesus thus proves to be life-giving. It is not, however, about nourishment alone. The positive response of the disciples to the indications of the Son of God opens them, above all, to the hope of eternal life,[60] repeatedly promised by Christ during his earthly mission (3:15–16, 36; 5:24; 6:40, 47; 11:25–26).

Moved by the magnificence of the sign made, the disciples begin anew to act in the light. The beloved disciple, recognizing Christ, confesses, "This is the Lord!"[61] Peter throws himself into the water towards the Risen One (21:7); he is followed in the boat by the other disciples, who then pull ashore a net full of fish (21:8). The dynamics and direction of the disciples' actions are clearly oriented towards Jesus. He is the one who ensures that believers in him do not remain in darkness (cf. 12:46) but become, in accordance with Christ's announcement, ready to do works greater than He (cf. 14:12). This is achieved through the care for the Church entrusted to Peter by Jesus, which is represented metaphorically by lambs (21:15) and sheep (21:16, 17).[62]

The shepherding mission assigned to the disciple is preceded by a threefold question of love for Christ, which is crucial for its success. First, each positive response on Simon's part, though different from Jesus' intention, nevertheless leads to the announcement that John's soon will give his life in the future (21:18–19) as the One who is the Good Shepherd (10:11, 14).[63] Second, Jesus outlined to Peter the prospect of going where (now) he does not want to go, suggesting an inner transformation about to take place inside him. Third, the transition from one extremity to the other is signaled by a temporal caesura expressed by the juxtaposition: "When you were younger" – "But when you grow old" (21:18). In contrast, the ultimate goal of the aforementioned transformation, which requires the disciple to follow Jesus, is to glorify God.

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60 Cf. Labahn, "Fishing for Meaning," 144.

61 A similar declaration is uttered during Jesus' second encounter with the disciples in the cenacle by previously absent Thomas, who first formulates concrete, physical conditions regarding his faith in the Risen One (20:25). The words uttered by Thomas at the sight of Jesus, "My Lord and my God" (20:28) turn an unbeliever (ἄπιστος) into a believer (πιστός). This is the kind of disciple Christ desires (20:27). Nevertheless, he calls blessed (μακάριοι) those who believe, though they have not seen (20:29) and follow Him in His humility (13:17). If the transition from unbelief to faith can be described as conversion, then the state of being blessed best expresses its effect.

62 According to Timothy Wiarda ("John 21.1–23," 67) both this dialogue and the entire narrative about the encounter of the resurrected Jesus with his disciples on the shore of Lake Tiberias reflect the live, human experiences of the protagonists of the story rather than a collection of symbolic, ecclesiastical statements.

63 According Rinaldo Fabris (*Giovanni*, 818–819) Peter did not give his life for the sheep but because Jesus called him to love and follow Him to the point of giving his own life.

4. Following Jesus as a Condition for Preserving the Fruit of Conversion

The motif of following Jesus begins (1:37, 38, 40, 43), intensifies (12:26; 13:36, 37; 18:15),[64] and crowns the process of gathering and forming his disciples (21:19, 20, 22) in the Fourth Gospel with the use of the verb ἀκολουθέω.[65] However, it does not only apply to this one narrow group of protagonists in John's narrative. Jesus is also followed by the crowd witnessing His signs (6:2). In this way, they also become the focus of the Father's testimony about his Son (5:36). The Scribes and Pharisees, the Jews[66] whom Jesus tells he is the light of the world (8:12) and the Good Shepherd followed by sheep (10:4, 5, 27) are also indirectly addressed with the invitation to follow. For the Jews, choosing Christ by following Him would mean breaking up their previous walk in darkness and consequently enable them to possess the light of life (8:12), attain salvation (10:9), and have life in abundance (10:10). In this context, the call to follow Jesus fully reflects the biblical journey of conversion, leading to the knowledge of God (Deut 4:39; Bar 2:31; Ezek 34:40; Dan 3:45), revealed in the Fourth Gospel by Jesus as the Father (3:35; 6:27; 8:18).

In addition to the examples of the use of the verb ἀκολουθέω analyzed so far, two more are of particular interest in John's text. The first is in the narrative about the resurrection of Lazarus (11:31). The second features in the story about the events after Jesus' resurrection (20:6). In both cases, there is no mention of following Him. Instead, it concerns following Mary, the sister of Lazarus, who went out to meet Jesus, even though the Jews accompanying her thought they were going to the tomb of her dead brother (11:31). In contrast, in the story concerning the journey of the two disciples to the empty tomb of Jesus, Simon Peter follows the beloved disciple (20:6). Is there any connection between these two scenes and the theme of the biblical idea of conversion in John's text? Given the development of the depicted events, the answer must be affirmative.

The Jews following Mary become eyewitnesses to the resurrection of Lazarus. The miracle performed by Jesus answers their question: "Could not the one who opened the eyes of the blind man have done something so that this man would not have died?" (11:37). In many of them, the sign arouses faith in Christ (11:45). Following the beloved disciple, Peter, despite being the last to arrive, enters the empty tomb of Jesus first. The sight of the linen and the shawl lying there leads him to understand the Scriptures that speak of Christ's resurrection (21:9). The Evangelist does

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[64] As the fulfillment of Jesus' work is approaching, the call to follow Him and the manner in which this work is to be carried out requires greater determination on the part of the disciples, right up to accompanying Christ on the path of his saving passion.

[65] Among the Synoptics, the abovementioned term, which appears 19 times in John, is used most often by Matthew (25 times), Mark (18 times), and Luke (17 times).

[66] Not once do these groups become the addressees of a similar encouragement in the Synoptic Gospels.

not record that Simon believed in it. This act is attributed to the beloved disciple who went inside the tomb behind Peter (21:8). In any case, following the one who is in a close, even intimate relationship with Jesus, such as Mary or the beloved disciple, prepares the other protagonists of the narrative – as yet unaware of the unfolding events – to change their disposition. This time it is not about breaking with moral iniquity but about establishing a relationship with Christ, who is the resurrection and the life (11:25). Following Jesus (ἀκολουθέω) and abiding (μένω) in him (8:12; 12:26; 15:5) are two interconnecting paths leading not only to salvation but also to the realization of one's life vocation.[67] In this context, the reaction of Simon, who turns away (ἐπιστρέφω) to look at the beloved disciple following Jesus (20:20) and then asks about his fate (21:21), hinders the achievement of this goal. It is telling that the recollection of the Last Supper accompanies the Evangelist's recounting of this event with a fixed image of the beloved disciple resting on Jesus' breast and inquiring about the identity of the traitor (21:20). Taking one's eyes off Christ and the path set by him threatens the loss of peace and instigates confusion. Hence the response to the encouragement expressed by Jesus, "You follow me!" (21:22; cf. 21:19), requires Simon to make a kind of return, a conversion to the risen Lord.[68] He needs to realize that the mission given to him is part of the testimony by which others will also believe in the Son (17:20) to attain eternal life (cf. 20:31).

Conclusion

Another approach to conversion, different from the one of Synoptics, is developed in the Fourth Gospel using the theological categories of passing from darkness to light, making straight the way before the Lord, faith leading to life, and rebirth as a condition for entering the kingdom of God and abiding in Jesus and following Him. Each of these corresponds to the attitudes adopted by the narrative protagonists to the testimony about Christ as the Son of God. Faith in Him is the factor that determines the spiritual transformation in man, involving turning to the light as life inherent in the Word, which was sent to the world and incarnated for man's salvation. The reactions of the eyewitnesses of the signs performed by Christ, presented against the background of the Jewish environment hostile to Jesus, are the best reflection of the process, which, in the Synoptics, is defined as a change of thinking. Its consequences – abandoning evil, submitting to the will of Jesus, and performing good deeds – stem from turning to Him. The lasting fruit of the relationship thus

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67 Cf. Grasso, *Il Vangelo di Giovanni*, 797.
68 Cf. Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni*, 854.

established is not only a share in eternal life but also a personal testimony that glorifies Jesus' Father.

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Verbum
Vitae

A Few Remarks about the Lectionary after Fifty Years of Existence

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Abstract: This paper aims to present the historical development of the lectionary for use in the Holy Mass, then to summarize the principles of the present lectionary and its ecumenical meaning, more specifically, its influence on the protestant lectionary. Based on the historical facts and the recent documents of the Holy See, the proposal for partial renewal of the Sunday Lectionary will be discussed. The main method used in the study is the analysis of the historical sources, documents of the Holy See, and theological studies. The critical analysis and comparative method will lead to the synthetic presentation of postulates of the partial renewal of the present lectionary after fifty years of usage in the liturgy. The analysis conclusions provide suggestions for the enrichment of the lectionary: firstly, with the passages from the Old Testament read in their whole context, not only according to the harmonization with the text of the Gospel; secondly, with the thematic selection of the second reading compatible with the first reading, and the Gospel reading; thirdly, with the texts pointing out the role of women in the history of salvation.

Keywords: lectionary, Bible, liturgy

The Second Vatican Council was intentionally pastoral and not dogmatic in character. At the center of the Council's renewal of the Church was the liturgy as the source and summit of its life. The liturgy was to be renewed as first. It underlines the foundational meaning of the liturgy as the *locus theologicus* for the doctrine of the Church, the intrinsic reality of the practical life of the Church as the Mystical Body of Christ, and the community of believers.

The liturgical community was at the center of the renewal of the Church by the Second Vatican Council. This explains the emphasis the Council Fathers put on *actuosa participatio*, i.e., active participation of the faithful in the holy liturgy. This was the aim of the liturgy renewal, explained in the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*): "In this restoration, both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify; the Christian people, so far as possible, should be enabled to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community" (*SC* 21).

One of the important elements of the renewed liturgy was the lectionary comprising the readings from Sacred Scripture. As stressed in the Second Vatican Council, these readings are the perennial and intrinsic part of the celebration of the Holy

Mass. "From that time onwards the Church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading those things 'which were in all the scriptures concerning him' (Luke 24:27), celebrating the Eucharist in which 'the victory and triumph of his death are again made present,' and at the same time giving thanks 'to God for his unspeakable gift' (2 Cor 9:15) in Christ Jesus, 'in praise of his glory' (Eph 1:12), through the power of the Holy Spirit" (*SC* 6).

Readings from the Scripture are necessary for the spiritual life of the faithful, as the Eucharist itself. Thanks to God's word, the liturgy participants grow in wisdom, and thanks to the Eucharist, they grow in holiness. The divine interventions announced in God's word are renewed in the Eucharist: "The spoken word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy."[1]

The Council Fathers desired to revive the pastoral activity of the Church as well as the intense relation of the faithful with God by means of the Holy Scriptures. Therefore, the very lectionary was to provide Catholics with rich sustenance from the Bible.[2] According to the Second Vatican Council's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*:

> Sacred Scripture is of the greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy. For it is from Scripture that lessons are read and explained in the homily, and psalms are sung; the prayers, collects, and liturgical songs are scriptural in their inspiration and their force, and it is from the Scriptures that actions and signs derive their meaning. Thus to achieve the restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy, it is essential to promote that warm and living love for Scripture to which the venerable tradition of both eastern and western rites gives testimony (*SC* 24).

The so-called three-year lectionary, promulgated officially by Pope Paul VI on May 29, was introduced into pastoral practice in the whole Church on November 28, 1971, the first Advent Sunday, beginning the liturgical year.[3] Almost sixty years have passed since the proclamation of the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The year 2021 saw the fiftieth anniversary of the promulgation of the new lectionary. This very jubilee gives an opportunity to reflect and recognize the values of the renewed lectionary and to discuss the possibility of its improvement.

This paper aims to emphasize some of the values of the present worldwide three-year lectionary and explore some minor improvements, taking into account

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[1]   "The Church is nourished spiritually at the table of God's word and at the table of the Eucharist from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed. The spoken word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy." Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, *General Introduction to the Lectionary*, no. 10.

[2]   See Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation*, IV, C, 1.

[3]   *Ordo Lectionum Missae*; cf. Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 28–29.

the development of theology, especially ecumenical dialog, and the social changes and sensitivity concerning the role of women in society. The steps undertaken will provide us with the definition of the lectionary, its main purpose, the principles underpinning the lectionary issued at the direction of the Second Vatican Council, and finally, its value and proposal for improvement.

1. The Definition and Purpose of the Lectionary

A lectionary is an "orderly sequence of selections from Scripture to be read aloud at public worship by a religious community."[4] This definition of a lectionary contains three important elements. First, a lectionary cannot be identified with the Bible as such; it comprises selected passages from the Bible to be used for worship, and the latter reciprocally becomes the first hermeneutic of the scriptural word. Second, the passages are not random and haphazard; they are carefully chosen and systematized in patterns according to specific theological and pastoral principles. Third, the liturgical and pastoral purpose of a lectionary, and specifically the type and frequency of the meetings of Christians, determine how the Bible fragments are chosen and distributed: it is different for the solemn celebrations and the regular daily Holy Mass, and different still for the rites celebrated occasionally.[5]

The purpose of a lectionary is to serve uniformity to worship at the Holy Mass and to provide the congregation of faithful abundantly with the Word of life.[6] The Holy Scripture passages intended for use in the liturgy are known by the Latinate "lections" or by the Greek term "pericope," which means an "extract" of the Bible.

2. The Principles of the Present Lectionary

The liturgy reform undertaken by the Second Vatican Council included the renewal of the lectionary. Although the first Council's document, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, does not contain a specific section dedicated to the lectionary, nevertheless, the indications scattered in the conciliar documents allow naming some principle guidelines for the order of the lectionary: the biblical texts are essential for the liturgical celebrations;[7] readings on Sundays and solemnities should be given pri-

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4   Reumann, "A History of Lectionaries," 116; Waznak, *Introduction*, 73; Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 3.
5   Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 3–4.
6   Waznak, *Introduction*, 73.
7   Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 7, 24, 33, 35, 51; Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, no. 21.

ority;[8] the lectionary should be adapted to modern times;[9] the lectionary should take into account the previous tradition;[10] it should include more readings concentrated on Christ as the fulfillment of the history of salvation,[11] and the center of each Christian celebration;[12] the lectionary should include texts, which would help to indicate in the homily the main principles of the Christian life[13] so that the faithful could have been more and more transformed by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.[14]

3. The Value of the Lectionary

The three-year lectionary underlines the priority of Sunday celebration, the primary day on which the faithful assemble to receive grace from the risen Lord and praise God through Him and with Him. The importance of the Sunday is emphasized instead of any societal interest, local traditions, or any other competing interests, which challenge the primary focus on Easter as the reason for the assembly.[15]

Another value of the lectionary is the more abundant proclamation of the Old Testament texts. The Tridentine Missal, published by Pope Pius V in 1570, contained 138 fragments of the Bible to be read on Sundays in a one-year cycle. However, there were only two readings for Sunday Masses: the first one – with three exemptions – from the Apostolic Letters and the second from the Gospel. It means that the Old Testament was somewhat unappreciated. Moreover, its texts were read only onthree occasions in the liturgical year: the Solemnity of the Epiphany, Good Friday, and the Paschal Vigil.[16]

The discussed fruit of the Second Vatican Council offers even-handed treatment of all four gospels. The Gospel of John received the central meaning and was appointed for major solemnities and festive times of the liturgical year. The chance to hear differing Gospel narratives allows us to interpret the Scriptures as more than merely factual narratives about the past.[17]

After fifty years of practical use of the Sunday lectionary in the Holy Masses, it is worth asking whether this valuable liturgical book has room for improvement, that is to say, whether this treasure may shine even brighter.

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8   Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 49, 106.
9   Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 4, 23, 37–40, 49, 107.
10   Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, nos. 4, 23, 107.
11   Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 5.
12   Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 102.
13   Cf. Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 52.
14   Sławiński, "Znaczenie," 388; De Zan, Introduzione, 56; Bugnini, *La riforma*.
15   Ramshaw, "The Ecumenical Gift," 20.
16   Nocent, "The Roman Lectionary," 183; Sławiński, "Ecumenism," 46.
17   Ramshaw, "The Ecumenical Gift," 20.

4. The Proposal for Improving the Lectionary

The current lectionary introduced by the Second Vatican Council has been enriching the liturgical celebration of the Church for more than fifty years now. However, according to the document *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993) by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, "The lectionary, issued at the direction of the Council (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 35), is meant to allow for a reading of Sacred Scripture that is 'more abundant, more varied and more suitable.' In its present state, it only partially fulfills this goal."[18] Therefore, the fiftieth anniversary of introducing the lectionary to the liturgy provides an opportunity to reflect on its value and the potential enhancement of this remarkable liturgical book so that it gains even more splendor.

In the time that has passed since the last council, society has gone through an enormous technological development and experienced many social changes, globalization, and the development of strong movements like feminism. At the same time, theological studies, methods, and approaches to interpreting the Bible have developed. Besides the historical-critical methods and approaches based on tradition, new methods of literary analysis and approaches using human sciences, as well as contextual approaches, were taken seriously into consideration in the analysis of the Sacred Scripture and discussed in the above document of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (1993).[19]

The proposals for consideration in the renewed version of the lectionary for Sundays include 1. renewed use of the Old Testament texts; 2. thematic selection of the second reading compatible with the first one and the Gospel; 3. enrichment of the Sunday lectionary with texts indicating the role of women in the history of salvation.

4.1. Renewed Use of the Old Testament Texts

It is natural that the Gospel pericopes are central in the Christian liturgy of the word; the Old Testament readings were selected solely for harmonization with the Gospel. Nevertheless, some scholars observe "the inadequacy of the assumption that the Old Testament is 'fulfilled' in the New Testament."[20] Such an interpretation gives the impression that the Old Testament is of lesser value than the New Testament. Gerard Sloyan warns that the fulfillment principle should not be used to portray the Jews as disloyal and incomplete while, at the same time, the disciples of Jesus as justified. "This is the triumphal understanding that all that has been realized in the Christ of

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18   See Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation*, IV, C, 1.
19   The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation*; see Dyk, *Co głosić*, 29–30.
20   See Waznak, *Introduction*, 83.

glory has been realized in Christians. Since lectionary choices can contribute to this mentality, it must be all the more vigilantly resisted when they are employed."[21]

The more abundant reservoir of the Hebrew Scriptures opened for the liturgical readings is a wonderful fruit of the Second Vatican Council. Those readings, appropriately assigned, in some way complement the Gospel readings. The ample use of the Hebrew Scriptures in the Christian liturgy is a sign of clear rejection of any influence of Marcionism. At the same time, it is the expression that the Church treasures and honors Jewish heritage. As Gail Ramshaw observes, "The lectionaries' proposal of such a way forward between Christians and Jews seeks to repair previous church practice and offers to the wider society a path of reconciliation that is sorely needed."[22]

However, it may also be observed that the harmonization principle that decides the selection of the Old Testament fragments to fit the Gospel does not allow us to enjoy the integral stories in their context but provides only mere snippets. Yet the knowledge of the main stories of the Old Testament is needed to understand the New Testament. The Pontifical Biblical Commission expresses this in the document entitled *The Jewish People and Their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible* (2001): "Without the Old Testament, the New Testament would be an incomprehensible book, a plant deprived of its roots and destined to dry up and wither."[23]

One has to remember that the Old Testament has value in itself as the word of God, although its interpretation in the liturgy is christocentric.[24] An inspiring proposal to integrate at least some main stories of the Old Testament into the lectionary has been offered by the Revised Common Lectionary, prepared and used by some non-Catholic denominations.

Before we develop this issue, it is worth observing that many Christian denominations have been enthusiastic about the new Catholic lectionary and have commented to some effect that it was "Catholicism's greatest gift to Protestant preaching."[25] Episcopal and Presbyterian Churches in the United States have been using the Catholic lectionary since 1970, with the Lutheran Church in the United States joining them in 1973. This was the case until 1983, when a group of Christian denominations prepared their own lectionary on the foundation of the Catholic one. Their lectionary was updated in 1992 and published as the *Revised Common Lectionary*.[26]

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21 Sloyan, "The Lectionary," 135; see Waznak, *Introduction*, 83.
22 Ramshaw, "The Ecumenical Gift," 21.
23 Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People*, 84.
24 "These considerations show the unique importance of the Old Testament for Christians, while at the same time bringing out the newness of christological interpretation. From apostolic times and in her living Tradition, the Church has stressed the unity of God's plan in the two Testaments through the use of typology; this procedure is in no way arbitrary, but is intrinsic to the events related in the sacred text and thus involves the whole of Scripture." See Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, no. 41; Dyk, *Co głosić*, 51–52.
25 White, *Christian Worship*, 139.
26 See West, *Scripture and Memory*.

This revised version was accepted, among others, by Presbyterians, the United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, United Methodists, and Lutheran Churches in the United States.[27]

As Protestants drew inspiration from Catholics for their lectionary, it might have been fruitful for Catholics to have a common lectionary with Lutherans and at least some other Christian denominations.[28] According to the Pontifical Biblical Commission, the lectionary issued at the direction of the Second Vatican Council "[…] even as it stands it has had positive ecumenical results."[29] The reciprocal acknowledgment of the common Sunday lectionary for most Christians would be an inspiration, most of all for preachers. Catholics and other Christians could use reciprocally common aids for preaching during the liturgical year.

Compared to the Catholic one, the *Revised Common Lectionary* had alternative readings of the Old Testament in the Ordinary Time. They were offered not as the snippets harmonized with the Gospel but as the consecutive reading of the chosen parts of the Scriptures based on the *lectio continua* method. It means that the Protestant lectionary abandons the typological method in favor of continuous reading. Thus, in liturgical Year A, readings from the Torah are given because that year, the Gospel of Mathew is read, which is, so to speak, the most "Jewish" Gospel. Mathew's work encompasses many quotations from and allusions to the Old Testament. In liturgical Year B, the Gospel of Mark is read, which refers to Jesus primarily as "the Son of David." That is why it seemed proper to associate those readings with the stories about David. And finally, in Year C, the Gospel of Luke is read, which is marked by the sensitivity to social justice. Such a characteristic led the authors of the *Revised Common Lectionary* to associate it with readings from the Prophets, where there are many interventions concerning social justice.[30]

While the revised Protestant lectionary attracted the attention of some Catholic theologians, there are no initiatives in the Vatican regarding a common lectionary for Catholics and Protestants, at least those who use one.[31] Such a lectionary would be a significant ecumenical gesture and a huge step toward the unity of Christian communities, especially as the obstacles to a common approach to the word of God are not as many as those to intercommunion.[32]

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[27] See Waznak, *Introduction*, 75; Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 52.
[28] Sławiński, "Ecumenism," 47.
[29] Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation*, IV, C, 1.
[30] Sloyan, "Word and Sacrament," 66; Sławiński, "Znaczenie," 393.
[31] Waznak, *Introduction*, 75.
[32] Sławiński, "Ecumenism," 48.

4.2. Thematic Selection of the Second Reading Compatible with the First One and the Gospel

The apostolic texts from the first century bear witness that the early Christians were aware of the intrinsic meaning of the word of God for the Church. They knew that the message of the risen Lord is and remains forever the center of the life of the Church and relevant to every area.[33]

There is a discussion about the practice of the second reading on the Sunday liturgy. The creators of the lectionary did not mean this reading on Sunday in Ordinary Time to harmonize with the other two readings. According to Robert Waznak:

> […] it does cause problems for hearers and preachers. It is like watching your favorite television program and at the same time trying to read the warnings of a hurricane that flash on the bottom of the television screen. Or it is similar to an orchestra beginning with overture of *Romeo and Juliet* (Old Testament Reading), then switching to the music of *Hello Dolly* (second reading), and finally ending with the music of *West Side Story* (Gospel reading). One could discern the connection between *Romeo and Juliet* and *West Side Story* but *Hello Dolly* in the middle of the common theme of star-crossed lovers is confusing and jolting. In a future revision of the lectionary, some liturgists have proposed that the second lesson be read at the end of the liturgy as a dismissal, similar to the *haftarah* at the end of the ancient synagogue service.[34]

This solution to read snippets of the apostolic letters at the end of the liturgy does not seem optimal. Another could be the thematic adjustment of the second reading to the Gospel, similarly to the selection of fragments from the Old Testament. Then all three readings could harmonize, which would facilitate the preachers to concentrate on one topic. Just such a method was used to select all readings on solemnities in Advent and Lent time.

Interestingly, Pope Benedict XVI, in both of his exhortations, i.e., *Sacramentum Caritatis* and *Verbum Domini,* pointed out that "given the importance of the word of God, the quality of homilies needs to be improved. The homily 'is part of the liturgical action' and is meant to foster a deeper understanding of the word of God, so that it can bear fruit in the lives of the faithful" (*SaCar* 46; *VD* 59). As the result of this care for the homily improvement, "the Homiletical Directory" has been suggested as the help for the preachers to enrich their sermons with the catechetical content:

> The catechetical and paraenetic aim of the homily should not be forgotten. During the course of the liturgical year it is appropriate to offer the faithful, prudently and on

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33   See Ramshaw, "The Ecumenical Gift," 21.
34   Waznak, *Introduction*, 82.

the basis of the three-year lectionary, "thematic" homilies treating the great themes of the Christian faith, on the basis of what has been authoritatively proposed by the Magisterium in the four "pillars" of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the recent Compendium, namely: the profession of faith, the celebration of the Christian mystery, life in Christ and Christian prayer (*SaCar* 46).

What could help in the fulfillment of the desire of Pope Benedict XVI might be a reorganization of the texts taken from Apostolic Letters for the liturgy. Instead of continuous or semicontinuous readings, the thematic method might be suggested for selecting the texts from Apostolic Letters adjusted to the liturgical year. The wise selection of those texts might help to explain some main doctrinal themes to the faithful. At the same time, it is important to emphasize that neither the liturgy nor preaching should turn into a theological lecture separate from the celebrated mystery. The biblical readings and the homily are an integral part of the liturgy itself. The sermon should always point to Christ's mystery being present and at work in the Sunday assembly. "The faithful should be able to perceive clearly that the preacher has a compelling desire to present Christ, who must stand at the centre of every homily (*VD* 59)."

The liturgy is, first and foremost, a celebration of the mystery of Christ. Its didactic role is quite secondary to the most important, salvific, and cult anamnetic one. Therefore, it would be difficult to subordinate the texts of Sacred Scripture to specific theological themes. Thus, the current solution to read apostolic texts in a semicontinuous way appears optimal. At most, one can think of introducing apostolic works that are not heard during the Sunday liturgy. All theological additions to the biblical text are the task of the homily, which, as part of the liturgy, must respect its nature. This must also be respected in the length of the sermon because, as observes Pope Francis: "If the homily goes on too long, it will affect two characteristic elements of the liturgical celebration: its balance and its rhythm. […] This means that the words of the preacher must be measured, so that the Lord, more than his minister, will be the centre of attention" (*EG* 138).

4.3. Enrichment of the Sunday Lectionary with Texts Indicating the Role of Women in the History of Salvation

Another aspect of possible enrichment of the lectionary concerns the role of women. As we know, biblical texts were written two millennia ago in a patriarchal culture. In that time and culture, the role of women was not appreciated as much as it is nowadays. It is enough to mention that in the 19th century, it was still not easy for women to study. For example, Saint Edith Stein (1891–1942) was allowed to write and defend her doctorate in Philosophy, but even her promotor Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) was against her habilitation – and the following position it would give her –because

she was a woman. To illustrate the long-lasting unjust treatment of women, it is suffi-
cient to mention their exclusion from voting during political elections. For instance,
women in Poland received the right to vote in 1918, in Hungary in 1920, in Switzer-
land and Liechtenstein in 1971, and in the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden as late
as 1991.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the lectionary has been prepared by a special
group of theologians called *Coetus XI*. It consisted of eighteen celibatarian men from
six developed Western countries under the leadership of Fr. Cipriano Vagaggini,
OSB (1909–1999).[35] Some theologians believe that the lectionary selections conserve
the androcentrism of the Bible.[36] For example, a feminist author, Marjorie Procter-
Smith, writes: "While biblical texts themselves generally present women as adjuncts
to men, the lectionary hermeneutic, by intention to be selective, and by its tendency
to focus on a few central major figures, such as Moses, David and Elijah, or the male
disciples of Jesus (especially Peter and Paul), increase this marginalization of women
characters."[37]

There are some significant feminine figures in the Bible, including Deborah,
Tamar, Judith, Ruth, Naomi, Esther, Bathsheba, Anna – mother of Samson, Susan-
na from the Book of Daniel, Anna the Prophetess, the Mother of Jesus, Elizabeth, and
many others. They include widows, mothers, and virgins. Unfortunately, the stories
of Esther, Ruth, Judith and other women are not read on Sundays. And such omis-
sion cannot be explained by the violence found in the books of Esther or Judith
since the violent passages about David beheading Goliath are included in the Sunday
lectionary.[38]

Indeed, the famous story about the worthy wife depicted in chapter 31 of Prov-
erbs was chosen for the thirty-third Sunday of Year A. Still, it is not given in full:
the passages mentioning that she serves her husband are included, but the descrip-
tion of how aptly she manages merchandise and "girds herself with strength, and
makes her arms strong" are omitted (Prov 31:17).[39]

Some Old Testament stories involving women have a strong sexual accent, which
was considered better omitted. Nowadays, conversations about sexual orientation and
such activities are no longer taboo. However, people seem shyer about talking about
death than sex or gender. It is certainly not easy for celibate preachers to interpret
such texts in the liturgy. On the other hand, would it not be an opportunity to talk
about some problems discussed daily in marriages, which form the nucleus of society?

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[35] See Bonneau, *Sunday Lectionary*, 28–29; Sławiński, "Ecumenism," 46–47. According to Renato De Zan
(*Introduzione*, 57), that group consisted initially of 7, then briefly of 17, and at the end of 900 experts in
the field of liturgy, biblical and pastoral studies, and catechetics.
[36] Waznak, *Introduction*, 85.
[37] Procter-Smith, "Lectionaries," 89; Waznak, *Introduction*, 85.
[38] Fox, "Strange Omission," 13; See Waznak, *Introduction*, 85.
[39] See Waznak, *Introduction*, 85.

Since the promulgation of the lectionary, feminist studies have developed significantly. In the apostolic letter, *Mulieris Dignitatem,* of August 15, 1988, Pope John Paul II acknowledged the irreplaceable role of women in the history of salvation.[40] The renewed lectionary could give the inspiration to explain the development of the understanding of the dignity of women and their indispensable role in society.

Conclusions

Summing up, the Sunday celebration of the Eucharist is, for most Christians, the main or even the only one moment in which they come into contact with the word of God, which is taken from the lectionary. This lectionary used in the Roman liturgy is not a perfect book, but it still remains a wonderful work of the liturgical and doxological hermeneutic of the Bible. It means that the reading from the lectionary is part of the liturgical event of praise.[41] The Introduction to the lectionary states: "The Church is nourished spiritually at the table of God's word and at the table of the Eucharist: from the one it grows in wisdom and from the other in holiness. In the word of God the divine covenant is announced; in the Eucharist the new and everlasting covenant is renewed. The spoken word of God brings to mind the history of salvation; the Eucharist embodies it in the sacramental signs of the liturgy."[42]

They both form but one single act of divine worship, which "offers the sacrifice of praise to God and makes available to God's creatures the fullness of redemption."[43] Even though the partial renewal of the lectionary would be desired, this liturgical book, as it is, remains a treasure of the Roman Church, solid spiritual nourishment, and an inspiring source for preaching.

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[40] See John Paul II, *Mulieris Dignitatem*, no. 27.
[41] See Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* 138; Waznak, *Introduction*, 88.
[42] Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship, *General Introduction to the Lectionary*, no. 10.
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Verbum
Vitae

Catholic Social Teaching
as a Source of Enrichment of the Moral
Dimension of Social Enterprise Management

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Abstract: Social enterprises perceive social and environmental issues as primary objectives of their hybrid socio-economic activities. They believe that financial stability is a prerequisite, not a goal. This approach is similar to Catholic social teaching (CST). The detailed content of the social encyclicals is a valuable means of deeper exploration and enrichment of the moral dimension of social enterprise management. The following article analyses social entrepreneurship from the point of view of the fundamental principles of CST and theological premises. The reference to the management of a social enterprise of the supreme personalistic standard and principles such as the common good, subsidiarity, and solidarity allows the moral dimension of this process to be understood more deeply. The paper was created based on a method appropriate to research focused on moral theology and CST. First, the content of selected literature on the subject (social entrepreneurship) and carefully selected theological-moral sources (especially papal documents and publications by CST researchers) were analysed. Subsequently, the results of the analysis were subjected to inference and conceptual work in relation to the adopted general research objective and specific research tasks: the phenomenon of social enterprises was described; the specific features and limitations of the social enterprise management process were identified; the fundamental principles of Catholic social teaching as normative criteria for social enterprise management were reviewed; the possibility of applying the aforementioned CST principles to social enterprise practice was discussed and presented, and the final conclusions were formulated.

Keywords: Catholic social teaching, management, principles of social life, social enterprise, social entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is a relatively new area of research. The development of this discipline over the past few decades can be linked to a growing interest among researchers, and more broadly among society as a whole, in the social, environmental, and moral aspects of economic activity.

The idea of social entrepreneurship can be defined by four traits: (1) the social purpose of the activity resulting in the creation of social values for the benefit of people in need of support (at risk of social exclusion), society (particularly the local community) or the environment; (2) market orientation – a clearly profit-making form of activity utilising business strategies, methods, and financial profit as a means to fulfil an established mission or social purpose; (3) the innovative nature of the venture

(social innovation); (4) the implementation of a specific venture through an organisation such as a social enterprise.[1]

The first characteristic of social entrepreneurship, which relates to the creation of social value, including social change, is associated with its ethical dimension. Furthermore, many definitions of social entrepreneurship emphasise the presence of a "strong ethical fibre" in the activities undertaken by social entrepreneurs.[2] In this context, it is worth noting that the overwhelming minority is made up of researchers who engage in a discussion on the moral aspects of social enterprises.[3] While numerous publications on business ethics or corporate social responsibility (CSR) are available, analyses that take into account the organisational specificity of social enterprises appear to be essential in the case of social entrepreneurship. These organisations are quite different from commercial enterprises, which are usually oriented towards profit maximisation.

The ethical perspective adopted by the researcher is also relevant in this type of research. Every variety of normative ethics (e.g. utilitarian ethics, ethics of duty, ethics of responsibility, etc.) offers an original contribution to the understanding of the moral dimension of human behaviour, including the management of a social enterprise. Consequently, what seems to be particularly worthwhile – if only due to the marginal interest of researchers in this approach – is a discussion about the potential that the fundamental principles of Catholic social teaching exhibit in relation to the moral dimension of social enterprise management. Such a research perspective is adopted in this article.[4] In addition, it is worth emphasising that Pope John Paul II categorised CST as research of a theological and moral nature.[5] The essential content of CST is included in the papal encyclicals. Starting with *Rerum Novarum*, an encyclical of Leo XIII published in 1891, popes have addressed pressing issues relating to the times in which they lived. In the discourse on the moral dimension of social enterprise management, the social teaching of John Paul II (especially *Centesimus Annus*) and the encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, written by Benedict XVI, deserve special attention.

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1 Choi – Majumdar, "Social Entrepreneurship."
2 Bacq – Janssen, "The Multiple Faces," 382.
3 A valuable review of the literature on social entrepreneurship includes the following publications: Nur Suriaty, "The Discussion"; Hota – Subramanian – Narayanamurthy, "Mapping the Intellectual Structure." On the other hand, the rationale for undertaking a broader study on the ethical dimension of social entrepreneurship is described, among others, by Elizabeth Chell *et al.* in "Social Entrepreneurship."
4 At this point, the author would like to emphasise once again that CST is one of many possible viewpoints from which the moral dimension of social enterprise management can be analysed. For readers who are perhaps less familiar with this type of approach, it is worth clarifying that the proposed approach does not entail narrowing the motives of social entrepreneurs to those of a spiritual nature only. In fact, CST represents a variety of normative social ethics that stems from a particular religious and moral tradition. Moreover, it is a universal proposal, not a confessional one, since its core consists of personalistic ethics emphasising the dignity of every human person above anything else. Therefore, it calls for the affirmation of the subjectivity of every person as a participant in all social, economic, and political structures.
5 John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, no. 41; John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, no. 55.

The article aims to assess the contribution that the principles of CST can make to the discovery and enrichment of the moral dimensions of social enterprise management. It is not enough to assume *a priori* that a social enterprise (through its leaders and employees) is simply supposed to "do good." From the point of view of CST principles, it is necessary to look critically at, among other things: how – taking into account the moral aspects – a social enterprise should be organised; how – taking into account the ethical dimension – it should be managed; and what moral principles should social managers follow. They constitute the key research questions of this article.

A three-stage research procedure was adopted, which is characteristic of CST and determines the structure of the content. It includes: (1) a description of the subject of the research; (2) a presentation of the normative contribution of CST to the analysed subject; and (3) an indication of practical recommendations taking into account the normative considerations of the subject under study. Therefore, the selection of the publication as research material for the analysis was based on the criterion of substantive suitability relating to the implementation of specific research tasks, which – at the same time – determine the structure of the content of the article. The aforementioned tasks include: (1) a description of the phenomenon of social enterprises; (2) an indication of specific features and limitations of social enterprise management; (3) a discussion on the fundamental principles of Catholic social teaching as normative criteria of social enterprise management; (4) a discussion and presentation of the possibilities of applying the analysed principles of CST to the social entrepreneurship practice; and (5) a presentation of final conclusions.

The paper was created based on a method appropriate to research focused on moral theology and CST. First, the content of selected literature on the subject (social entrepreneurship) and carefully selected theological-moral sources (especially papal documents and publications by CST researchers) was analysed. The results of the analysis were then subjected to inference and conceptual work in relation to the general research objective and specific research tasks adopted.

1. The Phenomenon of Social Enterprises

In the literature, "social enterprise" is often used as an umbrella term referring to different types of social enterprises and various organisational and legal forms. In different countries and regions of the world, it is not uncommon for the social enterprise concept to cover different forms of specific objectives or ways of implementing social undertakings. That is why the term "social venture" – as Marzena Starnawska notes – is "the most universal term representing what is happening

in social entrepreneurship, as it does not refer to any particular sector and does not point to any particular organisational and legal form."[6]

Setting aside the widespread debate on the term social enterprise,[7] it is important to identify three dominant schools defining a social enterprise:[8] (1) earned income – a social enterprise is any form of commercial activity that is undertaken by a non-profit organisation to fulfil its mission or (within the same approach) a commercial enterprise pursuing social objectives can be considered a social enterprise (this occurs, for example, in the case of CSR initiatives); (2) social innovation – this approach emphasises the significance of social innovation in increasing the level of effectiveness of social enterprises, at the same time appreciating the key role of the social entrepreneur as a charismatic leader, social change agent and social businessman who seeks innovative solutions to existing social problems; (3) EMES[9] – this strand, explained below, results from the work of a network of collaborating universities and researchers in Europe who undertake research on social enterprises and social entrepreneurship.

The first two approaches originated in the United States, while the third concept emerged in Europe. The twofold – North American and European – definition of social entrepreneurship stems from varying cultural, historical, social, political, and economic contexts in which social enterprises have developed on these continents. The fundamental difference between these approaches also lies in the diverse perception of social enterprise leaders. The European continent emphasises the associative nature of social entrepreneurship. The key role is played by a group of citizens and their joint initiative, self-help, and public-private partnerships. However, in the American model, social enterprise initiatives are created thanks to the involvement of individuals and their specific characteristics, such as entrepreneurship, charismatic leadership and social inclinations. Therefore, a social enterprise in the United States combines the aspect of social innovation with market-based activities and the use of management methods characteristic of private enterprises.[10]

The American understanding of a social enterprise includes a number of different legal forms: private profit-oriented businesses engaged in socially beneficial activities (corporate social responsibility, corporate philanthropies); dual-purpose businesses combining commercial and social objectives; non-profit (social purpose)

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6   Starnawska, "Przedsiębiorczość społeczna," 172–173.
7   For the discussion about the definition of a social enterprise – see: Ciepielewska-Kowalik *et al.*, *Social Enterprise in Poland.*
8   Starnawska, "Przedsiębiorczość społeczna."
9   The abbreviation EMES comes from the French title of a research project "L'EMergence de l'Entreprise Sociale en Europe" (Eng. "The Emergence of Social Enterprises in Europe"), carried out between 1996 and 1999 on behalf of the EC Directorate-General for Research and Innovation – more information available at www.emes.net.
10   Defourny – Nyssens, "Conceptions of Social Enterprise."

organisations that undertake market activities in order to be able to fulfil a social mission.[11]

In Europe, the concept of a social enterprise is not uniform either. The prevailing definition, as mentioned earlier, is that developed by the EMES Network. According to this interpretation, a social enterprise can be identified by the following economic criteria: (1) continuous activity producing goods and/or services, (2) undertaking a significant level of economic risk, and (3) a minimum level of paid work; as well as social criteria: (1) an explicit aim to benefit the community, (2) an initiative launched by a group of citizens or civil society organisations, (3) a limited profit distribution; combined with participatory governance: (1) a high degree of autonomy, (2) decision-making power not based on capital ownership, and (3) participatory nature, which involves various parties affected by the activity.[12]

As the authors of this definition emphasise, the indicated criteria should not be seen as necessary "conditions" that an organisation must meet in order to be seen as a social enterprise, but as a description of the "ideal type" of such a business. It is, therefore, a methodological tool rather than a normative set of elements that make up a social enterprise.[13]

It is worth noting that social enterprises adopt various organisational forms in different countries, depending on the legal system and the cultural and historical background of the development of the non-profit sector. As a result, the social enterprise sector includes both new organisational formations (e.g. in Poland, this includes social cooperatives) and traditional third-sector organisations (foundations, associations).[14] The increasing importance of this sector leads to a growing interest in practical aspects of social enterprise management in the field of research. It is especially important to understand the determinants of the success of these organisations. Factors conditioning the efficiency and effectiveness of social enterprises lie in the human layer (management and employees), as well as in other internal resources of the organisation and its environment.[15]

2. Characteristics of Social Enterprise Management

Every organisation is isolated from its environment, with which it interacts in a specific manner. Social enterprises operate in settings involving specific challenges, constraints, opportunities, and threats. The role of a social manager is to deal with these

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[11] Kerlin, "Social Enterprise."
[12] Defourny – Nyssens, *The EMES Approach*, 12–15.
[13] Defourny – Nyssens, "Social Enterprise in Europe," 239.
[14] Brzuska – Kukulak-Dolata – Nyk, *Ekonomia społeczna*, 19–53.
[15] Wronka-Pośpiech – Frączkiewicz-Wronka – Dobrowolska, "Osobowościowe wyznaczniki pracy," 108.

conditions. As Martyna Wronka-Pośpiech *et al.* point out, according to contingency theories of leadership,[16] it is essential to adapt the management and leadership styles to the given situation and organisational context.[17]

The nature of social enterprises, which influences the manner in which they are managed, is determined by the inclusion and prioritisation of social objectives in their mission. This orientation towards creating social transformation facilitates the establishment of a well-defined direction for the actions of managers and employees. At this point, it is particularly important to engage in dialogue with stakeholders and create a coherent organisational culture.[18]

It is closely linked to another factor determining the functioning of these organisations, namely financial resources. Their level is reduced by profit, as it is not the purpose of social enterprises, but rather a means to achieve their social mission. As a result, the managers of these entities – unlike managers in charge of commercial enterprises in which profits can be reinvested – have to be much more concerned about financial stability. However, social managers are obliged not only to look for diverse sources of funding (which will allow them to gather the financial capital necessary to invest in innovative initiatives in support of social change),[19] but they should also remember about maintaining liquidity at the business level.[20]

Furthermore, it should be noted that in the process of raising funds for a social enterprise's mission activities (also from a broad range of non-business sources), the management often becomes somewhat dependent on various stakeholder groups (e.g., public sector authorities, taxpayers, the unemployed and employees). Each of these groups may pursue different goals, develop different perceptions, and have different expectations of activities undertaken by social organisations.[21] This poses a considerable management challenge, but in this case, the success depends on the ability of a social enterprise to manage issues that are relevant to its stakeholders. This is what ultimately plays a crucial role in legitimising and accounting for the assigned responsibilities.[22]

In addition, the management of a social enterprise requires not only a modern approach (i.e., planning, good organisation of work and resources, leading and controlling) but also taking into account the uniqueness of the human factor involved in this type of organisation. The personnel and even the management of social cooperatives – which by definition have a democratic management style – are often

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16   Fiedler, *A Theory of Leadership*; Vroom – Yetton, *Leadership.*
17   Wronka-Pośpiech – Frączkiewicz-Wronka – Dobrowolska, "Osobowościowe wyznaczniki pracy," 109.
18   Wronka-Pośpiech, "Kulturowe uwarunkowania zarządzania przedsiębiorstwem społecznym."
19   Wronka-Pośpiech – Frączkiewicz-Wronka – Dobrowolska, "Osobowościowe wyznaczniki pracy," 108–109.
20   Clark – Brennan, "Entrepreneurship."
21   Brzuska – Kukulak – Dolata – Nyk, *Ekonomia społeczna*, 58.
22   Balser – McClusky, "Managing Stakeholder Relationships"; Wronka-Pośpiech – Frączkiewicz-Wronka – Dobrowolska, "Osobowościowe wyznaczniki pracy," 109.

made up of people from socially excluded groups or groups at risk of social marginalisation.[23]

However, it appears that the ability to achieve goals set by a given organisation depends mostly on the qualities and motivation of the social entrepreneur/manager.[24] It is a person who is especially challenged to pursue a mission that encompasses social and economic objectives. They must continuously adapt the enterprise's strategy to external market requirements, other manifestations of the turbulent environment, as well as dynamic changes occurring in the non-profit sector. Moreover, the operation at the intersection of business and social sectors means that they have to interact with various stakeholder groups and manage these relationships skilfully. While ensuring revenue generation, they cannot stop focusing on their social mission and the creation of social impact.[25] Some researchers emphasise that social entrepreneurs exhibit a distinctive type of socio-moral commitment.[26] Others highlight traits such as altruism, indignation and disagreement with existing inequalities and injustices[27] or compassion.[28] Roger L. Martin and Sally Osberg point out that when searching for specific characteristics distinguishing social entrepreneurs from commercial entrepreneurs, it is important to focus first and foremost on the values benefitting from their actions.[29] In turn, the implementation of certain values is guarded by relevant principles.

3. CST Principles as Normative Criteria for the Management of the Social Enterprise

CST provides theological and moral principles to give insight into the complexity of phenomena and processes occurring in the social sphere, including the economic sector. Therefore, they can also be applied to the management of social enterprises. The four fundamental principles of CST include: (1) the dignity of a human person, (2) the common good, (3) subsidiarity, and (4) solidarity.[30]

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23   Brzuska – Kukulak-Dolata – Nyk, *Ekonomia społeczna*, 58.
24   Zadroga, "Professional Ethics," 501–504.
25   Wronka-Pośpiech – Frączkiewicz-Wronka – Dobrowolska, "Osobowościowe wyznaczniki pracy," 109.
26   Wronka-Pośpiech – Frączkiewicz-Wronka – Dobrowolska, "Osobowościowe wyznaczniki pracy," 110; Nicholls, "Playing the Field."
27   Yujuico, "Connecting the Dots."
28   Miller – Wesley – Williams, "Educating the Minds."
29   Martin – Osberg, "Social Entrepreneurship"; Wronka-Pośpiech – Frączkiewicz-Wronka – Dobrowolska, "Osobowościowe wyznaczniki pracy," 110.
30   The documents of the Church's social doctrine do not explicitly systematise social principles. It is rather the result of the efforts of researchers dealing with Catholic social teaching. Nevertheless, it is certainly possible to notice their somewhat hierarchical nature. The key guiding rule is the personalistic standard,

Human dignity, which stems primarily from the revealed truth of man's creation in the image of God (Gen 1:26–31; Gen 2:4b-7:18–25), means that every human person has an intrinsic value that should be respected in every dimension of social life. This personalistic rule constitutes the foundation and root of all other principles of Catholic social teaching and of the entire content of the Church's social doctrine.[31]

It is in the spirit of personalism that Benedict XVI placed persons and their communities (including enterprises) at the centre of social thought in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*. The Pope emphasised that "the economy needs ethics." More importantly, he adds that it cannot be "any ethics whatsoever, but an ethics which is people-centred" (*CV* 45). Thus, he presents a thesis that only personalistic ethics, which refers to the fundamental principle of recognising and respecting the dignity of the human person and forbids treating a human being as a tool serving any (also economic) purpose, can uphold an authentic moral order in business, including social entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial ethics that does not take into account the inviolable dignity of the human person and the transcendent value of natural moral norms "inevitably risks losing its distinctive nature and it falls prey to forms of exploitation; more specifically, it risks becoming subservient to existing economic and financial systems rather than correcting their dysfunctional aspects. Among other things, it risks being used to justify the financing of projects that are in reality unethical" (*CV* 45). This is why the principle of Christian personalism, the implementation of which leads to responsible behaviour with respect to each person and to the authentic fulfilment of people through self-giving to others (which is a manifestation of love), is so significant. Such an understanding of ethical standards allows recognising that morality is not – as in the case of deontonomism – constituted by standards or detailed rules imposed on mankind (for example, in the form of codes of professional ethics), but by the fulfilment of a person through a morally good act.[32]

The common good means that all social activities and institutions should be oriented towards the improvement of the human person and of humanity as a whole. Generally, it can be understood as the duty to organise social conditions, which ensure that human beings and whole communities can reach their potential by creating a favourable environment. The CST tradition contains extensive reflections on the common good, but it is John XXIII's definition that can shed important light on issues analysed in this article. The Pope defines this principle as "the sum total of

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or, in other words, the principle of the dignity of the human person. This is the basis from which – like a root – grow other principles and the detailed content of the Church's social teaching. Furthermore, each of the principles of social life can be regarded as a concretised application of the personalistic standard to a particular area or aspect of the said life. Apart from the aforementioned dignity of the human person, *the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* also specifically identifies the principle of the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity (no. 160). See also: Gocko, "Zasady nauki społecznej."

31 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium*, no. 160.
32 Derdziuk, "The Integrating Function of Virtue."

those conditions of social living, whereby people are enabled more fully and more readily to achieve their own perfection" (*MM* 65).

It is worth emphasising that, from the perspective of CST, the common good is not an external rule imposed on business but rather an internal principle describing the good created by the business and the way in which this good is linked to the development of the person who works there. The common good helps to understand what actions can lead to the prospering of good business.[33] In view of this principle, it is thus worth enriching the concept of social enterprise management to steer it in the direction of *good* social entrepreneurship. In this context, John F. McVea and Michael J. Naughton define "well-managed enterprise" by identifying – following the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace[34] – three fundamental criteria: (1) "good goods" – the production of goods (commodities) and offering services that are genuinely good; (2) "good work" – the organisation of work in such a way that workers develop their potential and talents; (3) "good wealth" – the creation of wealth (prosperity) in a sustainable way and its equitable distribution. When all three types of goods are present, enterprises provide social conditions that increase the likelihood of human development. Each of these interrelated goods is supported by principles that help the leader to structure organisational processes in a way that creates a community designed to serve the development of all people associated with the enterprise.[35]

Subsidiarity is a reminder that it is a grave mistake to deprive individual human beings and communities of what they can achieve on their own initiative. For this reason, the principle offers people and communities the freedom to contribute to the development of each human person, as well as the human family as a whole. In CST, it is generally understood as the duty to protect and foster the manifestation of the inherent social nature of human beings. Its deepest meaning was formulated by Pius XI in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno*: "just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organisations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to the members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them" (*QA* 79).

In this light, the principle of subsidiarity is contrasted with all forms of overprotectiveness, bureaucracy, and the exaggerated presence of the state and public authorities in social life, while its implementation is fostered by, among other things, appreciation of the importance of associations and intermediate organisations as well

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33   Marek – Jabłoński, "Care of the Common Good."
34   Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Vocation of the Business Leader.*
35   McVea – Naughton, "Enriching Social Entrepreneurship," 4, 7.

as their support, for example, through legislative and institutional assistance. This allows the intermediate social bodies, such as social enterprises, to properly perform tasks constituting their responsibility.[36]

Solidarity – as stated by John Paul II – is not some "feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" (*SRS* 38). This principle encourages sharing resources, time, talents, and skills with those who suffer from poverty, oppression, lack of freedom, illness, disability, old age, etc. After all, each person should (primarily out of love) care for every neighbour, as Jesus Christ teaches in the Gospel (Mark 12:29–31; John 13:34). In the case of a social enterprise, managers should make every effort to improve – if necessary – the conditions and quality of life of all individuals with whom their organisation interacts. It may include employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders, and the communities in which they operate. For instance, they should pay attention to whether any of their employees are suffering. Then, they should ask themselves: how can we help? How can we put the principle of solidarity, expressed most profoundly in the commandment to love our neighbour, into practice in our social enterprise? In this sense, social entrepreneurship is sometimes referred to as a solidarity economy.[37]

4. Results and Discussion: Implications for Social Enterprise Management

A personalistic view of the morality of economic life cannot, however, stop at the level of general ethical theories and postulates. Respect for the dignity of every person without exception should be the basis and key criterion of any specific recommendation relating to the practice of social entrepreneurship. This is why John Paul II, in his encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, emphasises that an enterprise (including a social enterprise) should first and foremost serve humans, in accordance with their material, intellectual, moral, spiritual as well as religious requirements (*CA* 34–35). Consequently, it should not operate only to produce certain material goods or services in order to multiply the financial profit of the capital owner: "profitability is not the only indicator of a firm's condition. It is possible for the financial accounts to be in order, and yet for the people — who make up the firm's most valuable asset — to be humiliated and their dignity offended" (*CA* 35). In this context, John Paul II declares

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36 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium*, no. 186–187.
37 Pastor – Benner, *Solidarity Economics.*

that "the purpose of a business firm is not simply to make a profit, but is to be found in its very existence as a community of persons" (*CA* 35). It is worth noting that this approach is consistent with the model of the functioning of the ideal social enterprise. However, the social entrepreneur's recognition of the central role of the human person in the process of organisational management does not indicate that they should be less concerned about generating a financial profit. After all, it is by no means a matter of bankrupting a company in the name of personalism and other moral principles. What is needed is a strategy for optimising profit rather than maximising it at all costs. It is crucial to be aware of for whom and why profit is being made. This will help to avoid a rift between the need to fulfil the humanistic and social goals of social entrepreneurship and economic efficiency. For, as John Paul II stresses, "the lives of human beings, their souls, their bodies, are more precious goods than any form of accumulated wealth. What use is it to accumulate material goods in ever-increasing quantities," asks the Pope, "if the enterprise itself, which is a community of persons, is in danger of losing its soul, its true identity?"[38]

It is thus imperative to focus on its "inside" in the process of managing a social enterprise and give this specific working environment a human, deeply personalistic dimension. This implies the creation of working conditions and the implementation of a management model in which "the development of personal capabilities is accompanied by the efficient and rational production of goods and services and helps the employee to recognise that they are truly working for themselves."[39]

At the same time, it should be noted that genuine respect for the dignity of the human person and their right to full development within a social enterprise promotes greater productivity. This is because "the integral development of the human person through work does not impede but rather promotes the greater productivity" (*CA* 43). In contrast, the violation of the dignity of the human person is not only "morally inadmissible" but also "will eventually have negative repercussions on the firm's economic efficiency" (*CA* 35).

The personalistic emphasis regarding social entrepreneurship is also revealed in Benedict XVI's statement: "the primary capital to be safeguarded and valued is man, the human person in his or her integrity: 'Man is the source, the focus and the aim of all economic and social life'" (*CV* 25). The encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* contains a reflection on dual-purpose (hybrid) businesses, which explicitly refers to the social enterprise. According to the Pope, "alongside profit-oriented private enterprise and the various types of public enterprise, there must be room for commercial entities based on mutualist principles and pursuing social ends" (*CV* 38).

Hybrid business models introduce the "logic of gift" and the "principle of gratuitousness" (*CV* 34) as an expression of brotherly love, both to the "logic of the market"

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38   John Paul II, "L'incontro con i lavoratori, con gli imprenditori," 1770.
39   John Paul II, "L'incontro con i rappresentanti del mondo del lavoro," 1203.

(*CV* 36) and to the "logic of the state" (*CV* 39). The dynamics of the "logic of gift" are based on the dynamics of an individual aiming to achieve integral development: "the human person by nature is actively involved in his own development" (*CV* 68). Against this background, Benedict XVI emphasises that businesses too must first and foremost serve "integral human development" (*CV* 11, 17–18, 23, 30). They do not exist to generate profit but to produce goods and services that satisfy human needs. Profit is only an indication that they are working efficiently. Therefore, an enterprise should implement projects not to maximise profits, but to align productivity with the requirements of moral and social responsibility.[40]

What is more, the motivation of entrepreneurs must not be limited to financial incentives. The Pope believes that people involved in business have a vocation. In his view, business – like any human institution – must transcend the social sphere and become part of God's plan of salvation. All human institutions should consequently strive to infiltrate their structures – based, after all, on human relationships – with a manner of thinking and acting in accordance with God's Revelation. By doing so, Benedict XVI highlights the transcendent purpose of economic activity. He adds that the economy (and also social entrepreneurship) cannot become ethical "merely by virtue of an external label, but by its respect for requirements intrinsic to its very nature" (*CV* 45).

This theological view has a distinctly biblical basis. Saint Peter encourages everyone to "participate in the divine nature" (2 Pet 1:4). Saint Paul expresses a similar idea, stating that Christians are "no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household" (Eph 2:19). The recognition of God as the Father by one Spirit (Eph 2:18) consequently establishes a universal brotherhood among them. Moreover, it emphasises the importance of social structures fostering fraternity, friendship, solidarity and love, even if humanity is already united and reconciled to God "in one body [...] through the cross" (Eph 2:16). For "in Christ we, though many, form one body" (Rom 12:5) and we have been called to "serve one another humbly in love" (Gal 5:13), "build each other up" (1 Thess 5:11) and "strive to do what is good for each other" (1 Thess 5:15).[41]

As mentioned in the earlier part of this article, a well-functioning social enterprise – as a specific form of creating the common good – produces three interdependent sets of goods: good goods, good work and good wealth. With regard to CST, the "good goods" criterion implies that a good social entrepreneur maintains solidarity with the poor. They become aware of opportunities to serve those in particular need, as well as the disadvantaged and undervalued in contemporary society. In the case of social entrepreneurs, such solidarity, which often stems from a deep sensitivity to the suffering of the vulnerable, is expressed through a firm and persistent

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40   Grassl, "Hybrid Forms of Business." DOI: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-011-1182-5.
41   Grassl, "Hybrid Forms of Business," 5–6. DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1776125.

commitment to the common good.[42] The second good created by a good social entrepreneur is the organisation of good work, in which employees can develop their talents and potential. At the heart of good work lies the principle of cherishing the dignity of human labour and its subjective dimension. A good social enterprise manager recognises that work affects not only their character but also the employees they manage and work with. From the perspective of CST, this recognition should prompt good social entrepreneurs to structure work also according to the principle of subsidiarity. This principle – similarly to the common good – promotes employee development by providing them with opportunities to use their talents and skills that help to achieve the organisation's mission. In practice, it is necessary to design the work performed by the personnel in such a way as to use their talents and skills; to teach, develop and adequately equip employees by providing them with the right tools, training and experience that allows them to perform their tasks; and to establish strong relationships with the staff based on mutual respect and trust.[43] Thirdly, a good social entrepreneur must be aware that, according to CST, there are two – closely related – dimensions of "good wealth": creation and distribution. It is not possible to distribute wealth if it has not been created. Simultaneously, it is not possible to create wealth without distributing it fairly to those who have created it. Like the good servants in the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14–30), entrepreneurs create wealth by making creative use of the available resources and finding innovative ways to produce more than what they have received. In business, this is referred to as the "added value." That is why every good entrepreneur (including a social entrepreneur) wanting to ensure the viability of their organisation must use resources efficiently and maintain adequate levels of revenue, high levels of productivity and effectiveness. For the social entrepreneur, the creation of wealth entails a moral obligation to distribute it. At the same time, it is necessary to emphasise that this task does not consist in carrying out the distribution but ensuring that this process is guided by the principle of equitableness. According to the CST, the principle of equitable distribution requires the allocation of wealth in a way that creates fair and appropriate relationships with those who have participated in its creation. In practice, this rule confronts entrepreneurs with a series of intricate and difficult moral challenges that address fundamental issues of justice and fairness. In fact, the issue of equitable distribution involves the resolution of moral implications related to how to set prices and employee remuneration, how to manage liabilities and receivables, how to pay taxes, and how to allocate benefits and provide support within the framework of a declared social mission.[44]

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[42]   McVea – Naughton, "Enriching Social Entrepreneurship," 7–9.
[43]   McVea – Naughton, "Enriching Social Entrepreneurship," 9–12.
[44]   McVea – Naughton, "Enriching Social Entrepreneurship," 12–14.

With regard to the principle of subsidiarity, it is crucial to respect the nature of social enterprises as grassroots organisations created as part of a civil society initiative. Such a stance should be reflected in the appreciation of their specificity on the part of the entities and communities in their organisational environment, which takes the form of respect for their mission and the promotion of their unrestricted freedom and responsibility for the undertaken actions.[45] In contrast, a tangible manifestation of the implementation of the principle of subsidiarity in the internal management of a social enterprise is an approach in which managers strive for financial independence from external institutions. It is expressed in attitudes and activities focused on raising funds mainly at one's own risk, as well as through one's own efforts and resources, that is, in the form of business activities. This allows shifting away from an "extended hand" attitude, which is the case with many NGOs and leads to almost complete dependence on the preferences of public or private donors. Guided by the principle of subsidiarity, well-managed social enterprises aim to become sovereign entities capable of taking action in the public sphere in line with their own mission and based on their own resources (including financial). In practice, this means that managers have to independently formulate development strategies based on their own resources, exercising true self-governance and striving to ensure the well-being of citizens. In this way, the chance of not falling into the trap of becoming an "extension" of public institutions or a hostage to philanthropic emotions in favour of a real implementation of the notion of empowerment becomes real.[46]

When referring solidarity to social enterprises, it is crucial to emphasise that CST acknowledges the great potential of private organisations that are not oriented towards profit-generating activities, such as social enterprises, for solving many human problems. It is due to the fact that such organisations are characterised by the courageous pursuit of a harmonious combination of productive efficiency and interpersonal solidarity.[47] "Civil society, organised into its intermediate groups, is capable of contributing to the attainment of the common good by placing itself in a relationship of collaboration and effective complementarities with respect to the State and the market. It thus encourages the development of a fitting economic democracy. In this context, State intervention should be characterised by genuine solidarity, which as such must never be separated from subsidiarity."[48] The development of the social enterprise sector has played an instrumental role in revealing many of the hidden or ignored problems of the capitalist economy, including the marginalisation of those who cannot afford to access the market because of their limited purchasing power or whose dysfunctions do not allow them to compete with others on

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45   Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium*, no. 357.
46   Frączak – Wygnański, *Polski model ekonomii społecznej,* 15.
47   Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium*, no. 357.
48   Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium*, no. 356.

the open labour market. The inventiveness of social entrepreneurs and the social innovations that they propose are often applied to these types of problems in a manner that is more effective than traditional government or traditional charity solutions. Consequently, there are two main ways in which social entrepreneurs can pursue solidarity with the poor in relation to good goods. The first involves the creation of goods and services that serve the poor, while the second consists in the establishment of conditions that allow empowerment and foster self-respect among those in need.[49]

Conclusions

Social enterprises perceive social and environmental issues as primary objectives of their hybrid activities. They regard financial stability as a prerequisite, not a goal. Such an approach is close to CST. Furthermore, the detailed content of social encyclicals constitutes a valuable means of deeper exploration and enrichment of the moral dimension of social enterprise management.

The foregoing discourse allows concluding that social entrepreneurship, like economic life as a whole, should not be devoid of references to moral principles and even more – to theological content. This view is supported by the analysis of the fundamental principles of CST. The moral dimension of social enterprise management can be better understood by taking into account the guiding personalistic standard, as well as principles such as the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity.

In relation to social entrepreneurship, the personalistic rule, which refers to the dignity of the human person, generally involves focusing on management actions through which the dignity of all those who make up a social enterprise and are associated with it is respected. One of the key objectives of social entrepreneurship lies in the empowerment of individuals and communities for the benefit of whom certain undertakings in the sphere of social transformation are launched. In this context, it is also necessary to apply the principle of subsidiarity as the basic rule determining the division of labour and responsibilities linked to the execution of social and professional reintegration activities. A transition from assistance to self-help must occur.

It is important for the managers of social enterprises to be able to act collectively on behalf of people in need of help, as well as demonstrate genuine solidarity with the disadvantaged. Moreover, in order to address social problems effectively, it is necessary to have an understanding of the complex causes of these problems and to think in terms of systems. For this reason, the practical implementation of principles of solidarity and the common good should involve, among other things, the creation of genuine structures of solidarity and the common good through appropriate

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49   Sobocka-Szczapa, *Ekonomia społeczna*, 27–28.

legislative and market changes, resulting in an increased number of social enterprises working for the poor and other people at risk of social exclusion.

Despite various factors that normally push social enterprises in one of the extreme directions – either towards commercialisation (profit) or social activism – ultimately, only the authentic vocation of Christian love (*agape*) appears to motivate the activities of social managers strong enough so that the hybrid organisations can avoid "distorting" their natural mission. This will allow all the characteristic features of social enterprise management discussed in the article to be taken into account.

Based on the teaching of Pope Benedict XVI included in *Caritas in Veritate*, it is worth emphasising that the theological novelty of the approach presented in this paper lies in the fact that social institutions (including social enterprises) should not only be seen as flawed human structures, but also as communities in which, thanks to Holy Spirit, it is possible to implement the principles of the Kingdom of God and – above all – the commandment of love revealed in the Gospel by Jesus Christ.

The adopted research perspective, which is characteristic of CST, naturally has its limitations. The article is based on deliberately limited sources that are typical of the Catholic moral tradition. The research results can be further developed by taking into account other moral religious traditions or theories of normative ethics. Furthermore, a future direction of research may include, inter alia, an analysis of selected models of social enterprise management in terms of the implementation of CST principles. The study may also focus on a discourse on the moral dimension of social enterprise management in the context of a selected philosophical theory or religious tradition.

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The *Crux Interpretum* of 1 Cor 15:29: What is at Stake and a Proposal

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Abstract: This short paper tackles the much-discussed *crux interpretum* of 1 Cor 15:29. Biblical scholars have tended to analyse word for word the expression οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν and present various hypotheses, with the idea favored by the scholarly majority being that of vicarious baptism for the dead. I propose a new reading of 1 Cor 15:29 in its literary and rhetorical context of 1 Cor 15:12–34. Here, what those who believe in Christ do (v. 29), what the apostles do (v. 30), and what Paul does (vv. 31–32), are put together as good practices which become incomprehensible if there is no resurrection of the dead. Vicarious baptism cannot be considered a good practice because it is at odds with Paul's concept of baptism, and because it was later even considered heretical and aberrant. In this context, the paper proposes to read ὑπέρ with a sense of finality, i.e. "for/in view of," and to see in ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν a brachylogy (as Paul employs elsewhere in his letters) for "for/in view of the resurrection of the dead." Therefore in 1 Cor 15:29 Paul presents the positive example of the people who undergo baptism as a public manifestation of faith, in the hope of taking part in the final resurrection together with all the dead, especially with those who are "in Christ." To the new reading corresponds this new translation: "Otherwise, what will they do those who have themselves baptised for/in view of (the resurrection of) the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then do they have themselves baptized for/in view of (the resurrection of) them?"

Keywords: 1 Cor 15:29; baptism in Paul; vicarious baptism; resurrection in Paul

In 1 Corinthians 15:29 we are confronted with one of the most difficult Pauline *crux interpretum*, about which much has been written.[1] In this contribution, after a brief survey of the research done so far, we would like to help the reader understand the main interpretative challenges of 1 Cor 15:29 and also to present an alternative proposal to the majority reading of vicarious baptism.

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[1] Already in 1925 Karl Barth (*Die Auferstehung*, 102) considering 1 Cor 15:29 a *crux interpretum*, said that he did not have anything satisfactory to say about it.

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1. *Status quaestionis*

The very first interpreter of 1 Cor 15:29 is Tertullian (*Res.* 48; *Marc.* 1:4; 5:10) who refutes the idea that Paul advocated the vicarious baptism, which was performed by the Marcionites. The Fathers essentially followed this position,[2] as did the Scholastics and even the Reformers.[3] It was only in the twentieth century that vicarious baptism became the most popular interpretation of 1 Cor 15:29, although other readings did not disappear.

Giving an impressive overview of interpretation up to 1951, in his five articles Bernard M. Foschini finds over 40 different readings, dividing them into three categories: 1. Baptism in the metaphorical sense; 2. Baptism in the proper sense, but not as the sacrament; 3. Baptism as a sacrament of the New Law.[4] About 10 years later, Mathias Rissi published the first monograph entirely devoted to this *crux interpretum*.[5] Reviewing the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the verse, he reduces to four the different interpretative possibilities: 1. A phrase from a convert's baptism confession; 2. An oblique reference to martyrdom; 3. Ritual washing of a dead body before burial; 4. Vicarious baptism.[6] We have to wait until 2005 to find an important new monograph about 1 Cor 15:29. In that year Michael F. Hull published his work proposing that the passage concerns ordinary Christian baptism – not some mysterious, aberrant form of vicarious baptism, which is otherwise unknown in the NT – as a witness to faith in the resurrection of the dead; and provides a good survey of the research, starting from the Fathers but focusing on the more recent interpretations.[7] In 2007 William O. Walker believes he has found the solution to all the interpretative problems of 1 Cor 15:29: the pericope of 1 Cor 15:29–34 is an interpolation, neither composed by Paul nor included by him in his letter, but by the Marcionites.[8] Walker bases his thesis on four arguments: the verses are out of place in that location; the vocabulary is non-Pauline; the text is speaking about vicarious baptism therefore it cannot be Pauline; 1 Cor 15:29–34 holds up as an independent unit. But Daniel B. Sharp aptly confutes it, and shows that Walker's thesis is untenable.[9] This position will be confirmed in our contribution demonstrating the argumentative unity and development of 1 Cor 15:12–34. In 2012 another useful *status quaestionis* was published by Joel R. White.[10] In it he shows that several scholarly works – published in the 15 years

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[2] We have the exception of Ambrosiaster (*Com. 1 Cor.* 15:29), who thought that vicarious baptism was administered to living Christians on behalf of Pagans who died without being baptized.

[3] For a schematic *status quaestionis* up to the Reformation, see English, "Mediated," 420–423.

[4] Foschini, "Those who are Baptized," 260–276, 379-388 [1950]; 46–78, 172–198, 276–283 [1951].

[5] Rissi, *Die Taufe*.

[6] Rissi, *Die Taufe*, 52–57.

[7] Hull, *Baptism*.

[8] Walker, "1 Corinthians 15:29–34," 84–103.

[9] Sharp, "Vicarious Baptism," 38–44.

[10] White, "Recent Challenges," 379–395.

before 2012 – dispute the majority position of vicarious baptism, posit a casual nuance for the preposition ὑπέρ in 1 Cor 15:29, and take the literary context of this verse more seriously; White also confirms his earlier reading in reference to the apostles as "the dead," and to the honour given to them by the baptized.[11]

But we have to add two more recent contributions which were not included in any of the previous *status questionis.* In 2017, Roger D. Aus interprets 1 Cor 15:29 in connection with the texts of Early Judaism regarding the intercession for the dead. According to Aus, Paul speaks about some members of the Corinthian community who have themselves baptized again on behalf of the dead, as a form of intercession for them, therefore his proposal can be grouped with the one of vicarious baptism.[12] In the same year Hanoch Ben Keshet published a contribution on his website, re-working his 2016 article about 1 Cor 15:29.[13] He finds in the verse, addressed only to the Jewish Christians of Corinth, a Jewish burial practice performed in the hope of the resurrection, a practice which would later be developed in the medieval *Taharat Hamet*. Therefore, he presents his translation of 15:29: "Otherwise, what do they achieve, those, who themselves are purifying [the dead] for the benefit of the dead? If, actually, the dead are not arising, why, then, are they themselves purifying [them] for their benefit?" As we are going to see, his proposal should be grouped with the one regarding ritual washing. After this concise but useful survey of the research, we can observe the main interpretative problems of the text of 1 Cor 15:29.

2. What is at Stake in 1 Cor 15:29

Considering the history of the research into 1 Cor 15:29 from a methodological point of view, we have to notice that the discussion is often based on historical precedents or phenomenological parallels in the surrounding religious cultures. In fact, on the one hand, we have scholars like Richard E. DeMaris[14] and Sharp[15] who affirm that there are analogous phenomena in Jewish and Greco-Roman funerary cults, and on the other hand, we have scholars like Hull[16] and Dieter Zeller[17] who think that there is no evidence of parallels to baptism for the dead in the ancient world prior to or contemporaneous with Paul. But in this way, we are at an impasse.

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11   White, "Baptized," 487–499.
12   Aus, *Two Puzzling Baptisms*, 74–124.
13   Keshet, "1 Corinthians 15:29," 1–19; Keshet, "Whether Jews," 331–348.
14   DeMaris, "Corinthian Religion," 661–682.
15   Sharp, "Vicarious Baptism," 53–66.
16   Hull, *Baptism*, 37–38.
17   Zeller, "Gibt es religionsgeschichtliche Parallelen," 68–76.

For our part, to get out of this situation and to shed light on a more apt interpretation of 1 Cor 15:29 we believe that it is necessary to bear in mind the literary and rhetorical context. The verse is part of the wider passage 1 Cor 15:12–34 (first argumentation of 1 Cor 15:1–58)[18] which aims to demonstrate the indissoluble bond between the resurrection of Christ and the final resurrection of the dead. This is the arrangement of the passage:

Thesis on the link between the resurrection of Christ and that of the dead (v. 12)
Demonstration in three steps (vv. 13–32):
A. Negative consequences of the denial of the resurrection (vv. 12–19);
B. Positive affirmations of the resurrection of the dead (vv. 20–28);
A'. Other negative consequences of the denial of the resurrection (vv. 29–32);
Peroration (vv. 33–34).

Particularly in unit A', returning to the negative consequences first discussed in vv. 12–19, we find an *argumentum ad absurdum* related to the conduct of the Christians: if the dead do not rise again, all the things the Christians do in the present become incomprehensible. Moreover, we can outline the arrangement of vv. 29–32 as follows, marked by three different examples:

What those who believe in Christ do (v. 29);
What the apostles do (v. 30);
What Paul does (vv. 31–32a);
The consequences for everyone (proverb) (v. 32b).

In unit A', due to the involvement of various subjects who through their actions reveal their hope in the final resurrection of the dead, we can see a positive progression. Thus the overall meaning of the unit is quite clear, but in this context v. 29 needs to be analysed carefully. From a syntactical point of view, the verse consists of a rhetorical interrogative sentence followed by a real conditional with an apodosis derived from another rhetorical question. In fact, in v. 29 Paul affirms that if there is no resurrection of the dead, then the actions[19] of οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν are incomprehensible. This Greek expression finds a perfect parallel and a synonym in βαπτίζονται ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν,[20] which could be also considered a repetition. Moreover,

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18   For the rhetorical arrangement of 1 Cor 15:1–58, see Bianchini, *The Apostle Paul*, 73–78.
19   The future ποιήσουσιν is to be considered a logical present with a subjective or self-involving aspect, cf. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1241.
20   Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1240: "D² and Peshitta replace the final αὐτῶν with τῶν νεκρῶν, but this is clearly late and secondary."

taking a cue from White,[21] we present the three fundamental lexical and grammatical problems that give rise to the different interpretations of the verse:[22]

οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι
a. those who undergo baptism with water
b. those who undergo metaphorical baptism (e.g. sufferings, martyrdom)
c. those who undergo ritual washing

ὑπέρ
a. substitutionary ("instead of" or "on behalf of")
b. final ("for the benefit of")
c. causal ("because of" or "on account of")
d. locative ("over")

τῶν νεκρῶν
a. dead people
b. dead bodies
c. dead in a metaphorical sense (e.g. the apostles)

3. Towards a New Proposal

Now that the time has come for an exegetical analysis, we shall consider each of the expressions in the text in order to come to a good interpretation of 1 Cor 15:29. Starting from οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι,[23] we wonder what the expression refers to. This group must be carefully differentiated from those who deny the resurrection, the group signified by the τινές of vv. 12, 34. It is unlikely that οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι could be linked with another group of Corinthians (otherwise, we would have found τινές again), or with the rest of the Christian community in Corinth (in which case we would have found ἄλλοι, cf. 1 Cor 9:12; 14:29, or οἱ πλείονες, cf. 2 Cor 2:6; 4:15). Rather οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι should be linked with the people inside or outside Corinth who receive baptism.

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21 White, "Recent Challenges," 380–382.
22 Moreover, the punctuation of this verse in itself is questioned but, as pointed out by Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 581, alternative interpretations of the text in NA[28] make 1 Cor 15:29 unintelligible.
23 Probably, it should not be interpreted as a passive voice, but as a middle voice indicating a choice and an involvement on the part of those who are baptized. We can also agree with the definition of Timothy A. Brookins and Bruce W. Longenecker (*1 Corinthians 10–16*, 161) who use the category of "permissive middle." On other hand, Keshet ("1 Corinthians 15:29," 3–7) reads βαπτιζόμενοι as middle voice with an active value (he speaks of an indirect middle), but it is difficult to justify this choice because for that, Paul could have used the normal active voice of βαπτίζω as he does in 1 Cor 1:13, 16[2x],17.

But which baptism? We need not look for a meaning beyond the literal one. Above all, because the verb βαπτίζω in 1 Corinthians is always employed to indicate the usual Christian rite (in some ways also in 10:2[24]). Therefore, the proposals of metaphorical baptism or ritual washing are not convincing.

Moving on to a consideration of the preposition ὑπέρ, if we read it in the substitutionary sense, it then suggests the most accepted hypothesis of a vicarious baptism. Thus, it could be a rite that is performed in the place of and on behalf of the dead who had not received it yet. In support of this hypothesis, as we have already seen, the exegetes have looked for parallels in the Greco-Roman religion and in Judaism. Unfortunately, these elements are external to the text and context of 1 Cor 15:29 and do not adequately confirm such a hypothesis. Besides, such a view is further invalidated by the fact that Paul presents the baptism ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν in 15:29–32 as a positive example; this fact is evident from the proposed literary and rhetorical arrangement of the text. The idea of vicarious baptism, with its impersonal and substitutionary character, is at odds with the Pauline meaning of baptism, linked to the gift of the Spirit to the person who become son of God (1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:26–29). Thus it would be unreasonable for Paul to refer to it in order to support his argument. Later, the writings of some Church Fathers speak of vicarious baptism as an aberrant practice performed by heretical Christian groups.[25]

Another possibility, followed by a few exegetes,[26] is the interpretation of ὑπέρ in a locative sense, which would mean that the Apostle was indicating a baptism performed over the graves of the dead believers. This custom is not documented in any way by the sources. What is more, we hardly find a case of ὑπέρ plus genitive in the locative sense in the NT. Therefore, only the hypotheses of either the final or the causal interpretation of ὑπέρ are left, and we intend to analyse them by paying attention to the sentence in its entirety.

Before that, it is necessary to address the meaning of τῶν νεκρῶν. In 1 Cor 15, the plural of νεκρός, with or without the article, always indicates the dead who are destined for the resurrection according to Paul (vv. 12, 13, 20, 21, 42): dead people, not simply dead bodies. Therefore, this must also be its meaning in verse 29.[27]

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[24] As Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 381, clearly explains, Paul coins the phrase εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσθησαν in 10:2 on the basis of the baptism of the believers, which is the *primum analogatum*: the experience of the people in the desert is interpreted in the light of its similarity with the Christian rite, with which it shares the nature of a saving gift.

[25] Cf. Barbaglio, *La prima lettera ai Corinzi*, 832. The third Council of Carthage in 397 explicitly prohibited every kind of vicarious baptism, saying in its sixth canon: "Deinde cavendum est ne mortuos etiam baptizari posse fratrum infirmitas credat, cum eucharistiam non dari mortuis animadvertit."

[26] E.g., Grosheide, *Commentary*, 372–373.

[27] The original idea of White ("Baptized," 494) to see in νεκρῶν a reference to "the apostles" is not so convincing, also because at the same time he assigns the normal meaning of "the dead" to νεκροί, proposing two different uses (real and metaphorical) of a word in the same verse. Cf. Sharp, "Vicarious Baptism," 44–47, for a valid confutation of this hypothesis.

At this point, putting together what we have demonstrated thus far, we can offer a complete interpretation of the verse. Some scholars support the causal interpretation of ὑπέρ, meaning "on account of the resurrection of the dead": those who undergo baptism do so because of their faith in the resurrection of Christ and all Christians,[28] or because of their desire to take part in the resurrection together with the dead believers.[29] Those who suggest a final interpretation of ὑπέρ read "for the benefit of the dead" in the sense of being reunited with their loved ones, who were already Christians, and are now dead.[30]

For our part, we propose to find in 1 Cor 15:29 ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν a brachylogy, a figure of speech condensed to express a thought. We can find brachylogical syntagmata elsewhere in Paul's epistles,[31] some of them having a similar grammatical form to that of our verse (ὑπέρ + genitive): ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ "to spread his name" (Rom 1:5), ὑπὲρ ἀληθείας θεοῦ "in order to show that God's promises are true" (Rom 15:8), ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν "in order to remove our sins" (1 Cor 15:3), ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν "for the strengthening of your faith" (1 Thess 3:2).[32] In the aforementioned cases, Paul employs ὑπέρ with the sense of finality in connection with a brachylogy. Particularly, the quotation of 1 Cor 15:3 belongs to the same context of our verse, thus we can propose the hypothesis that the same construction in 1 Cor 15:29 also works in the same way. Moreover, we can add that the final meaning of the preposition, as stated by BDR § 231.2 and attested to in classical Greek, is determined by the fact that it introduces what one wants to and can attain, therefore translated as "for, in view of." We think that this translation of ὑπέρ is applicable also in some other Pauline occurrences such as in 2 Cor 1:6; 12:19; Phil 2:13.

Now it is important to observe that in the context of 1 Cor 15 we find four occurrences of the same syntagma in connection with νεκρῶν, that is (ἡ) ἀνάστασις (τῶν) νεκρῶν (vv. 12, 13, 21, 42), which leads us to infer that the brachylogical expression of v. 29, in which only τῶν νεκρῶν is mentioned, can be understood to mean "the resurrection of the dead." However, in this case, why is the very important word "the resurrection" omitted? In our opinion, with the deliberate omission of ἀνάστασις, Paul aims to emphasize the dead with whom one will again be reunited at the resurrection. Thus, the Apostle hints at the idea that he presented for the first time in the consolation passage of 1 Thess 4:13–18. Finally, we believe that 1 Cor 15:29 can be rendered in this way: "Otherwise, what will they do those who have themselves baptised for/in view of (the resurrection of) the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then do they have themselves baptized for/in view of (the resurrection of) them?"

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28   Hull, *Baptism*, 235.
29   Ciampa – Rosner, *The First Letter*, 784.
30   E.g., Raeder, "Vikariatstaufe," 258–260.
31   Jermo van Nes (*Pauline Language*, 208) says about brachylogy: "This figure of omission must be distinguished from ellipsis because brachylogy is only essential to thought and not to grammar (e.g. 1 Cor. 11:16)."
32   Cf. BAGD, 1030.

In conclusion, we suppose that in 1 Cor 15:29 Paul presents the positive example of people who undergo baptism because it is a public manifestation of faith, in the hope of taking part in the final resurrection together with all the dead, especially with those who are "in Christ."[33] The purpose of this verse, as Schnabel[34] points out, is to show that if there were no resurrection, then the Christian rite itself would be meaningless because it would be deprived of its effects with regard to death, eternal life, and union with Christ. If, on the one hand, baptism in our context is functional to the Pauline argumentation in favour of the resurrection, then on the other, it is presented in its eschatological dimension, as the foundation of the final hope of every Christian. Indeed, precisely because they have decided to receive baptism, they can look forward full of hope and with the certainty derived from their faith, to their ultimate destiny: as they have shared the fate of the first Adam, so will they also share the fate of the second Adam (cf. 15:44–49).

With this short article we have aimed to make clear what is really at stake in the *crux interpretum* of 1 Cor 15:29, above all underlining the importance of the literary and rhetorical context for the interpretation, which are elements neglected by scholars. Consequently, we have proposed a new reading of the verse with ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν as "for/in view of the resurrection of the dead," and a new interpretation with the positive example of the group of people who undergo baptism in the hope of taking part in the final resurrection together with all the dead, especially with those who are "in Christ." We are by no means saying that this is the last word on 1 Cor 15:29, but we do hope to have provided some useful insights for further research.

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[33] Our position is only apparently similar to Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1248. Because, taking a cue from Maria Raeder, firstly he does not reject the idea of vicarious baptism, secondly he reads ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν as "for the sake of the dead" and thirdly, he thinks that the reunion with the dead is only with believing relatives.

[34] Schnabel, *Der erste Brief*, 944.

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Verbum
Vitae

"Christianity. Fundamental Teachings" by the Churches in Turkey as an Example of an Ecumenical Catechism

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Abstract: The booklet entitled *Christianity. Fundamental Teachings*, published by the Joint Commission of Churches in Turkey in 2018, expresses the shared beliefs of the Christian Churches in Turkey. It can be seen as a landmark in inter-church efforts to draw closer together. Trying to explain Christianity to non-Christians, the booklet presents the key elements of the Christian faith in a clear and easily comprehensible way. This article provides a synthetic presentation of the content of this booklet and shows issues that are important in the Turkish context. Since the call for "an ecumenical catechism" resonates from time to time in the international and inter-church areas, this joint publication of the Churches in Turkey can be a good example of such a catechism for other Churches worldwide. Moreover, this booklet can serve as a good teaching tool for Christians or non-Christians. Thus it is worth studying, translating, commenting on and implementing after being appropriately adjusted to other social, cultural and religious contexts.

Keywords: catechism, Christianity, ecumenism, fundamental teachings, Turkey

In 2018, a booklet (95 pages in a small format) entitled *Christianity. Fundamental Teachings* was published in Istanbul, worked out by the Joint Commission of Churches in Turkey. It expresses the shared beliefs of the Christian Churches in Turkey.

This collaborative book has been worked out by leaders of all of the major churches of Turkey (Armenian, Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Syriac Orthodox, mainline Protestant, and Evangelical Protestant) and authorized by five heads of these churches: Bartholomew I (Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople), Archbishop Aram Ateshian (Armenian Patriarchal Surrogate in Turkey), Metropolitan FilüksinosYusuf Çetin (Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir Syriac Orthodox Diocesan Leader and Patriarchal Surrogate), Archbishop Levon Zekian (Chairman of the Catholic Bishops Conference of Turkey) and Pastor İsmail Kulakçıoğlu (Chairman of the Association of Protestant Churches in Turkey). Its first edition had the Turkish title *Temel İlkeleriyle Hristiyanlık* and appeared in 2015, the Preface to the English translation in 2016, copyright for the English edition in 2017 (printed in January 2018). The Joint Commission of Churches in Turkey holds the copyright. The Bible Society in Turkey

(Kitabı Mukaddes Şirketi) is the publisher of the work.[1] The Joint Commission of Churches in Turkey dedicates its work "to the movement towards communion, mutual love and respect as proof that the points uniting us are incomparably greater than those dividing us and as a memorial to such constructive dialogues that spring out of love."[2]

1. *Christianity. Fundamental Teachings*

The aim of this paper is to give a synthetic presentation of the content of *Christianity. Fundamental Teachings*, with brief commentaries. The book is divided into 13 chapters.

Chapter One, "An Overview of Christianity,"[3] is an extended Creed with a brief panorama of Christian Churches and denominations. It explains the origin of the name "Christian" and provides a brief description of the structure of the Church and its worship. Regarding the structure of the Church, the document states that as the mystical (spiritual) body of Christ, the Church has had a well-organized hierarchal structure since its beginnings. This structure does not represent class divisions, but rather functional differences. "Though the titles may differ among denominations, a certain kind of division of labor can be observed in all of them." The "differences in biblical interpretation" and "divisions that have occurred throughout history for political reasons" are given as reasons for the denominational differences. The birth of Jesus Christ, celebrated at Christmas, and His resurrection from the dead, celebrated at Easter, are underlined as two great religious Christian festivals. According to the document, all Churches, even if they are interpreted somewhat differently, consistently perform "two special ceremonies or rites: baptism and communion." If you had to keep only one chapter in the entire book, you would need to choose the introductory one.

The Second chapter is entitled "The Existence and Oneness of God."[4] "Christianity believes that the Eternal Creator existed before time, while everything that exists was made by Him out of nothing (*ex nihilo*)." According to the Christian faith, there are four primary ways for humankind to know God: through reason, through Revelation, through Jesus Christ and through the Holy Spirit. Christianity teaches about the recognition of the existence of God through His works by the natural light of human reason. Revelation is defined as God's self-revelation to humanity in time and space. The Holy Bible is the "written revelation" and from this book,

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1   JCCT, 1–12.
2   JCCT, 10.
3   JCCT, 13–17.
4   JCCT, 18–22.

which Christians accept as the Word of God, they get to know "who God is, what He desires, what are His attributes and goals, and what plans He has for the world and humankind." Jesus Christ is seen as the direct revelation of God, different from and superior to any prophet. Through the Holy Spirit given by the Father people get to know and experience God personally in a new dimension. This phenomenon is known as the "new birth." At the end of this chapter, we can read that the doctrine about Holy Trinity, "presented to humanity through Jesus Christ by the revelation of the Holy Spirit, is a new stage of divine revelation that explains God more fully without denying His oneness."

The above statement leads to Chapter Three that deals with the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.[5] It begins with a remark that the human mind cannot comprehend God. His oneness and trinity are revealed. "Just like the other attributes of God, this too is hard *nut* for human reason to *crack*" but the three-fold name of God – the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit – is clearly revealed by Jesus Christ. The Oneness of God is presented in the Old and New Testaments, which is supported by relevant biblical quotations. The evidence of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in the Old (!) and New Testaments is exposed, and theological terms, like *hypostaseis* and *personas*, are clarified. Particularly, the Father–Son relationship is explicated:

> So, we can say that the Father is the cause within divinity, in a way hidden from everyone and everything. That which is born from the Father is the WORD, which expresses Him. The divine essence is hidden, while the Word is that which is revealed. Even a human word verbalizing a person's hidden thought is both one connected to and distinct from that thought. If this is so, the terms Essence and Word express a functional difference existing within God. Anything that originates from God is also God. No reality in God is unconscious. Consequently, the divine Word also has a conscious and unique personhood.[6]

The topic of the 4th chapter, the largest in the entire book, is the doctrine of salvation.[7] It reflects on the "pyramid of creation," with humankind on the top, the "problem of freedom," the "fall of men," the "plan of salvation" and the "election of Abraham as the Father of faith," followed by a presentation of the reality of sin and the sacrificial system of the Old Testament. The inadequacy of this system is stressed as Jesus Christ is "the True Sacrifice." He offered his life on the Cross as the only acceptable sacrifice for our sins. Presenting "the victory of Easter," the document depicts the Jewish Festival of Passover, its historical and religious meaning, and the Lord's Supper established by Jesus. Christ desired his disciples "to participate in His ceremony of sacrifice and to continue it."

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5   JCCT, 23–33.
6   JCCT, 32.
7   JCCT, 34–46.

Furthermore, this chapter deals with the question of sacrificing animals, arguing that the era of sacrificing animals came to an end with the single sacrifice of Jesus Christ for all on the Cross: "[…] From that moment, for a Christian to sacrifice an animal for his sins would be to deny his faith; or at the very least, it would be a sign of deep ignorance. To submit for some reason to a superstitious practice remaining from times of idolatry […] is a denial of one's baptismal vows."[8]

Chapter Five, the shortest in the book, is devoted to the Ascension of Jesus Christ.[9] It is noticed that the process of turning the world back to the Kingdom of Christ began with an interesting paradox, that of His leaving this world and being exulted to the realm of the divine. From this realm, He could shape history through the activity of the Holy Spirit and prepare the world for His second coming. At the same time, Jesus Christ, who ascended into heaven, "can request from God the Father for all humankind the forgiveness and justification that he secured as the sacrificial offering on the cross, thereby opening wide for us the door of divine grace."

Continuing this line of thought, the 6th chapter deals with the second coming of Jesus Christ.[10] A Christian is described as a person who eagerly awaits this coming. Contrary to our impatience and hurriedness, the Creator is the God of ages. He foresaw that it would take a specific period of time for the seeds of the first coming of Christ to grow, be scattered and spread across the whole world. "This time period, which may be considered very brief by cosmic measurements, although it seems long to human beings whose lifespan is 70 or 80 years, will one day come to an end." The second coming of Christ is described as visible by all, a cosmic event witnessed by the whole world. With this coming "a new heaven and a new earth" will be established. The document honestly states that this rightful expectation "is unfortunately from time to time the cause of misusing or manipulating this event through hasty and amateur interpretations." Extreme interest, zeal and curiosity about this subject can lead to unhealthy spiritual conditions as concluded:

> It is best to avoid giving exact dates, creating calendars or spreading sensational news. All heretical beliefs establish their teaching on sensationalism and excitement rather than on stable New Testament doctrines. They do not read the New Testament starting from the Sermon on the Mount, but rather from the book of Revelation. Therefore, we feel it our duty warn all Christian against such exaggerated and ono-sided doctrines. The best way to prepare for the return of Christ is to live today – and every day – as He desires us to.[11]

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8   JCCT, 46.
9   JCCT, 47–50.
10   JCCT, 51–55.
11   JCCT, 54–55.

"The Activity of the Holy Spirit"[12] is the title of Chapter Seven. The day of Pentecost is seen as a turning point in human history. Through this event, God offered humankind His greatest gift: namely, Himself. The Holy Spirit completes the work of Christ and resides in believers. He is the guarantee of eternal life and of our resurrection. Just as we have physical needs, we read in the book, there are spiritual things that we must absolutely have: the Word of God, prayer, the Mysteries of the Church (Sacraments), fellowship, faith, hope, love and all the other spiritual virtues. "Neglecting these is spiritual suicide. However, all of these and the other spiritual practices are like the dead bones that the Prophet Ezekiel saw in his vision. They do not have life in themselves. […] Only God's Spirit can give them life." That is why our lives, works and worship will be as they should be. For "God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).

The place and importance of the Church are shown in Chapter Eight.[13] The meaning of the word "Church" as well as the human and divine structure of the Church, its relationships with Christ, and salvation have been discussed. The Church is described as an effective instrument, which Christ uses to bring about the salvation of all people. "We would not be exaggerating if we said the Church is the mouth, hands and feet of Christ." According to St. Athanasius, in Christ "God became man so that man might become a god." The Church is seen as a stage in the realization of this process, whose plan began even before the creation of the universe.

Baptism, of the Christian rites presented in the book, has been given the most attention, in particular in the section of the 8th chapter entitled "One Baptism and Repentance for the Forgiveness of Our Sins." The word "baptism" and the theological meaning of this "sacrament" are elucidated. This is the second time when the word "sacrament" appears in the document; the previous chapter spoke generally about the Mysteries of the Church (Sacraments). "The view that rejects the doctrine of only One Baptism performed in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and supports multiple baptisms, is considered to be a false doctrine from the viewpoint of universal Christianity." The struggle against sin continues with all its intensity even after baptism. However, one does not need to be baptized again for the forgiveness of sins. "The right of repentance, which is granted even to the believer's final breath, is sufficient for purification."

The expression of the previous chapter – "the believer's final breath" – introduces an eschatological topic, namely the resurrection of the dead. The "power of death," the "power of Christ's Resurrection," "bodily resurrection," "resurrection with heavenly bodies" and "Final Judgment" are the main motifs in the next chapter entitled "The Resurrection of the Dead."[14] The thought that the soul is eternal and that after

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12   JCCT, 56–60.
13   JCCT, 61–66.
14   JCCT, 67–71.

death the human soul somehow continues to exist is a very common belief, we read in the document, however, "Christians believe in a much more supernatural miracle than this. The belief that the dead will one day be raised immortal with new bodies and be judged is one of Christianity's foundational doctrines."

Chapter Ten focuses on the Holy Bible.[15] The point of view presented in *Christianity* is as follows (also expressed by the subtitles): "The Oldest Monotheist Record Known and Recorded in World History is the Holy Bible," "The Holy Bible is a Long-Term, Divine Design Surpassing Human Power and Wisdom," and "The Holy Bible is the Most Influential and Successful Work Ever Witnessed." Moreover, in the section entitled "The Holy Bible Has Proven its Accuracy Despite Every Kind of Criticism" it is stated that every comparison between the texts of our oldest extant handwritten manuscripts and the Holy Bible used today proves that no differences have either changed or corrupted its meaning. Further, the structure and the process of formation of the Bible, as well as the place of the Holy Scripture in the lives of faithful have been presented.

The foundations of Christian ethics are the main issue of Chapter Eleven.[16] This part underlines that the Christian faith gives meaning to ethical values and establishes their universal dimension; in Christianity all moral standards derive from love. The Ten Commandments are mentioned, in particular, the two commandments of love. The application of love in Christianity is shown from the very beginning of its era: schools, hospitals, soup kitchens in addition to houses of worship, healing programs for people addicted to alcohol and drugs or others, active aid programs and various foundations.

The topic of the sacredness of life is separately dealt with in this chapter. It begins with the observation that "[e]verything prohibited by secular law may not be a sin, while not every sin may be prohibited by secular law," followed by the main point that "abortion is the greatest assault on human life and, therefore, also to Almighty." Abortion "means the death of something in the soul of the mother as well." "The murder of millions of embryos still in their mother's womb, who are deprived of the right to live, should lead us as Christians to think, pray and take action against such acts."[17]

The 12th chapter deals with Christianity and culture.[18] Since religion is one of the foundation stones that make up societies, "it is inevitable that culture both affects and is affected by it." The following fields of culture are enumerated and described: language, literature, music, painting and sculpture. The contents of many novels as well as works of poetry and philosophy have been deeply influenced by the Holy

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15   JCCT, 72–77.
16   JCCT, 78–84.
17   JCCT, 82–84.
18   JCCT, 85–90.

Bible. This chapter mentions eminent writers: Dante, Erasmus, Shakespeare, Victor Hugo, Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky as well as great painters and sculptors: Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. "It is not difficult to see the inspiration and influence of the Hagia Sophia cathedral on mosques and Eastern architecture. This is a wonderful example of continuity in culture and civilization."

Finally, Chapter Thirteen includes a call for unity: ecumenism.[19] Ecumenism is described as an "open-ended and long-term movement toward harmony among churches rather than as an ideology." Although this movement has developed to a considerable extent, it has not yet reached the level of all believers meeting together "under a single homogenous umbrella of faith, coming together as one church with organic administrative unity." It is evident "that such an ideal will be realized at the second coming of Christ."

In the "Final Word" of the booklet, its authors declare that the most important condition for unity and peace is to maintain an attitude "that prioritizes principles that unite rather than divide us." And one of the most effective ways to move toward unity is to determine, express and declare our mutual beliefs in Christ.

> With this small book, we have aimed to do just this. […] Although the common foundation of faith expressed in this book may not yet be enough for the perfect and ideal Christian unity (namely, communion), they nevertheless constitute a serious step forward that should not be minimized in any way. […] Therefore, we ask God to bless this sincere effort as we dedicate this book, with the participation and approval of our city's principle churches, to the unity of all believers, with the hope that it will prove a source of inspiration for all those who read it.[20]

2. The Turkish Context

Turkey is the cultural and religious bridge between Europe and the Middle East. Istanbul is one of Christianity's most important cities. Over the ages, this city has been a center of Christian study and leadership. The ecumenical councils that determined the foundational doctrines of Christianity were held or organized in this city.[21]

In the early 1900s, 20 percent of Turkey was Christian. Today it is approximately 0.2 percent. The total population of Turkey is estimated at 81.3 million (July 2018). According to the Turkish government, 99 percent of the population is Muslim, approximately 77.5 percent of which is Hanafi Sunni. Representatives of other religious

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19   JCCT, 91–95.
20   JCCT, 95–96.
21   JCCT, 9.

groups are mostly concentrated in Istanbul and in other large cities as well as in the southeast. Exact figures of the number of Christians are not available. However, they self-report approximately 90,000 Armenian Apostolic Orthodox Christians (including migrants from Armenia); 25,000 Roman Catholics (including migrants from Africa and the Philippines); 25,000 Syrian Orthodox Christians (also known as Syriacs); 15,000 Russian Orthodox Christians (mostly immigrants from Russia who hold residence permits); 7,000 members of Protestant denominations; fewer than 3,000 Chaldean Christians, and up to 2,000 Greek Orthodox Christians. There also are small, undetermined numbers of Bulgarian Orthodox, Nestorian, Georgian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox, Syriac Catholic, Armenian Catholic, and Maronite Christians.[22]

Despite legal protections and freedom of religion, the Christian minority in Turkey is still experiencing some basic problems. Hate speech against Christians has increased, fueled by social media. Legal recognition as a church is limited to the historic places of worship. Protestant churches in particular are experiencing problems.[23]

The authors of *Christianity. Fundamental Teachings* admit that "[t]he historical texture and ecumenical richness of Istanbul has made such an enterprise possible."[24] Their collaborative work originated because the different Christian denominations in Turkey began reporting to Turkish government that state and Muslim schools were teaching distortions about Christianity and its practices. This problem led to creating the booklet under discussion.[25] Consequently, many of its chapters have considered important Turkish and Islamic contexts, especially regarding the truths of faith and its sources, rules of conduct and rituals.[26]

The introductory chapter begins with the following statement: "Christianity is a monotheistic religion." As for the Scriptures, it is stated that "Christianity accepts the Hebrew prophets and Holy Scriptures" and "the Bible is the inspired Word of God, comprised of the Old and New Testaments." The Word of God is described as "the cornerstone of Christian worship" and "biblical prayers, Psalms and prophetic passages are repeated and memorized." The fasting practiced "for personal discipline and spiritual maturity" is also mentioned. The order of describing these elements of the Christian worship and prayer is precisely explained in the context of Islam: Word of God, fasting, festivals and rites.[27]

In Chapter Two a special mention about Turkey is made in the section about revelation through Jesus Christ and His identity. We read that the long-awaited Messiah is Jesus of Nazareth, and that in the unique person of Jesus Christ, the Word of God

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[22] United States Department of State, "Turkey 2018."
[23] Casper, "Despite Drop in Deportations." Bulut, "Protestant Christians in Turkey."
[24] JCCT, 94.
[25] Sessions, "Clear and Precise Statement."
[26] Cf. Danecki, *Podstawowe wiadomości o islamie*, 264–389.
[27] JCCT, 13, 16–17.

became human through the divine incarnation: "In Turkey, He is referred to as *Kelamullah* (the Word of Allah) and *Ruhullah* (the Spirit of Allah)." Naturally, Christians use the name "Son of God."[28]

The main doctrinal Christian problem in the Islamic context is raised in the next chapter, namely, the accusation that Christians "believe in three Gods." This accusation "is false" – the booklet firmly states – as "Christianity is absolutely and uncompromisingly monotheistic religion. It is impossible to come to any other conclusion as a result of reading the Old and New Testaments."[29]

Interestingly, the evidence of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in the Old Testament is that "[…] Holy Scriptures show that this one God is not, as many suppose, a solitary being in His absolute oneness, but rather one who has distinct centers of consciousness and distinct persons […]. The doctrine of the unity of God's distinct persons can be clearly seen in the Old Testament." Then the booklet refers to Gen 1:26 ("Let us make…"), Prov 8:22–36 (God's Wisdom), Ps 110:1 ("The Lord says to my Lord…") and to the plural Hebrew word *Elohim*.[30] From the theological point of view, these statements are too bold. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states more moderately: "God has left traces of his Trinitarian being in his work of creation and in his Revelation throughout the Old Testament" (no. 237).

Chapter Three concludes with a simple illustration which can facilitate a certain acceptance of the mystery of the Holy Trinity:

> The sun is one. However, no one can see its essence. […] Let us, then, use the sun as an analogy of God and call this the Father. […] It has a form, a round shape that we can observe. This form comes about as the hidden essence pouring forth. This form, which is inseparable from its essence, belongs to the sun and is worthy of being called the sun. Let us now call this shape of the sun the Word or Son. The sun also has rays, which beam from its essence and shape. These, too, spread throughout the universe without separating from the sun. These, too, share the same essence and nature with the sun. So let us call these the Holy Spirit. While this analogy is only an illustration, it can assist us by explaining that something can simultaneously be in one and three forms.[31]

An interesting statement on this issue has been made by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches in its ecumenical commentary on the Creed. The Commission notices that those who agree with Christians about their belief in one God find the Trinitarian affirmation of Christians difficult to understand, particularly Jews and Muslims. For them the Christian concept of

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28 JCCT, 20.
29 JCCT, 26–27.
30 JCCT, 28–29.
31 JCCT, 32–33.

the Triune God has been "a stumbling block" because it seems to deny monotheism. But today there are also Christians who think that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity should at least be reinterpreted and even linguistically revised. The Faith and Order Commission draws attention to the danger of the "modalistical" explanation of the Trinitarian doctrine "as if it meant that God is really one, but because of human limitations is understood in three different ways." Many Christians feel that the traditional Trinitarian teaching is too speculative in comparison with the biblical language about God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. "Such challenges ask for contemporary work of clarification," concludes the Faith and Order Commission.[32]

The questions of the resurrection and the Final Judgment are also important to the Islamic context.[33] These Islamic beliefs are mentioned in the conciliar Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions *Nostra Aetate*: "[Moslems] await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. For this reason, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting" (no. 3). It comes as no surprise that these topics have been highlighted in the eschatological Chapter Nine of our book. Human conscience and divine justice "require this kind of judgment, because this world is a place in which neither evil deeds are fully punished nor good deeds are adequately rewarded. If the only reward and punishment were in this world, it would open up a huge ethical crisis (Psalm 73)."[34]

In Chapter Ten, another observation about Turkey is made. It applies to "one-sided slander campaign against the Christian Holy Bible" that is "consciously pursued within certain circles" in Turkey. We should quote the following fragment as very instructive from an apologetic point of view:

> Though such criticisms have been thoroughly answered in many books, unfortunately Christians have not found sufficient opportunity to properly defend the Bible and their faith through the media. We encourage Christians to educate themselves on these subjects, especially in the face of this unjust one-sided propaganda. We would like them to become more knowledgeable and aware not just to avoid being affected by such propaganda, but, when necessary, to defend their Book and provide an appropriate and convincing response. The limits of this booklet do not allow us to enter into deeper analysis of this subject. Please refer to the clergy of the church to which you belong or to the Bible Society for more detailed information.[35]

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32 *Confessing the One Faith*, 17.
33 Cf. Danecki, *Podstawowe wiadomości o islamie*, 301–312.
34 JCCT, 71.
35 JCCT, 75.

Chapter 12, dedicated to Christianity and culture, discusses the question of paintings and sculptures. As stated by the Joint Commission, Christianity does not reject paintings and sculptures, and these fields of art have been used in abundance to decorate churches. Moreover, "clothing in Christianity" is explained as follows: in Christianity, there is not a single, prescribed dress code which is given as a religious obligation, whether the person "is expected to adhere to the mode of dress generally accepted by society and to avoid wearing disturbing or provocative styles, contrary to morals and common decency." There is no command or practice requiring women to be covered more than men. "We take past practices to be issues of culture."[36]

This chapter also brilliantly shows the interrelations between faith and culture, the missionary nature of the Church in the changing cultures, and the culture as a cultivated field of the Church as seen by contemporary theologians.[37]

Another issue raised in this chapter is sacred places and pilgrimages. "We believe that places where God is worshipped have a special sacredness." The Holy Bible teaches that God regards some places in this world as holier than others. Mountainous and uninhabited areas have traditionally been places where God gave His revelations: "Think of Mount Sinai, Mount Zion, Mount Horeb, Mount Carmel and Mount Tabor."[38] The tradition of offerings in order to show love and gratitude to God is also explained: candles, incense, cloth, flowers, carpets, candelabras or anything for use in a church, as well as donations such as money. "However, the desire to offer the blood of animals is contrary to the practices of today's civilized world, modern environmental awareness and compassion for animals."[39] All of the four issues (clothing, sacred places, pilgrimages, offerings) occupy very important place in the Islamic religion and culture.[40] No wonder, they have been distinguished and very clearly discussed in *Christianity*.

Thomas K. Johnson, Senior Advisor to the The Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Alliance and the special envoy of this Alliance to the Vatican, author of the longest review of our booklet, describes the context of this work. It is not exactly the Gnosticism or Arianism faced by the early Church and conduced it to the formulation of the creed:

> The Turkish context is a history of violence, genocide and oppression, now facing a Muslim majority culture mixed with global secularism. There are serious analogies to the situations faced (or soon to be faced) by Christians around the world. The method used in this book cannot be imagined without the recent history of intra-Christian relations, both the process of getting to know each other by talking about each other's truth claims and

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36   JCCT, 86–88. Cf. Huda, "Islamic Clothing"; Yıldırım, "Religion," 183–294.
37   Cf. Kopiec, "Continuity," 46–51.
38   JCCT, 88–89.
39   JCCT, 89–90.
40   Danecki, *Podstawowe wiadomości o islamie*, 351–356, 363–376.

also the process of joint responses to opposition. The churches from the four branches of Christianity in Turkey have presented a unified proclamation, apologia, and ethics in response to opposition and persecution. The global body of Christ needs to find courage to follow.[41]

3. The Call for an Ecumenical Catechism

The task of catechesis is not only to teach the doctrine, but also to introduce it to the whole Christian life. The broadly understood Christian life also includes its social and cultural context, as well as the ecclesial, and thus, the ecumenical one.[42] The call for an ecumenical catechism resonates for time to time in the international and interchurch area.

The first ecumenical catechism was published in 1973 and entitled *The Common Catechism. A Book of Christian Faith* (German edition; English edition in 1975). It was written by a team of German, French, and Swiss scholars, nineteen Catholics and sixteen Protestants (Lutherans and Calvinists), including such internationally well-known names as Heinrich Fries, Walter Kasper, Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Its purpose was "to help ensure that Christians co-operate within their own communities in the common growth of the churches towards that unity in variety which is the goal of all ecumenical efforts."[43] This 720-page book is divided into five parts, devoted respectively to God, Jesus Christ (His work and His person), "New Men" (effects of Christ's death and resurrection on His followers, problems of grace, freedom, sin, prayer, the sacraments), faith in the world (with Christian ethics), and to ecumenical efforts.[44] Yet *The Common Catechism* contains a certain uneasiness about such topics as the pre-existence of Jesus, His virginal conception, and His physical resurrection. The doctrine of Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Humanae Vitae* on birth control is firmly rejected. Overall, the book is seen as "a survey of the kind of European liberalism that has inspired Protestant ecumenism and is becoming increasingly attractive to ecumenically-minded Catholics."[45]

The Common Catechism has not been approved as official teaching by any Roman Catholic or Protestant church body, and importantly, it does not embrace the theology of Easter Churches. Even the remarkable book of Cardinal Kasper *Harvesting the Fruits* covers only the results of the Western bilateral dialogues of

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41 Johnson, "An Astonishing," 87.
42 Kantyka, "Ekumenizm i katecheza," 171.
43 Feiner – Vischer, *The Common Catechism*, xiv.
44 Feiner – Vischer, *The Common Catechism*, 1–89, 91–275, 277–395, 397–550, 551–666.
45 Dederen, "The Common Catechism," 12–14.

the Catholic Church with Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican and Methodist Churches.[46] That is why the Turkish *Christianity. Fundamental Teachings* is so important: it takes Eastern theology into account and has been approved by the heads of these churches, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople included.

According to Cardinal Walter Kasper, former president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, a shared ecumenical catechism could be one of the fruits of the ecumenical dialogue of the last decades. "We have affirmed our common foundation in Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity as expressed in our common creed and in the doctrine of the first ecumenical councils," but "we do not yet have any idea how such a catechism could be structured and written," he said during the opening of the symposium held at the Vatican in 2010.[47]

Attempts of common explication of the Christian Creed are closely related to the idea of an ecumenical catechism. The most important work is the document of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches entitled *Confessing the One Faith. An Ecumenical Explication of the Apostolic Faith as it is confessed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381)* published in 1991. This text grew out of many years of study and consultation by theologians of various Christian traditions and from all parts of the world. It is not a consensus, nor even a convergence text, but an instrument offered to the Churches to assist them as they reflect on and seek to recognize the apostolic faith.[48] *Confessing the One Faith* is structured in three parts, following the three articles of the Creed. Each section indicates basic affirmations of faith as well as main challenges to be faced with regard to the respective theme. In identifying these challenges, attention is paid to three factors: (a) the language and philosophy of the age in which the creeds were formulated are no longer those of the present day; (b) the influence of old and new religions is more and more affirmed and appreciated in many cultures; (c) in modern societies, especially with the process of secularization, many of the basic affirmations of the Christian faith are questioned.[49]

At this point it is worth recalling ecumenical methodology, which is advocated in the Vatican document concerning the ecumenical dimension of pastoral formation:

> Attention should be drawn to the real communion already existing among Christians, seen in their reverence for the living Word of God and their common profession of faith in the triune God and in the redemptive action of Christ, the Son of God made man. It finds expression in the various Creeds Christians share; it is embraced in the one sacrament of

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46 Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits*, 3.
47 "Vatican Suggests Ecumenical Catechism."
48 Tillard, "Preface," xii.
49 *Confessing the One Faith*, 8–9.

baptism which constitutes the fundamental bond between them; it directs them all to full visible unity and a common destiny in the one Kingdom of God.[50]

The symbol of faith is the stem cell of all dogmatic development in the Church. It has the significance of the foundation of the whole building, together with the Scriptures, constituting a particularly legitimate interpretation of it. It express-es "the essence of Christianity."[51] The Creed should be at the heart of ecumenical dialogue, and much has already been done in this area.[52] However, it should not be forgotten that the Creed does not deal with ethical issues, the way of life, conduct and action of Christians in the world, important for the formation of Christian spirituality.[53] The credibility of the Church is connected with its various signs: unity, holiness, universality, love, praxis, witness, culture-forming activity and values.[54]

The task of publishing an ecumenical catechism can be facilitated today by the publication of catechisms of individual Churches or confessions. Nevertheless, the structure of *Christianity. Fundamental Teachings* resembles neither the structure of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nor Luther's *Catechisms*, nor *Catechism of the Orthodox Church*. These Catholic and Lutheran catechisms consist of four chapters covering (in different order) faith (Creed), liturgy (sacraments), moral life (commandments) and prayer (Our Father). The structure of the Orthodox catechism is focused on the mysteries of Christ's life in seven chapters: His Nativity (with subtitle "From Old Adam to New Adam"), Baptism ("From Abraham to Jesus: waiting and receiving God's Anointed"), Transfiguration ("Who is God?"), Teaching ("From Old Covenant to New Covenant"), Cross and Resurrection, Ascension and Pentecost ("New Age: Church Age"), His Second Coming and our life of the World to Come; an annex about prayer has been attached.[55]

These catechisms have different origins, objectives, and authorities within their Churches. Regardless of the differences, we can find a certain similarity: the mutual connection between faith, liturgy, Christian life and prayer. On the one hand, the division into four parts protects against the "ruinous dichotomy" what Christian "believe" and "act," which leads to intellectualism and moralism. On the other hand, the division into four parts poses a problem for the theocentric, Christocentric, and soteriological exposition of the doctrine. It should also be remembered that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* is an organic compendium, from which it has been made precise and comprehensive. The catechism of the Orthodox Church uses

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50 Pontificium Concilium ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam, *La dimension oecuménique*, no. 17.
51 Sesboüé, "Treść tradycji," 119.
52 Sabugal, *Credo*, 35–40.
53 Hryniewicz – Karski – Paprocki, *Credo*, 11.
54 Kaucha, "Wiarygodność Kościoła," 138–145.
55 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 13. *Księgi Wyznaniowe Kościoła Luterańskiego*, 41–55, 60–131. Paprocki, *Bóg żywy*, 19, 67, 97, 131, 187, 281, 399, 477.

a much more metaphorical, typological (thanks to the patristic reading of the Old Testament) and liturgical language. It is shorter and more suitable for direct use in catechesis.[56]

It seems that the Turkish booklet kept all these required dimensions. Its exposition is theocentric, Christocentric, soteriological, biblical and metaphorical, and the booklet is extremely brief. Thus it can easily be used in catechesis or other presentations of the Christian faith. Summarizing the structure of *Christianity. Fundamental Teachings* by the Joint Commission of Churches in Turkey, we can conclude that it is an extensive commentary on the Creed (Chapters 2–9) with an introduction (Chapter 1) and chapters dealing with the Bible, ethics, culture and ecumenism (Chapters 10–13). The teaching about the creation, incarnation, death and resurrection of Christ is included in the chapter about salvation; thus, protology has been integrated into Christology and soteriology. The book ends with a motivational call to Christian unity.

The booklet *Christianity. Fundamental Teachings* has received very positive critiques. "Turkey's Jewel" – this term was used by Brian C. Stiller, Global Ambassador of the World Evangelical Alliance.[57] According to the reviewers, this collaborative work presents the commonalities of the faith as well as the distinctions, but doing the latter very "calmly." It explains Christianity to non-Christians in a way that is both accessible and enlightening, and it would be a great reference and teaching tool for any Christians or non-Christians. "There is a beauty to its clarity and a wonderful spirit to it mission."[58] The booklet, "short but impactful," is seen as "a landmark" in inter-church efforts to draw closer together. This "easy to read synopsis" of major Christian doctrines has its "historic significance." It is an "excellent, clear and powerful book and balanced statements of what Christian believe." More than that, the authors present the key elements of the Christian faith in a way that is "fresh for western readers." It is in part a reflection of the theology of the Eastern Churches, which is complementary to that of the Western Churches.[59]

Andrew Messmer describes the publication of *Christianity* as "something amazing" because the Churches of Turkey have been able to produce a document that attempts to be universal and long-lasting despite the local flavor. He wrote: "I gladly confess that, although I am a (generally conservative) Protestant, there is little if anything that I disagree with. This, indeed, is encouraging!" This reviewer also lists which issues were left out of the book: canon of Scripture, Popes, the veneration of Mary and the saints, Purgatory, the number of the sacraments, the millennial

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56   Batut, "Le Catéchisme," 30–31. Gianetto, "Come usare," 187.
57   Stiller, "Turkey's Jewel."
58   Sessions, "Clear and Precise Statement."
59   Dinolfo, "Historic breakthrough." Moody, "If You Want." Niccum, "Short but Impactful." Rogers, "Seeing the Ecumenical Movement."

kingdom and use of images. These omissions reminded us precisely of what still divides us and sharpen the focus of our future ecumenical conversations.[60]

To sum up, the Turkish booklet is not a compilation or comparison of doctrines, even for unifying purposes as practiced by "symbolic theology" (*theologia symbolica*) or by "science of confessions" (*Konfessionskunde*).[61] It expresses the shared beliefs of the Christian Churches in a mature, balanced and convincing way.

Conclusion

The collaborative work of the Churches in Turkey is a good example for other countries, or even Churches worldwide, how to prepare a kind of an "ecumenical catechism." It would be even a paradigm of such a catechism. In comparison with other ecumenical catechisms, the booklet embraces Eastern theology and has been authorized by heads of the local churches. It also takes into account the local context. As a good teaching tool for Christians or non-Christians it is worth knowing, translating, commenting and implementing, after being adopted to other social, cultural and religious contexts. As a clear and balanced statement of what Christians believe, it gives the idea how a new ecumenical catechism could be structured and worked out. Such a catechism (or local catechisms) could be one of the fruits of the ecumenical dialogue conducted in the past decades and an instrument of evangelization for our time.

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60   Messmer, "Christianity."
61   Cf. Karski, *Symbolika*, 9–13; Pokorska, *Porównanie wyznań*, 12.

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Ｖerbum Ｖitae

The Feigned Ignorance of Judas. Rhetorical Question from the Category *interrogatio*/ἐρώτημα in Matt 26:25

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Abstract: The article analyzes the utterance made by Judas in the Cenacle (1) in the context of his efforts to hand Jesus over to the chief priests (Matt 26:14–25). The fact that his question (Matt 26:25) includes the particle μήτι which assumes a *negative response* from the interlocutor (1–2) suggests that the disciple was unaware that he was betraying Jesus. Consequently, there is no shortage of positive opinions about Judas, expressed both in the past and today. Matthew's narrative, however, says something different in this regard. The research problem is therefore seeking an answer to the question: how to interpret Judas' words? The referenced various biblical translations (3.1) and claims of exegetes (3.2) quote the words of the apostles (Matt 26:22, 25) and explain them in an ambiguous manner. The attempts to solve the problem shown in sections 2 and 3.1–2 do not provide a satisfactory conclusion. In the last section (4), the *grammatical* rules and *narrative* logic – which are clearly in contradiction – are supplemented with a *rhetorical* perspective, which leads to a definitive resolution of the dilemma. The synchronic approach applied to the pericope Matt 26:14–25 allows one to draw the conclusion that in Judas' utterance one should identify a rhetorical question from the category *interrogatio*/ἐρώτημα whose function in Matt 26:25 is *auferendae dissimulationis* ("misleading pretense"). Many exegetes have decrypted Judas' dishonest conduct, but it is only this article that precisely defines this rhetorical phenomenon.

Keywords: Judas, betrayal, misleading, pretense, rhetorical question, *interrogatio*/ἐρώτημα

The person of Judas and his deed(s) intrigue many people, not only believers. On the one hand, it is noted that it was he who was entrusted with the purse of the apostles' community, which means that he must have enjoyed the special trust of Jesus (and perhaps also fellow disciples), as well as an appropriate level of resourcefulness and intelligence. On the other hand, however, it became apparent that Judas' moral attitude left much to be desired: he would steal from his friends (John 12:6). Furthermore, his disloyalty in a "little" matter (cf. Luke 16:10) led to his betrayal in a more serious matter: he handed the Son of Man over to the executioners. And this is probably why his name was always placed at the end of the list of the twelve apostles,[1]

This article is an expanded, updated and thoroughly reworked version of an already published text, entitled: "Mateuszowa prezentacja Judasza: czy uczeń był świadomy, że zdradza swego Mistrza [Matthew's presentation of Judas: was the disciple aware that he was betraying his Master?]," *Studia nad Ewangelią według św. Mateusza. Nowy Testament: geneza – interpretacja – aktualizacja* (eds. J. Kręcidło – W. Linke; Lingua Sacra. Monografie 5; Warszawa: Apostolicum 2015) 329–347.

1   See Matt 10:4; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:19. Cf. Limbeck, "Ἰούδας," 1765.

often – including elsewhere – with the addition of the term "traitor/the one who had betrayed Him."[2]

Jesus predicted the betrayal of Judas at the Last Supper,[3] but only the Gospel according to St. Matthew states – after the saddened disciples expressed the hope that the traitor was none of them (Matt 26:22) – that Judas, separately, on his own behalf, also suggested that he had nothing to do with it (Matt 26:25). Such an understanding of Judas' words is dictated by the meaning of the negative particle μήτι present in his utterance. This is quite an intriguing issue, because from the content of Judas' question it follows that the disciple was unaware that he was betraying his Master. But is such an interpretation possible? Can one adopt it considering the context in which these words were spoken? The narrative logic of the events recounted in Matt 26:14–25 seems to contradict this by clearly indicating that Judas' actions showed his awareness of their consequences. On what condition, therefore, should a different solution be adopted and how should it be formulated?

This article undertakes to solve the problem thus outlined. First, sections 1–2 will show the role of the particle μή/μήτι in Matthew's Gospel (and especially in 26:22, 25). Then, section 3.1 will reference various English-language biblical translations quoting the utterances of Judas (Matt 26:25) and other disciples (Matt 26:22), which translate the words of the apostles in many different ways. The subsequent section 3.2 will present the opinions of exegetes on Judas' question, derived especially from the particularly authoritative English-language commentaries on the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Next, section 4 will supplement the grammatical rules and narrative logic with a rhetorical perspective, which will greatly contribute to resolving the dilemma under investigation. This is also where the *novum* of this study will be clearly demonstrated since, unlike previous commentaries, in addition to an interpretation of Judas' behavior and words, it will also propose a specific *name* for the rhetorical question uttered by the disciple in Matt 26:25 as well as identify the *function* it performs in the analyzed text. The presented opinion will be sealed by a short commentary, present in one of the last footnotes, concerning the title "Rabbi" which Judas used to address Jesus in the Cenacle.

A synchronic approach will be applied, focusing on the grammatical and rhetorical analysis of the pericope Matt 26:14–25 (taking into account the narrative logic of the events reported) and, in particular, of Judas' utterance itself recounted in verse 26:25. A correct interpretation of the disciple's question should help solve the problem under consideration: why did Judas speak in the Cenacle as if he was not aware that he is handing his Master over to the executioners? How should his words be understood?

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2   Cf. Matt 26:25; 27:3; John 12:4; 18:2, 5.
3   Cf. Matt 26:21; Mark 14:18; Luke 22:21; John 13:21.

1. Judas' Problematic Question in Matt 26:25

It was noted above that only St. Matthew presents the dialogue between Jesus and Judas in the scene where the traitor is revealed. Although the other evangelists – each, of course, in their own distinct way – also show this episode,[4] Matthew, although his account largely coincides with Mark, concludes this sad scene in a unique way, presenting an exchange between the Master and his tragic disciple (Matt 26:21–25).

First, however, the prophecy of betrayal receives a unified response from the apostles who ask about the addressee of the announcement "one of you will betray me." They formulate the words expressed in Greek as follows: μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, κύριε; (Matt 26:22).[5] Because of the subjective negative participle μήτι present in this sentence, it should be understood as a question expecting a negative answer and translated as: "It is not I, is it, Lord?/Surely not I, Lord?," with appropriate vocal intonation so as to express the disciples' *concern* and their *anticipation of denial* from Jesus. It clearly fits into the narrative logic, as none of the disciples had previously undertaken any actions constituting a betrayal of their Master.

Surprisingly, however, three verses later, Judas – known for his murky dealings with the Sanhedrin (cf. Matt 26:14–16; Mark 14:10–11) – also utters (almost) the same words, also expecting a negative answer from Christ: μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ῥαββί; (Matt 26:25). This interpretation of both questions follows from strict adherence to the definition of the above-mentioned particle μήτι.[6] Was Judas therefore also convinced that he had nothing to do with the betrayal of Jesus? Was he not aware of

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4   Cf. Mark 14:18–21; Luke 22:21–23; John 13:21–30.
5   Textual criticism does not note any significant variants in this or the following case.
6   Cf. Blass – Debrunner – Rehkopf, *Grammatik*, § 427,2: "μή (μήτι), wenn eine verneinende Antwort erwartet wird"; BAGD, § 4910: "μήτι. A marker that invites a negative response to the question that it introduces"; Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon*: "μή, a particle of negation […] But μή is either […] an interrogative particle (Latin *num*) i. e. (generally) implying a negative answer"; LSJ: "μή [...] § C (in questions) I. (direct questions) a. with indicative, implying a negative answer, *surely not*, *you don't mean to say that*"; Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, § 2651: "μή […] expect[s] the answer *no*"; Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon*: "μή [...] 3. as an interrogative particle when a negative answer is expected"; Friberg – Friberg – Miller, *Analytical Lexicon*: "μή negative particle *not*, […] (2) used to introduce questions expecting a negative answer (cf. 1 Cor 12:29–30)"; Romizi, *Greco antico*, 812: "μή […] nelle interrogative retoriche in cui si attende riposta negativa"; Montanari, *Vocabolario*, 1355: "μή […] con indicativo nelle [proposizioni] interrogative retoriche con riposta negativa"; Lampe, "μή," 371: "con l'indicativo in proposizioni indipendenti è un interrogativo suggestivo: forse che? (→ μήτι). La risposta attesa è «no»"; Balz – Schneider, "μήτι," 381–382: "particella interrogativa, per lo più in domande che attendono una risposta negativa, talvolta anche in domande con risposta incerta […] [Cf.] Matt 26:22, 25 (dove il v. 25 formula la domanda come è pensata da Giuda, e in contrasto ad essa la risposta di Gesù)"; Abramowiczówna, *Słownik*, III, 139: "μή […] w pytaniach niezależnych w indykatywie, gdy domyślna jest odpowiedź negatywna"; Popowski, *Wielki słownik*, 396: "μή […] jako partykuła pytajna w pytaniach, na które oczekuje się odpowiedzi przeczącej"; *ibidem*, 399: "μήτι […] partykuła pytajna w zdaniach, na które oczekuje się normalnie odpowiedzi zaprzeczającej; może też oznaczać wątpienie"; Hagner, *Matthew*, 766; Davies – Allison, *Matthew*, 461 and n. 44; Bruner, *Matthew*, 615; Harrington, *Matthew*, 366–367; Osborne, *Matthew*, 965; Gibbs, *Matthew*, 1393–1394.

his misdeeds? It is possible that it is precisely this understanding of Judas' conduct that inspired some people to assume a positive attitude towards his person. The contemporary common views on this disciple are eagerly replicated, clearly whitewashing his character. On the one hand, it is a way to show "pity" for Judas' fate, but on the other hand, it suggests that his action was indeed necessary to fulfil God's plan of salvation.[7] Disregarding Jesus' warning,[8] Judas is attributed with good intentions (and betrayal does not, after all, give rise to positive connotations: it is difficult to give a favorable opinion on a traitor!) and it is claimed that Judas was pushed to act because he was "impatient with Jesus' failure to inaugurate the kingdom."[9]

2. The μή/μήτι Particle in the Gospel according to St. Matthew

At this point, however, it is worth asking the following question: is it certain that Judas was awaiting a negative response from Jesus? In other words: did St. Matthew, who recounts this brief dialogue, always strictly observe grammatical rules in his work? Indeed, it is possible that sometimes he made exceptions and put different interpretations on, inter alia, the negative particle which is key to the present study. The fact is that the κοινή dialect frequently deviated from the rules of classical Greek and, in addition, individual authors sometimes had a rather peculiar understanding of the rules of the language (often foreign to them) they used to write the books of the New Testament. It is therefore important to "enter," as it were, the mind of the author and examine how he considered the μή/μήτι particle in his work.

It appears that μή initiating an independent interrogative sentence in St. Matthew's Gospel always – in line with the definition – expects a negative answer. There are few examples of this kind (four), and their meaning is not difficult to decipher.[10]

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7   Cf. Mark 14:43–45.49 and parallel; John 13:18; Matt 27:9. In fact, as early as the 2nd century, heterodox works began to emerge showing this disciple in a favorable light (e.g. the Gnostic *Gospel of Judas*). Judas was strongly condemned in the Middle Ages, yet – after modern times, when his character was understood in various ways – he is again approached with forbearance in contemporary history. Cf. Bocian, *Leksykon postaci biblijnych*, 213–217; Krasucka – Partyka, "Judasz," 208–209; Kramarek, "Judasz," 209–213; Starowieyski, *Judasz*; Starowieyski, *Apokryfy*, 880–886, 907–937; Myszor – Tondera, "Ewangelia Judasza," 887–906; Grochowski, "…miłujmy się wzajemnie," 67–68.

8   Matt 26:24 and parallel: "...woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for him if he had never been born."

9   Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1402. Similarly Mounce, *Matthew*, 239; Stein, "Judasz," 495; Świderkówna, *Rozmowy o Biblii*, 78.

10 Cf. Matt 7:9: "Is there anyone among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?"; 7:10: "Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?"; 9:15a: "The wedding guests cannot mourn while the bridegroom is with them, can they?"; 11:23a: "And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be thrown down to Hades!"

The case is slightly different with μήτι, i.e. the emphatic "version" of μή:[11] out of also four occurrences in Matthew (as a negative particle starting an interrogative sentence), two times it clearly awaits a negative response,[12] one time it is (possibly) ambiguous,[13] and yet another time it suggests a "yes" answer (!), with a faint tinge of doubt.[14] The last case could indicate the author's openness to the possibility of non-standard treatment of the μήτι particle, as adopted by St. John the Evangelist quoted in the footnote.

Conclusions:

(Ia) Since the narrative logic clearly states that Judas was *aware* of his treacherous actions, perhaps, in the first place, it is worth trying to find in his question a formula used by him to hear a *positive answer* from Jesus. The example of μήτι in Matt 12:23 opens the possibility for a special approach to that particle also in Matt 26:25. In that case, the disciple's words should be considered a provocation involving Iscariot sarcastically and ironically saying to Jesus: "Is it I/Am I the one/Could it be I, Rabbi?," obviously with the appropriate intonation in his voice. Would he have been able to make such an emphatic statement immediately after Jesus announced the tragic fate of his betrayer (Matt 26:24: cf. footnote 8)? It might have been possible, although it would mean Judas' astonishing confidence, arrogance and disrespect toward Jesus.

(Ib) Bearing in mind that in Matt 12:23, the μήτι particle was associated not only with an affirmative answer but also with accompanying *doubts*, this time, if one wanted to try to find that second aspect ("doubt") in the behavior of Judas, his words could be translated as follows: "Is it (possible that it is) I, Rabbi?" That approach would mean that Judas *was rather unaware* of his betrayal, although Jesus' words would make him *doubt* his own innocence. Contrary to what was expected by the crowd in Matt 12:23, he would not have expected a positive response from

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[11] BAGD, § 4910: "μήτι [...] This marker is somewhat more emphatic than the simple μή"; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 989, n. 17: "A question introduced by μή expects the answer no, and the emphatic form μήτι [...] makes the idea sound even more far-fetched: «surely not!»."

[12] Cf. Matt 7:16b: "Grapes are not gathered from thorns or figs from thistles, are they?"; 26:22b: "Surely not I, Lord?"

[13] This is about Judas' utterance from Matt 26:25 analyzed in this article. In the main text, the word "possibly" is added in anticipation of the next, last – and, as will be shown, peculiar – case of using the μήτι particle in Matt 12:23, and also because of the diversity of opinions about Matt 26:25 among exegetes (to be discussed a little later). In turn, we ourselves are convinced of the univocal meaning of this particle in the said verse.

[14] Cf. Matt 12:23: "All the crowds were amazed and said, «Could this one be the Son of David?»." The *doubt* potentially expressed by the μήτι particle was mentioned above in the dictionaries of Remigiusz Popowski and Balz – Schneider, and Morris (*Matthew*, 656, n. 41) also writes about it, citing yet another exegete: "Chamberlain points out that, while μή is used to introduce a question expecting a negative answer, «For a hesitant question, μήτι may be used». He cites John 4:29, where the Samaritan woman asks, «Might this be the Messiah?»." The quote from the Fourth Gospel cited here is very reminiscent of Matt 12:23. So here the speaker expects a *positive answer* to the question asked, although *with a hint of doubt*.

Jesus but rather *an answer confirming or denying* that fact, probably hoping that Jesus would say the word "no."

However, it should be noted that the hypotheses Ia and Ib, trying to apply to Matt 26:25 the specific meaning of μήτι from Matt 12:23 and thus attempting to make the question of Judas the second exception (out of all 8 cases of μή/μήτι in the Gospel of Matthew), are not an accurate reflection of the case in Matt 12:23. The crowd asking about the identity of Jesus as the Son of David waited for a positive answer while expressing uncertainty about that matter. In contrast, each of the propositions, Ia and Ib, reflects one aspect of the crowd's behavior: Ia emphasizes Judas' expectation to hear "yes" from Jesus, while Ib represents his doubt. Therefore, the hypotheses Ia and Ib do not necessarily find their validation in the non-standard meaning of the μήτι particle in Matt 12:23. For the record, it is considered that the former emphasizes Judas' awareness of betrayal (which corresponds to the narrative logic), and the latter – his unawareness (which contradicts that logic).

(II) If one were to follow most of the cases of μή/μήτι in the Gospel of Matthew, which respects the grammar rules, it should be acknowledged that Judas – when uttering his μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ῥαββί; – expected a *denial* from Jesus, giving the impression that he was *unaware* of his betrayal. Although the above contradicts the situational realism present in Matthew's narrative, such a conclusion is prompted by the rules of Greek grammar.

3. A Contemporary Way of Understanding Judas' Question

The ambiguous interpretation of the μήτι particle is evidenced not only by the arguments presented in section 2 but also by the presence of different biblical translations – where Matt 26:22, 25 is interpreted in various ways – and different opinions expressed by the exegetes relating to the words spoken by Judas in the Cenacle. The examples of various interpretations, presented in the tables below, correspond to the conclusions that sum up the grammatical analysis (see section 2) and confirm the legitimacy of the research problem formulated at the beginning of this article. Not everyone understands Judas' words in the same way.

3.1. Judas' Question in Various English-Language Biblical Translations[15]

The first table presents the biblical translations of the questions formulated by the apostles and Judas, treating the μήτι particle as if its role resembled the one in Matt 12:23. It is assumed that those asking Jesus do not necessarily expect a negative answer:[16]

Translation	Matt 26:22 μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, κύριε;	Matt 26:25 μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ῥαββί;
Tyndale New Testament (1534)	Is it I, master? (*sic*!)	Is it I, master?
Bishop's New Testament (1595)	Lord, is it I?	Master, is it I?
Geneva Bible (1599)	Is it I, Lord?	Is it I, Master?
King James Version (1611)	Lord, is it I?	Master, is it I?
The Webster Bible (1833)	Lord, is it I?	Master, is it I?
Young's Literal Translation (1862/1898)	Is it I, Sir?	Is it I, Rabbi?
George Noyes Bible (1869)	Is it I, Lord?	Is it I, Rabbi?
English Revised Version (1885)	Is it I, Lord?	Is it I, Rabbi?
Darby Bible (1884/1890)	Is it I, Lord?	Is it I, Rabbi?
The Douay-Rheims American Edition (1899)	Is it I, Lord?	Is it I, Rabbi?
American Standard Version (1901)	Is it I, Lord?	Is it I, Rabbi?
Revised Standard Version (1952/1971)	Is it I, Lord?	Is it I, Master?
Revised Webster Update (1995)	Lord, is it I?	Master, is it I?
The Rotherham Bible (1999)	Can it be, I, Lord?	Can it be, I, Rabbi?
New Living Translation (2007)	Am I the one, Lord?	Rabbi, am I the one?
English Standard Version (2016)	Is it I, Lord?	Is it I, Rabbi?

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15 Considering the fact that most of the readers of this article speak English, the translations and commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew written in other languages are not included. Obviously, the other proposals could enrich the discussion but – to the author's knowledge – they would not necessarily lead to conclusions different than those based on the ones in English.

16 No information about the intonation used to ask both questions (in English) may give rise to uncertainty as to the interpretation of their meaning.

The following table presents translations of the Bible that take grammatical rules into account while interpreting the μήτι particle, thus implying that Judas and the apostles were expecting a negative response from Jesus:

Translation	Matt 26:22 μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, κύριε;	Matt 26:25 μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ῥαββί;
New Jerusalem Bible (1985)	Not me, Lord, surely?	Not me, Rabbi, surely?
New Revised Standard Version (1989)	Surely not I, Lord?	Surely it is not I, Rabbi?
The New American Standard Bible (1995)	Surely not I, Lord?	Surely it is not I, Rabbi?
God's Word to the Nations (1995)	You don't mean me, do you, Lord?	You don't mean me, do you, Rabbi?
Complete Jewish Bible (1998)	Lord, you don't mean me, do you?	Surely, Rabbi, you don't mean me?
New International Reader's Version (1998)	It's not I, Lord, is it?	It's not I, Rabbi, is it?
Today's New International Version (2001)	Surely not I, Lord?	Surely not I, Rabbi?
New English Translation (2006)	Surely not I, Lord?	Surely not I, Rabbi?
New American Bible (2010)	Surely it is not I, Lord?	Surely it is not I, Rabbi?
Revised Patriarchal Greek Orthodox New Testament (2010)	It is not me, is it, Lord?	It is not me, is it, Rabbi?
New International Version (2011)	Surely you don't mean me, Lord?	Surely you don't mean me, Rabbi?
Common English Bible (2011)	I'm not the one, am I, Lord?	It's not me, is it, Rabbi?
MacDonald Idiomatic Translation of the NT (2012)	You are not referring to me, are you, Lord?	It is not me, is it, rabbi?
Holman Christian Standard Bible (2017)	Surely not I, Lord?	Surely not I, Rabbi?

With reference to the definition of the participle μήτι, the conclusions can be grouped as follows:

(I) The translations presented in the first table, in the case of which not much attention is paid to the precise translation of the participle μήτι, are ambiguous considering the matter discussed in the study. The intonation used by Judas while asking the question was of great importance:

(Ia) On the one hand, the words might have been said in such a way (phonetically) that they constituted sentences of a provocative nature and a *"yes" response* was expected. In that case, Judas – *aware* of handing Jesus over to his enemies – would have additionally shown his arrogance and disregard for the Master.

(Ib) On the other hand, however, they might have suggested uncertainty of Iscariot, in which case his question – this time revealing *unawareness* of the betrayal – would have shown the disciple's puzzlement and anxiety while waiting for the response from Jesus (*positive* or *rather negative*).

(II) With regard to the translations included in the second table, in the case of which the rules of grammar are respected, the question of Judas is presented in such a way as if he was *unaware* that he was handing Jesus over to the enemies and, at the same time, absolutely convinced of his innocence. He expects a *negative* response from the Master and – implicitly and emphatically – underlines that he has nothing to do with that foul action.

3.2. Interpretations of Exegetes Relating to Matt 25:22, 25

The difficulty in understanding some biblical translations is related not only to the lack of access to the intonation in which the text should be read but also to the absence of a commentary which – provided by those translating the Bible into English – could dispel any doubts. The case is different in the works of exegetes who, in addition to the translation, included explanatory notes.

Similarly to sections 2 and 3.1, in this section, 3.2, the opinions of scholars who take into account the possibility that Judas acted *deliberately* as a traitor are presented first. Enjoying great respect, the long-standing secretary of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, Fr. Klemens Stock SJ, in his lecture on "The Passion of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels" given at the Pontificium Institutum Biblicum in Rome, at the beginning of his commentary on Matt 26:22, emphasized the role of the participle μήτι – which was to introduce a question with the expectation to receive a negative answer.[17] However, in a subsequent section of the commentary, he stated that in Matt 26:25, the particle has no longer this meaning and that the sentence uttered by Judas is of a *provocative* nature, thus a *positive answer is expected*.[18] Other, although not many, English language-speaking exegetes also interpret Judas' words in a similar (or only slightly different) way:

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[17] Stock, *Il racconto della passione*, 61: "Introducendo tale interrogativo con «mēti» essi esprimono la loro speranza d'una risposta negativa."

[18] Stock, *Il racconto della passione*, 63: "L'interrogativo di Giuda non può essere dettato dall'angosciosa speranza di sentire il «no» di Gesù (cf. sopra la spiegazione di 26,22), ma sembra avere piuttosto un carattere provocatorio."

Author and the work	Translation of Matt 26:25
Allen, *Commentary*, 275 (1907)	Is it I, Rabbi?
Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1064 (2005)	Could it be I, Rabbi?
Turner – Bock, *Matthew, Mark*, 338 (2005)	Am I the one?

It is not difficult to notice that most scholars do not make an exception here and – strictly following the rules of grammar – translate Judas' statement in such a way that his question (more or less clearly) implies a negative answer from Jesus. This seems to contradict the narrative logic but the opinions of the authors on the words of Judas critically assessing their content and the attitude of the disciple are useful here. Some examples of such interpretations are presented in the table below:

Author and the work	Translation of Matt 26:25	Commentary about Judas
Carson, „Matthew," 534 (1984)		This exchange [of the words], preserved only in Matthew, magnifies Judas's effrontery and […] the deceit of the betrayer
France, *Matthew*, 371–372 (1985)	You can't possibly mean me, can you?	Judas, surely disingenuously, uses the same incredulous form of question as the others […] his question, in comparison with theirs, rings hollow
Blomberg, *Matthew*, 387 (1992)	Surely not I, Rabbi?	
Morris, *Matthew*, 653, 655, 656–657 (1992)	Is it I, Rabbi? (the author inclines later to a different translation: Surely, not me, Rabbi?)	It must have come as something of a shock to Judas to hear these words, but since Jesus did not denounce him he was still safe and could go ahead with what he had planned
Hare, *Matthew*, 296–297 (1993)		Judas' question is as hypocritical as his kiss in Gethsemane. He knows the answer!
Gundry, *Matthew*, 527 (1994)	I'm not the one, Rabbi, am I?	[σὺ εἶπας] heightens the guilt of Judas by implying that he already knows the affirmative answer to his question, which therefore lacks sincerity. Woe to the hypocrite!
Hagner, *Matthew*, 766, 768 (1995)	I'm not the one, Rabbi, am I?	Judas questions Jesus, perhaps just to see whether he really knew who betrayer was […]. ὁ παραδιδοὺς αὐτόν […] (present participle), perhaps points to the fact that the betrayal had already been initiated […] Judas was the betrayer as he himself well knew
Malina – Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 129 (2003)		Judas proves his total lack of shame by brazenly asking whether Jesus knew it was he who was part of the secret plan

Author and the work	Translation of Matt 26:25	Commentary about Judas
Wilkins, *Matthew*, 824, 835 (2004)	Surely not I, Rabbi?	The tone of his reply is disingenuous, deceptive sincere, expecting a negative reply from Jesus. Judas has been carrying out his arrangements for the betrayal in secret [...] but Jesus' knowledge is divinely revealed: "Yes, it is you" [...] Rather than masking his insincerity, Judas's own question has indicated him [...] Jesus's reply confirms the truth that the interrogator is trying to avoid"
Davies – Allison, *Matthew*, 461, 464 (2004)	Surely it is not I?	the hypocritical question
Luz, *Matthew*, 358, 360–361 (2005)	It is not I, is it, Rabbi?	Judas [...] pretends not to know what is going on – behavior that [...] casts a most unfavorable light on his character [...] enormous impudence [...] In addition to the betrayal is the brazenness: Judas thinks that by asking the same question as the other disciples he can hypocritically hide his betrayal [...] it is his shame that causes Judas to act hypocritically in v. 25
Witherington, *Matthew*, 483 (2006)	Surely not I, Rabbi?	
Harrington, *Matthew*, 367 (2007)	It is not I, is it, Rabbi?	
France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 986, 990 (2007)	You don't mean me, do you, Rabbi?	Judas' question is insincere, since he is already contracted to betray Jesus; he merely echoes the other disciples so as not to appear out line. Perhaps he hopes that while Jesus is aware that he has a traitor in his inner circle he has not yet worked out who it is
Bruner, *Matthew*, 618 (2007)	You don't mean me, do you, Rabbi?	Judas's question (*mēti*), which expects the answer «no», suggests Judas's false security or perhaps his duplicity […] Judas is surely foolish in thinking that Jesus does not know what is going on
Albright – Mann, *Matthew*, 322 (2008)	«Is it I, Master?» The words are more emphatic than can easily be rendered in English, and perhaps we could here translate rather more freely by «Surely not I?»	
Turner, *Matthew*, 624, 625 (2008)	Surely it is not I, Rabbi?	Judas hypocritically asks if he could be the betrayer
Chamblin, *Matthew*, 1288 (2010)	It is not I, is it, Rabbi?	

Author and the work	Translation of Matt 26:25	Commentary about Judas
Gundry, *Commentary*, 117 (2010)	Surely I'm not [the betrayer], am I, Rabbi?	Judas's question exudes hypocrisy. He knows very well that he's the betrayer. He has been paid to betray Jesus. The thirty silver coins are jingling in Judas's pocket […] So his question […] that expects a negative answer, lacks sincerity. „And answering" adds emphasis to his pretending loyalty to Jesus with the question
Osborne, *Matthew*, 959, 966 (2010)	I am not the one, am I, Rabbi?	Undoubtedly, Judas is hoping that Jesus is not aware of his earlier evil betrayal
Talbert, *Matthew*, 286 (2010)	It is not I, is it, Rabbi?	
Mounce, *Matthew*, 241 (2011)	Surely not I, Rabbi?	
Gibbs, *Matthew*, 1393, 1397 and n. 21 (2018)	It is not I, is it, Rabbi?	Jesus, against Judas' rhetorical insistence, answers yes. We cannot be sure precisely what to make of Judas' question either. It seems most likely that, given the portrait in 26:14–16, Judas is simply trying to hide his true intentions. It is not, however, beyond the realm of possibility that there is genuine anguish in this question. We simply do not know

Almost all of the opinions presented in the table above emphasize Judas' hypocrisy and insincerity, that is, his dishonest action and a disguised lie in his surprising statement. Therefore, the authors suggest – not so much in the translation proposed by them but in the commentaries to the translation – *a deliberate* action of Judas, although covered with false words. Jeffrey A. Gibbs, in his recently published commentary (2018), even speaks of the "rhetorical insistence" in Judas' words, and – citing rhetoric – shows the right way to interpret the disciple's question. However, this author does not specify which phenomenon of a rhetorical nature the person reading verse Matt 26:25 is dealing with.

4. Rhetoric Comes to Help

How to get out of this stalemate situation? Can a problem in the case of which the grammatical rules seem incompatible with the narrative logic be solved? Or maybe it is possible to strictly follow the definition of the μήτι particle and take the realism of the situation in which Judas found himself into account at the same

time? Unlike other apostles, this particular disciple had already taken specific steps towards betraying Jesus – since he had visited the chief priests with an offer to "hand over" his Master (κἀγὼ ὑμῖν <u>παραδώσω</u> αὐτόν – Matt 26:15) and was looking for an opportunity to "hand Him over" (ἐζήτει εὐκαιρίαν ἵνα αὐτὸν <u>παραδῷ</u> – Matt 26:16), then how, in response to Jesus' words about his upcoming betrayal = "handing over" (εἷς ἐξ ὑμῶν <u>παραδώσει</u> με – Matt 26:21), he can ask the Master "Surely not I/It is not me, is it, Rabbi?" and expect a negative answer?

It appears that it is possible to clarify the matter and that the interpretation of Matt 26:25 in a plausible manner may be a groundbreaking achievement. The unravelling of such a *crux interpretum* is aided by rhetoric.[19]

Considering that Judas' words form a *question* addressed to Jesus, it is worth recalling various definitions of rhetorical questions and reflecting on whether, by any chance, the verse Matt 26:25 fits into one of them.

Since Judas' statement indicates that he expects Jesus' response in the form of a "yes" or "no," then, of all the categories of rhetorical questions cited to interpret Matt 26:25, two groups must be eliminated in advance: "the interplay (*Spiel*) of question and answer" (§§ 771–775) and "the helplessness question (§§ 776–779)."[20] On the other hand, the third group of questions ("the purely emotive question" – §§ 767–770) should exclude πύσμα/*quesitum*, since only the remaining category – ἐρώτημα/*interrogatio* – by virtue of the anticipation of a "yes" or "no" answer, seems suitable for attempting to define the question uttered by Judas in the Cenacle.

This is how – first in general and then in detail – Heinrich Lausberg defines the aforementioned rhetorical figure in three points:

Interrogatio/ἐρώτημα is a question "to which no answer is expected, since [...] from the point of view of the speaking party, the answer is supposed to be self-evident" (§ 767).

1) "[A] question is intended to humiliate the opposing party" (§ 767). "*Interrogamus [...] invidiae gratia [...] aut instandi*" [= We ask [...] as a result of hatred [...] or when we attack] (§ 768);

2) "ἐρώτημά ἐστιν, πρὸς ὁ ἀνάγκη ἀποκρίνασθαι κατ᾽ἀπόφασιν ἢ κατάφασιν οὕτω 'ναὶ' ἢ 'οὔ'" [= erotema occurs when it is necessary to choose between denial and confirmation, "yes" or "no"] (§ 767);

3) "Several functions of *interrogatio* may be distinguished [...] *Interrogamus etiam quod negari non possit* […] *aut auferendae dissimulationis* […] [*interrogatio*]

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[19] Even if Matthew's work is a *narrative* text (and, therefore, not *poetry*, a *speech* provided by Jesus or a work resembling, for example, any of the NT *letters* – and these types of texts are more suitable for rhetorical analysis), it exhibits certain phenomena of a rhetorical nature, the consideration of which may be not only useful but even necessary to better understand the Gospel message.

[20] Subsequent section numbers (§) refer to Heinrich Lausberg's monumental work: *Handbuch der Literarischen Rhetorik*. Its English translation is: *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric*. It is also worth referring to the work of the same author entitled *Elemente der literarischen Rhetorik*.

indignationi convenit […] *et admirationi* […] *est interim acrius imperandi genus*"
[= We ask about something that cannot be denied [...] or in misleading pretense
[...] [the question] suits both indignation [...] and bewilderment [...] There is also
a type in which we strongly command] (§ 768).

In view of the words spoken by Judas in the Cenacle, it is intriguing that this type of
rhetorical question can be used to "pretend to mislead the interlocutor" (*auferendae
dissimulation* – "misleading dissembling"). This definition, proposed by Marcus Fa-
bius Quintilian in *Institutionis oratoriae* IX, 2.8, seems to be fully in line with Iscari-
ot's attitude and thus contributes to the resolution of our dilemma.

Without fear of possible error, it can therefore be concluded that the reader
of Matt 26:25 is faced with a rhetorical question from the category ἐρώτημα/*interroga-
tio* whose function in the text is *auferendae dissimulationis*. Indeed, it is not difficult
to see that the words formulated by Judas are not intended to seek out information
(confirming or [rather] denying his assumption – and this was the case with the other
apostles in Matt 26:22), but – abandoning their dialogic function and, consequently,
assuming a rhetorical character – they are precisely a tool for adopting an attitude
of "pretending/feigning" (i.e., suggesting that "he is not the disciple who will betray
Jesus") in order to "mislead the Master and the other apostles."[21] Judas, therefore, al-
though he said the same words as other disciples, expressed them with a completely
different intent: knowing that he was the one Jesus was referring to, he wanted to
defend himself, hoping perhaps that Jesus would pass over the matter or, for example,
change the topic of the conversation.[22] However, to his surprise the Master – possibly
without revealing this truth to other disciples, that is, speaking in a hushed and dis-
creet voice – affirmed the secret he had been hiding.[23] Who knows, perhaps Jesus did

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[21] There is a clear difference between the words of the apostles and those spoken by Judas. While other disci-
ples undoubtedly express considerable emotion – in addition to content – with their suggestive question,
they ultimately wait for Jesus' response in the form of a clear answer to the burning question: "perhaps
it is not I, Lord (who is the one who will betray you)?" Therefore, they are seeking information that would
confirm their conviction of innocence regarding the Master's betrayal. Cf. Allen, *Commentary*, 275–276:
"They answer Him in indignant words which are half-interrogative, half-negative."

[22] One might ask: why did Judas speak at all in Matt 26:25 if he was one of the apostles speaking
in Matt 26:22? However, taking into account John 13:26, it is possible that Matt 26:23 implicitly informs
us of Jesus' act of handing Judas a piece of bread, to which it was "not appropriate" for Judas to remain si-
lent, but to try to divert attention from himself. Frederick D. Bruner (*Matthew*, 618) expresses a different
view: "Judas has said this only because the other disciples have said it, *pro forma*, perfunctorily, because
it was the thing to do."

[23] Stock, *Il racconto della passione*, 63: "La persona del traditore non viene […] rivelata agli altri discepoli.
Tutti vengono informati del fatto del tradimento e il traditore, in specie, del fatto che Gesù ne conosce
le intenzioni più profonde." Although "Jesus' reply to Judas σὺ εἶπας […] is enigmatic" (Gibbs, *Matthew*,
1394), the fact that these words should be understood as a *confirmation* of the message that has just been
provided is evidenced by Strack – Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, 990; Bartnicki, "Ewangeliczne opisy Męki," 111;
Gnilka, *Il vangelo di Matteo*, 580: "...Gesù lo abbia riconosciuto. «Tu l'hai detto» va letto come una confer-
ma"; Paciorek, *Ewangelia Mateusza*, 556 and most of the exegetes quoted in the last table (under section
3.2). An interesting comment regarding the words spoken by Jesus is made by Bruner, *Matthew*, 618–619:

so "suggesting to the traitor himself the certainty that his treachery was known […] and leaving opportunity to Judas of withdrawing from his course of treachery before its absolute and final exposure."[24] In fact, a little earlier, when he openly announced to his disciples the fact that one of them will prove to be a traitor (Matt 26:21), already then – as noted by the Church Fathers – Jesus gave a signal to perform the examen and abandon any unholy plans.[25]

"A clear «yes», if it had been heard, might have provoked the other disciples' fury and, surely, Judas's mock indignation. A «no» would have been untrue. And no response at all could have suggested that Judas's person or question was indifferent to Jesus." On the other hand, the understanding of Jesus' σὺ εἶπας as an affirmation is not necessarily at odds with the situation where participle μήτι anticipates – also in the case of Judas – a negative response. In fact, it is possible to answer affirmatively to a question expecting a denial, just as it is possible to answer negatively to a question expecting an affirmative answer (cf. John 18:26b-27a: οὐκ ἐγώ σε εἶδον ἐν τῷ κήπῳ μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ; πάλιν οὖν ἠρνήσατο Πέτρος ["Did I not see you in the orchard with him? Then Peter denied it again"]; cf. also the opinion of Balz – Schneider ["μήτι," 381–382] cited in footnote 6).

24 Allen, *Commentary*, 276. Other authors add: Carson, "Matthew," 535: "it is enough [...] to give Judas a jolt"; Luz, *Matthew*, 361: "Jesus does not want to expose Judas publicly and is still hoping that he changes his mind"; Bruner, *Matthew*, 619: "Jesus loved even Judas, and loved him enough to give him still one more chance"; Chamblin, *Matthew*, 1288: "As in the woes of chapter 23, Jesus sounds the most urgent of warnings to Judas. For when the betrayal is complete, his condition will have become hopeless."

25 Cf. Davies – Allison, *Matthew*, 461 and n. 36; Bruner, *Matthew*, 612–613. It is possible to notice a certain difference in the words spoken to Jesus by the apostles and Judas. While the disciples refer to their Master as "Lord," Judas uses the word "Rabbi" (cf. Davies – Allison, *Matthew*, 461; Hagner, *Matthew*, 767; Osborne, *Matthew*, 965: "There is a sharp contrast between their acknowledgement of Jesus as «Lord» and Judas, who calls him «Rabbi»"). Although it does not resolve the issue regarding the interpretation of the participle μήτι in Matt 26:25 – and thus the question of Judas' awareness (or lack thereof) of the Master's betrayal – it does shed additional light on the question of *his understanding of Jesus' identity*. It appears that in the Gospel of Matthew – unlike in the other gospels (cf. Mark 9:5; 11:21; John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8) – the term "Rabbi" takes on a negative connotation (cf. Matt 23:7–8) and Judas is the only disciple who uses it in Matt (Matt 26:25, 49) (cf. Mickiewicz, *Krocząc śladami męki Chrystusa*, 157; Gnilka, *Il vangelo di Matteo*, 580–581; France, *Matthew*, 372; Morris, *Matthew*, 657; Hare, *Matthew*, 296; Luz, *Matthew*, 360. A slightly different opinion is expressed by Gundry, *Matthew*, 527: "In view of 23:8, we ought not to think that Matthew rejects «Rabbi» as a Christological title by putting it on the lips of Judas" and Bruner, *Matthew*, 618: "Rabbi [...] is not a wrong title for Jesus in Matthew's Gospel; it is an inadequate one"). He refers to Jesus as "Rabbi" thus betraying his lack of understanding of his mission and role (cf. Homerski, *Ewangelia według św. Mateusza*, 330; Leske, "Ewangelia według św. Mateusza," 1198; Viviano, "Ewangelia według świętego Mateusza," 974). In the Gospel of Matthew, the term κύριε emphasizes His authority and divine power (Harrington, *Matthew*, 366–367: "«Lord», a prominent Matthean title for Jesus"; Gundry, *Commentary*, 117: "when addressed to Jesus, «Lord» points to his deity"). Used by the apostles, it expresses their faith in Jesus and the authenticity of their identity as disciples, contrasting with Judas' hypocritical questioning (cf. Gnilka, *Il vangelo di Matteo*, 579; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 835). Ultimately, all that can be said about Judas is that "there is no specific reason provided for his betrayal other than his request for payment" (Brown, *Matthew*, 294).

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Summary

After confronting the research problem of this article, it must be concluded that – while observing the rules of Greek *grammar* (that is, perceiving the μήτι particle, initiating an independent interrogative sentence, as expecting a negative answer) and staying true to the *narrative logic* of Matt 26:14–25 – it is possible to solve the problem of interpreting the intriguing question of Judas. This is done by resorting to *rhetoric* and discovering in the words spoken by him in the Cenacle (Matt 26:25) a rhetorical question from the category *interrogatio*/ἐρώτημα whose function in the text is *auferendae dissimulationis*. Judas, by formulating the phrase expressed by the evangelist in Greek as μήτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ῥαββί; = "Surely not I, Rabbi?," attempts to "mislead" all participants of the Last Supper with his "pretense/feigning." He undoubtedly does so consciously, as he had already used the word παραδίδωμι with the chief priests (hand over/give up/betray – Matt 22:15), the one used a little later by the evangelist to describe the actions taken by him (cf. Matt 26:16), and, finally, the one quoted by Jesus when he predicted the betrayal of one of His disciples (Matt 26:21). However, Judas' attempt at self-defence came to naught: Jesus exposed his plans (at least towards himself) and confirmed the truth he had denied. The title of "Rabbi," which Judas invoked, reveals his lack of understanding of Jesus' mission and his lack of faith in Him as Lord; it does not, however, negate the possibility of Judas' full awareness in his handing over of Jesus to the chief priests, from who he had already received silver coins (Matt 26:15). It is possible that the truth about the tragedy he brought about with his misdeeds later reached Judas and it is possible that his regret (Matt 27:3) was sincere (and, incidentally and inadvertently, he confirmed Jesus' innocence – Matt 27:4), but his despair and the decision to inflict just punishment on himself proved to be stronger (Matt 27:5). After all, in Judaism, suicide was not perceived unequivocally negatively.[26] Judas ended his life tragically but, in doing so, he bore full responsibility for his actions, as also when he denied being a traitor (Matt 26:25) – despite the attempt to pretend otherwise – he acted with full awareness.[27]

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26 Cf. Drzewiecka, *Śmierć Judasza*, 57–58 and n. 86.

27 Blomberg, *Matthew*, 389: "[Matt 26:24] reaffirms the divine certainty of the coming events and points again to Jesus' fate as scripturally determined [...] But [...] God's sovereignty does not override human free will or accountability, hence the woe concerning the one who will betray Christ. Had Judas not done the deed, someone else would have, but whoever does it damns himself in the process"; similarly Carson, "Matthew," 534; France, *Matthew*, 371–372; Morris, *Matthew*, 656–657; Davies – Allison, *Matthew*, 463; Wilkins, *Matthew*, 834–835; Luz, *Matthew*, 360–361; Nolland, *Matthew*, 1067; Witherington, *Matthew*, 483; Bruner, *Matthew*, 617; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 990; Harrington, *Matthew*, 367; Chamblin, *Matthew*, 1287–1288; Mounce, *Matthew*, 241.

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Verbum Vitae

"Holy Seed" in Isaiah 6:13:
Echo of an Exclusive Concept of Israel's Identity

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Abstract: The last phrase in Isa 6:1–13, in which critical exegesis sees an element of a post-exilic supplement to an existing text, communicates the thought of surviving the announced destruction of the little remainder referred to as the "holy seed." The problem considered in the presented study is the meaning of the term "holy seed" in Isa 6:13bβ, the possible context and the historical motive for inserting this phrase into the text of Isa 6, as well as the place of this complementary interference in the historical process of formation of Isa 6. The article presents literary and historical-critical analyses of the terms "seed" and "holy people" relating to the people of God and Israel, especially the expression "holy seed," which in the Old Testament, apart from Isa 6:13bβ, occurs only in Ezra 9:2, while it appears more often in the Book of Jubilees and in the Aramaic Levi Document. The results of the research lead to the thesis that the supplement in Isa 6:13bβ is a testimony to the last interferences in the composition of Isaiah, behind which stood literati from the Zadokite circles of the Hasmonean period. The prophetic statement in Isa 6:13bβ redefines Israel as God's people, separate from other nations. For this people there is hope for survival in a small remnant that remains aware of its election and holiness, and faithful to the covenant. This remnant of the people will prove to be the holy seed.

Keywords: holy seed, Isaiah, Zadokites, identity, exclusivism

Twice in the Old Testament the term "holy seed" appears in metaphorical use to designate human descendants, namely in Ezra 9:2 and Isa 6:13. In Ezra 9:2, the "holy seed" (זרע הקדש) are the people of Israel who were accused of mixing with the peoples of Canaan. According to the biblical text, the chiefs presented the problem to Ezra, who had just arrived in his homeland with a group of compatriots from the Babylonian exile. The term "holy seed" in this text indicates the distinctly exclusive character of the Israelite ethnos. This view was held by zealous returnees who considered themselves true Israelites and heirs to God's promises. The expression "holy seed" (זרע קדש) in Isa 6:13 characterizes the very few of God's people who will survive the destruction foretold by God to Isaiah. Historical-critical exegesis sees in Isa 6:13 a later addition to the text, in which the destruction appears to be complete, embracing all the people (העם הזה), because they have ceased to listen to the voice of God. The term "holy seed" seems to serve there to express hope for the survival of God's people in the holy remnant. But what is the exact meaning of the expression "holy seed" in Isa 6:13? Does it differ from the meaning attributed to the term in Ezra 9:2? The last phrase of Isa 6:13 with the descriptor "holy seed" (w. 13bβ) is not found in the Septuagint but is instead present in the Qumran manuscript (1QIsaᵃ).

What, then, may this term say about the historical formation of Isa 6? Attempting to answer these questions is the main goal of this study.

1. Isa 6:13 in the Content Composition and Formation History of Isa 6

The text of Isa 6:1–13 presents itself as the words of the prophet about seeing YHWH in the temple and being called to carry out the mission of announcing God's judgment to the Israelites. The boundaries of the pericope are determined by the time indications in Isa 6:1 and 7:1. Its first essential part is the description of the vision, at the centre of which is the testimony of the experience of the prophet of the immeasurable greatness and holiness of YHWH (vv. 1–4), followed by a remark about the cleansing of the prophet (vv. 6–7), who felt terrified and overwhelmed by the vision (v. 5). The second part consists of words about the mission entrusted to Isaiah (vv. 8–10), his response expressed by the question about the time of this mission (v. 11a) and God's answer (v. 11b) with an extended description of destruction (vv. 12–13).[1]

The text of Isa 6:1–13 has the characteristics of a text describing a prophetic calling, but it is most likely that it is not about the inaugural call of Isaiah, the call to a prophetic ministry, but about Isaiah's commissioning for a mission related to a specific task and time. An argument for this perception of Isa 6 may be the similarity of this text to the presentation of Micah's vision in 1 Kgs 22:19–21, which is not a narrative about an inaugural call of a prophet, but about entrusting a temporarily limited task to a person who voluntarily undertakes it. Moreover, the position of this vision narrative in the book (chapter 6) suggests that at least its last editors understood the text as having this character.[2]

According to the current text, the prophet, after experiencing the sight of God's majesty and the "cleansing" of his lips (vv. 1–7), expressed his readiness to undertake the God-given task (v. 8) before he heard what the task was, that it was not to call the people to conversion, but to harden their heart, by numbing their ears and blinding their eyes, "lest they understand with their heart, … and turn again, and be healed" (vv. 9–10). In response to the question about the duration of the hardening (עד מתי – "how long?" [v. 11a]), he heard from God that the end would be destruction involving the depopulation of cities and houses and the transformation of fields into

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[1] On the literary structure of Isa 6:1–13 cf. and see e.g. Sweeney, *Isaiah*, 132–134; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 112–113; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 80; Williamson, *Isaiah*, 36–38.

[2] Cf. e.g. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 223; Watts, *Isaiah*, 104; Grogan, "Isaiah," 504–505; Eck, "Bilden," 57–65. For more on this topic, including dissenting views, see e.g. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 234–239; Kaiser, *Isaiah*, 121–123; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 171–172; Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 114; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 80; Roberts, *First Isaiah*, 91–91; Williamson, *Isaiah*, 38–40.

wastelands (v. 11b). In vv. 12–13, however, there is already an element of hope in the "holy seed" motif.

Karl Budde, in a study published in 1928, presented his thesis about the "memoir" (*Denkschrift*) of Isaiah, which would include the material of Isa 6:1–9:6 and constitute a closed composition, drawn up by the prophet shortly after the Syro-Ephraim war (734–732 BC).[3] Some exegetes have rejected this hypothesis,[4] others have taken it up, making modifications that correspond to the conclusions of their own analyses and reflections. The vast majority of scholars believe that the Isaiah-Memoir can only be spoken of in terms of a collection that was gradually expanded and edited, and may have received its final form even in Persian times.[5]

The text of Isa 6:1–13, as an important part of this "memoir," has also received various diachronic identifications. One justifies the opinion that the basic material of the pericope, dated to the early post-Isian period in the 7th century BC, is the passus Isa 6:1–11.[6] However, it can be assumed as correct thesis that it was only passus 6:1–8, to which, during or immediately after the exile, 6:9–11 was added with a Deuteronomistic interpretation of the catastrophe of 587 BC.[7] The tradents of the Isaiah material introduced the Deuteronomistic-shaded hardening motif in 6:9–11[8] not to indicate the endpoint of the catastrophe, but to show a way of its new understanding. It was the hardening decreed by YHWH which was the reason for the exile.[9] The text of Isa 6:12–13 presents a testimony to other post-exilic stages of the formation and expansion of Isa 6, providing a complementary commentary to what was given earlier in Isa 6:11. The first later insertion was probably the statement in Isa 6:12 which differs from the preceding one (v. 11) in style. There is a clear reference to the deportation of the people.[10] The v. 13abα can be considered slightly later. In this statement, we can see the words of the editor, who thought it appropriate to remind the survivors that a new divine judgment awaits them, which will decimate them in numbers, if they do not show repentance. The phrase Isa 6:13bβ, with the term "holy seed," would be yet another and final late-post-exilic addition to the pericope.[11]

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[3] Budde, *Jesaja's Erleben*.

[4] E.g. Reventlow, "Das Ende der sog. 'Denkschrift,'" 62–67; Irvine, "The Isaianic Denkschrift," 216–231.

[5] E.g. Kaiser, *Isaiah*, 114–218; Werner, "Vom Prophetenwort," 1–30; Sweeney, *Isaiah*, 118–119, 127; Williamson, "The Isaiah Memoir"; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 73–80; Balogh, "Historicising Interpolation," 519–538. The hypothesis of the origin of Isa 6:1–9:6 from a single author in the early post-exilic period was proposed by Alexander V. Prokhorov (*The Isaianic "Denkschrift"*) but it was met with substantive criticism (see, for example, reviews: Hays, 103–104; Abernethy, 564–565).

[6] So e.g. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 241–242; Wagner, "Jesaja-Denkschrift."

[7] So e.g. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 80–87. Isa 6:1–8 could have its original continuation in 7:3 (Vermeylen, *Du prophète*, 246) or in 8:1–4 (Becker, *Jesaja*, 94–102); cf. Kaiser, *Isaiah*, 119–120, 130–131.

[8] Cf. Deut 32:15; 1 Sam 6:6; Zech 7:11–14.

[9] Cf. Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 85–87.

[10] Compare the use of רחק (hif.) in reference to deportation in Jer 27:10; Ezek 11:16; Joel 4:6.

[11] Cf. Wildberger, *Jesaja*, 241; Kaiser, *Isaiah*, 133; Becker, *Jesaja*, 64–65; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah*, 223; Berges, *The Book of Isaiah*, 80, 87–89.

2. "Seed" (זרע) as the Offspring Promised by God

The term זרע ("seed"), which in Isa 6:13 occurs in conjunction with קֹדֶשׁ ("holy"), in addition to its material sense, associated with the realm of agriculture or fertility (*semen virile*), very often has a metaphorical meaning in Hebrew Bible. From the theological point of view, the most important thing is the application of זרע to the offspring that is the object of God's promise. As a technical term for the expression of an important aspect of the promise doctrine, זרע is regularly used in the singular but as a collective noun. Thus the word may designate the whole line of descendants as a unit, as well as one man of promise.[12]

זרע as the object of God's promise first appears in Gen 3:15, in the so-called protoevangelium. There is a divine proclamation in it that the offspring (זרע) of the first woman will overcome the offspring of the serpent. Later the promise זרע is made to the descendants of Abraham (Gen 13:15–16; 16:10), Isaac (Gen 17:19; Exod 32:13) and Jacob (Gen 26:4; 48:4), as well as David (2 Sam 7:12). The descendants of the patriarchs are not only promised a blessing, but also receive this promise, expressed especially in the gift of the land (e.g. Gen 26:3; Exod 33:1; Deut 1:8). Furthermore, God's promise of offspring to the patriarchs is also linked to the announcement that through the offspring of the patriarchs God's blessing will be received by all the nations of the earth (Gen 26:4; 28:14).

3. Israel as a "holy people" (עם קדוש)

The term "holy" (קֹדֶשׁ) defines what is set apart and separated from something else – what is unholy and common. In the Old Testament, it primarily refers to YHWH, who is characterised by absolute holiness, "otherness" from creation, transcendence, and majesty (cf. Isa 6:3). With regard to the creation, that is to man and to various objects, holiness means separation, being set apart for YHWH as a holy God.[13] In texts identified as priestly (P) and their updating (*Fortschreibung*) (Pˢ), holiness was linked to the sanctuary as the place where God appeared holy in his glory and by his presence sanctified the sanctuary, its objects and cultic personnel (e.g. Exod 29:42–46). However, there is no mention of "holy people."[14] In the statements considered to be the fruit of the post-priestly (post-P) redaction of the Law of Holiness (Lev 17–26), sanctification no longer extended only to the priests, descendants of Aaron, but also to the people (e.g. Lev 20:22–26). In this way, the priestly concept of holiness was

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[12]   E.g. Kaiser, "זרע (*zeraʿ*)," 252–253; Hamilton, "זרע (*zāraʿ*)," 1127–1128.

[13]   E.g. McComiskey, "קֹדֶשׁ (*qādash*)," 787–788; Müller, "קֹדֶשׁ (*qdš* heilig)," 589–593; Otto, *Deuteronomium 1–11*, 865.

[14]   Durham, *Exodus*, 396–397; Dohmen, *Exodus*, 273–274.

broadened. Holiness became the duty of the people and the consequence of the work of the holy (קדוש) God, who "for himself" separated (בדל) this people from the other nations (Lev 20:26). An even later reworking attested in Lev 11:24–46, which presupposes the post-P redaction of the Law of Holiness and the related transformation of the concept of holiness, extends the priestly casuistry by also applying it to the daily life of the Israelites.[15]

There are several places in the Hebrew Bible where the term "holy people/nation" (גוי/עם קדוש) appears, referring unambiguously to Israel (Exod 19:6 [גוי קדוש]; Deut 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9 [עם קדוש]; Isa 55:5 [קדוש ישׂראל]; cf. Isa 62:12 [עם הקדש]; Isa 63:18 [עם קדשׁך]). The term "holy" (קדוש) defines Israel's attitude toward YHWH, indicating its exceptional closeness. Israel is a holy people "for" YHWH (ליהוה [Deut 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19]; לו [Deut 28:9]; לי [Exod 19:6]).

In Deuteronomy, the motif of the "holy people" is attested only in passages identified as the fruit of the post-exilic update (*Fortschreibung*) of the book,[16] linked to the times of Ezra at the end of the 5th or beginning of the 4th century BC. Holiness in these statements is an important internal aspect and determinant of Israel's relationship to YHWH. Israel's holiness, however, does not derive from his nature, but is founded on the act of YHWH's choosing (בחר) it from among all the nations (מכל העמים) and making it the "personal property" (סגלה) of YHWH (Deut 7:6; 14:2). Both motifs – "holy people" and "personal property" – served in the characterization of Israel's relationship to YHWH as a covenant relationship (Deut 26:16–19).[17] We also read about Israel as a "holy people" at the beginning of the post-priestly (post-P) Sinai pericope in the Book of Exodus (Exod 19–24). According to Exod 19:5–6, it was Israel's duty to be what God YHWH wants him to be and that, by listening to YHWH's voice and guarding his covenant, Israel can experience the nearness of his God (cf. Num 15:40). The sanctification of Israel belonged to the conditions of YHWH's theophany and his action for the good of Israel (cf. Josh 3:5). This perspective of perception of Israel's sanctification, marked by a look to the future, is confirmed in Deut 28:9, where the establishment of Israel as a holy people is mentioned as the fulfilment of God's promise but conditioned by keeping the commandments of YHWH and walking in His ways.[18]

Israel is also referred to as a "holy people" in the post-exilic Isaiah texts (Isa 62:12; 63:18). The reference in Isa 63:18 does so in the context of words about the Israelites'

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[15]   Reinhard Achenabach and Eckart Otto speak in this case of a so-called "theocratic reworking" (*Theokratische Bearbeitung*), which would assume an already formed Pentateuch (Achenbach, *Die Vollendung*, 499–528; Otto, *Deuteronomium 12–34*, I, 1293–1294). See also e.g. Meyer, "Leviticus," 87–88; Hieke, "Die Heiligkeit," 204; Hieke, "Ihr sollt," 354–356.

[16]   Otto, *Deuteronomium 1–11*, 866.

[17]   Otto, *Deuteronomium 1–11*, 865–866; Otto, *Deuteronomium 12–34*, II, 1991.

[18]   Dohmen, *Exodus*, 63–64; see also Römer, "Provisorische Überlegungen," 132–136, 151; Ska, *The Exegesis*, 139–164.

distancing from God's ways, the numbness and hardness of their hearts (Isa 63:17), which may point to some relation to Isa 6:9–13.[19] In turn, in the text of Isa 55:5, which is identified as a post-exilic redactional addition, Israel is referred to as holy (קדוש ישראל) in the context of its task of calling for the conversion of other nations and mediating their salvation. This may be evidence of a somewhat different tendency coming to the fore in the post-exilic community of Judah.[20]

In the conception of Israel as a "holy people" attested in the utterances mentioned and discussed above, holiness is a decisive marker of the identity and status of God's people. On the one hand, it is God's gift to Israel, but on the other hand, it is a task. The attribution of the descriptor "holy people" to Israel communicates the idea of Israel's national-religious exclusivism as God's people and also its specific task. The diachrony of the utterances with the term "holy people" applied to Israel allows a reflection to be seen in them of the post-exilic debate related to the problem of the identity of God's people and the definition of their status.[21]

4. "Holy seed" (זרע הקדש) in Ezra 9:2

In Ezra 9:2, the expression "holy seed" (זרע הקדש) metaphorically defines the Israelite ethnos. It conveys the ideal of the community of God's people, which, according to the biblical text, the "princes /chiefs" (שׂרים) had, when they presented to Ezra the problem of the faithlessness (מעל) of the people. That faithlessness was expressed in the fact that the people of Israel (העם ישראל), including the priests and Levites, did not separate themselves (לֹא נבדלו) from the peoples of the lands (עמי הארצות) and their abominations (תועבתיהם), but mixed (התערבו) with these peoples by way of intermarriage (Ezra 9:1–2). Those accused of unfaithfulness were recruited from among those who had previously returned from exile, together with those who, though not having been in exile, had joined their fate with the repatriates.[22] In turn, those peoples of the lands were the non-Jewish inhabitants of the province of Judah and their near neighbours, including the Samaritans,[23] but also the Judeans who did not go into exile and who may have posed a threat to the returnees in their attempts to purify Israel from foreign influences.[24]

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[19]   Watts, *Isaiah*, 903–904; Grogan, "Isaiah," 851; Ska, *The Exegesis*, 145.
[20]   More see e.g. Berges – Beuken, *Das Buch Jesaja*, 193–194; Zawadzki, "Nowe tłumaczenie," 78–79, 82.
[21]   Testimonies of the post-exilic debate about the identity of God's people can also be seen in other prophetic texts, e.g. in Mal 3:1–5 (cf. Zawadzki, "Mesjaństwo," 391–396). A broader discussion of this issue, however, goes beyond the scope of this study.
[22]   Williamson, *Ezra*, 130.
[23]   Williamson, *Ezra*, 46, 50, 130; Min, *The Levitical Authorship*, 121–122; Yamauchi, "Ezra," 448.
[24]   E.g. Cataldo, "The Other," 13; De Villiers, "Foreigner," 6.

The idea of holiness invoked in Ezra 9:1–2 in the context of the problem of intermarriage and the separation of Israel from other nations suggests a perception of the statements in Ezra 9:2 in relation to Lev 20:22–26 and Deut 7:3–6.[25] Thus, we would have a fragment of the late-post-exilic story of Ezra and the fruit of the post-priestly (post-P) redaction of the Law of Holiness and postexilic updating (*Fortschreibung*) of Deuteronomy: three records written in about the same place and time (the 4th century BC), providing testimony to understanding the identity and uniqueness of Israel as God's people. Only in Ezra 9:2, however, is the term "holy seed" found. The author of the utterance used it to adequately describe this small community of Judeans who had returned from exile (*golah* community). In this characteristic, one can see a reflection of a new group consciousness, based on the Deuteronomic idea of otherness and separation and born out of the experience of exile. This consciousness set the ideal that the exiled Judeans were to put into practice. The descriptor "holy seed" in Ezra 9:2, however, has very exclusive connotations. As such, it can convey the spirit of a lively, post-exilic debate about Jewish identity.

5. "Holy seed" in Jubilees and Aramaic Levi

The term "holy seed" occurs several times in the apocryphal Book of Jubilees, the origin of which is dated between 170 and 150 BC.[26] The analysed expression communicates in this work the idea of Israel's difference from other nations. For Israel belongs to a holy God (*Jub.* 16:17–18.26; 22:27; cf. 25:3, 12.18; 30:7–7). In this regard, the author of Jubilees takes up the line of the tradition expressed in the Law of Holiness, in Deuteronomy and Ezra. However, he lays greater emphasis on this holiness-based separation of the seed of Israel from the seed of the Gentiles (e.g. *Jub.* 30:7–15). Hence, according to Jubilees, the mixing of these seeds by intermarriage profanes and also defiles the holy seed of Israel, God's holy name, and is a threat to the entire community.[27]

Another writing in which the term "holy seed" is used to express the uniqueness of Jacob's offspring is the Aramaic Levi Document (ALD). However, whereas in Jubilees "holy seed" refers to all the patriarchs and their descendants, in the Aramaic Levi Document the use of the term is restricted to Levi and his descendants,

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[25] While the reference of Ezra 9:1–2 to Deut 7:3–6 should be considered probable, in the relation to Lev 20:22–26 we have a rather independent, parallel adaptation and updating of the available material. For more see e.g. Pakkala, *Ezra*, 108–110; Grätz, "Zuwanderung," 304–305; Bautch, "Holy Seed," 530–539; Hensel, "Ethnic Fiction," 141.

[26] VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, VI; Kugel, "The Compositional History," 520.

[27] Hayes, "Intermarriage," 25; Hayes, *Gentile Impurities*, 80; Sivertsev, *Households*, 64–65; Frevel, "Separate Yourself," 226, 243–247.

the Levitical priests. The holiness of Levi and his descendants is founded on the proximity of a holy God and hence for the author of the document this 'holy seed' is like the holy place (ALD 17–18). Scholars place the origin of the Aramaic Levi most often in the 3th or early 2nd century BC.[28]

In terms of the use and understanding of the term "holy seed," the two documents must certainly be seen in a reciprocal relationship. It is likely that in this respect it is not Aramaic Levi that refers to and depends on Jubilees, but rather the opposite. The epithet "holy seed," which the author of Aramaic Levi referred to Levi and his priestly offspring – holy as holy is the temple, the place of the presence of the holy God – was used by the author of Jubilees to define the Israelite ethnos in its distinction from other nations.[29] Jubilees, using the term "holy seed," emphasises the religious-ethnic aspect, betraying a nationalised and exclusive approach. Such use of the term "holy seed" may have been historically conditioned. "Holy seed" was supposed to adequately define the Israelites as God's people who had to stand and faithfully persist in confronting radical Hellenisation.

6. "The seed blessed by YHWH" in Trito-Isaiah

In Trito-Isaiah, the "blessed seed" theme occurs twice, namely in Isa 61:9 (זרע ברך יהוה – "the seed which Yahweh has blessed") and 65:23 (זרע ברוכי יהוה – "the seed of the blessed of YHWH"). In the first case, it is an element of the prophetic announcement of a complete change of situation of those who grieve in Zion (Isa 61:3) and of giving them comfort and consolation. God's view of the future resulting from God's faithfulness to covenant obligations is expressed there. The "blessed seed" is described as a covenant partner with YHWH (Isa 61:8–9). The reviving power of YHWH's blessing will be recognised in the lives of the descendants of those who mourn in Zion. Other nations will see this and "acknowledge that they are the seed which YHWH has blessed" (Isa 61:9). The unique status of Abraham's descendants will thus be recognised (cf. Gen 12:1–3).[30]

In Isa 65:23 "the seed of the blessed of Yahweh" are the addressees of the saving promise, somewhat earlier mentioned as the descendants of Jacob, YHWH's chosen

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[28]   E.g. Greenfield – Stone – Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi*, 19–22; Tervanotko, "Members," 160. Henryk Drawnel (*An Aramaic Wisdom*, 71; "Priestly Education," 548) concludes that the composition of the *Document* can be dated even to the end of the 4th or to the early years of the 3rd century BC. On the other hand, James Kugel ("How Old," 312) even points to the end of the 2nd century BC as the time when the ALD received its present form, however the source material would have come from an earlier period.

[29]   An analogy can be seen here with the previously mentioned, temporally earlier expansion of the priestly concept of holiness in the passages attributed to the post-P redaction of the Law of Holiness.

[30]   Childs, *Isaiah*, 506; Zapff, *Jesaja*, 394; Grogan, "Isaiah," 840–841; Bautch, "Holy Seed," 535.

and servants (Isa 65:9). They will experience God's reign in a transformed Jerusalem when God creates a new heaven and a new earth (Isa 65:17–18). The blessing, however, will be only for those descendants of Jacob who have not stained themselves with idolatry and have not done what is evil in God's sight (Isa 65:6–7.12). The "blessed seed" will be the renewed community of God's faithful people (Isa 65:21–24).[31]

The blessing of the seed of God's people referred to by the prophetic utterances in Isa 61:9 and 65:23 is linked to God's faithfulness, keeping covenant with his people. The expression "the seed blessed by YHWH" communicates the idea of Israel's permanence and uniqueness, founded on God's choice, love and truth (Isa 61:8–9; 65:9, 22). The remarks about the confrontation of the "blessed seed" with strangers (זרים; בני נכר), nations and peoples (גוים; עמים), present in the prophetic announcement in Isa 61:9 and in its context (Isa 61:5–6), indicate the attribution of a connotation of national-religious exclusivism to this descriptor. However, in the second text under discussion (Isa 65:23), the "blessing of offspring," as the context indicates, is conditioned not only by ethnicity but above all by loyalty to YHWH, expressed in doing his will. This observation harmonizes with the opinion of some scholars that the prophetic statements in Isa 60–64 reflect a negative attitude toward foreigners (e.g. Isa 63:1–6) and in Isa 56–59 and 65–66 the idea of conditional openness to strangers and their acceptance in the community is expressed.[32] The different perceptions of the community of God's people, noticed in the prophetic statements of Trito-Isaiah, in terms of possible membership, result from the history of the formation of this part of Isaiah and its historical conditioning, especially the discussion on the identity of this community. Thus, on the one hand, we have a reflection of the trend towards exclusivism and an intranational identity perspective, on the other hand, an expression of a concept of international identity, according to which strangers can also participate in the community of God's people. It is plausible, then, that the editor of Trito-Isaiah, motivated by the need of the times as expressed in the post-exilic debate over the identity of God's people, added statements to the prophetic text that shifted somewhat the boundaries of that community – from an exclusive nature to a more inclusive one.[33] The words about "the seed of the blessed of YHWH" in Isa 65:23 can therefore be considered part of a younger stratum in Trito-Isaiah, also identified, for example, in Isa 59:12 or 66:18–22, where the term "seed" (זרע) referring to a community experiencing God's blessing, has an inclusive sense. In addition to the Judeans, converted Gentiles may also belong to this community (cf. Isa 56:1–7).

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[31]   Childs, *Isaiah*, 537–538; Zapff, *Jesaja*, 428–429.
[32]   Middlemas, "Trito-Isaiah's," 107–108; De Villiers, "Foreigner," 3.
[33]   Cf. e.g. Nihan, "Ethnicity," 73–77; Middlemas, "Trito-Isaiah's," 106–115; Blenkinsopp, "Judeans," 467; De Villiers, "Foreigner," 3–6.

7. "Holy seed" and the Diachrony of Isa 6:12–13

The observations made above, as well as the research conclusions of other exegetes, suggest seeing in Isa 6:12–13 a post-exilic commentary on the prophetic words in Isa 6:1–11. The final phrase in 6:13bβ – "Its stump is a holy seed" – stands out in this commentary because, after the words about destruction, there is a further statement expressing hope for the survival of a small part of the covenant people Israel. The devastation will not be total.[34] The expression "holy seed," which characterises this people, prompts us to view the phrase Isa 6:13bβ in relation to Ezra 9:2 and in the context of the passages cited and discussed above, which refer to the holy and blessed people of Israel. Through the descriptor "holy seed," the author of Isa 6:13bβ is taking up the characterisation of God's people attested in the fragments of the late-post-exilic story of Ezra, the post-priestly (post-P) redaction of the Law of Holiness and the post-exilic *Fortschreibung* of Deuteronomy. The concept of Israel as God's people referred to in Isa 6:13bβ expresses the ideal of this community, which is characterised by holiness understood as a gift from God on the one hand and as a task on the other. In the light of this conception, Israel is a unique nation, distinct from others, and is to remain so for the sake of purity of faith and partnership with YHWH, resulting from election and covenant

A definition of the community of YHWH, in which the idea of Israel's exclusivism resounds and its identity is seen in an intranational perspective, is found in the statements of Trito-Isaiah in chapters 60–64. This is confirmed by the passages analysed and discussed above, in which the epithets "holy people" (62:12; 63:18) and "blessed seed" (61:8–9) are referred to Israel, and by those in which the foreign nations are perceived as enemies (63:1–6), or are assigned merely servile roles, also to attest divine authority (60:1–16).[35] In the text block called Trito-Isaiah, chapters 56–59 and 65–66, however, there are prophetic words marked by an international perspective on the perceived identity of YHWH's people, combined with openness to strangers. In this vision, the expansion of membership in YHWH's community, which will experience the goodness of God associated with the fulfilment of the promises, is nevertheless conditioned by a faithful and loyal relationship with YHWH, expressed through respect for the covenant law that YHWH has made with the Israelites (e.g. 56:1–7; 66:18–20). On the other hand, in the same chapters there is also mention of God's harshness towards his people who have rebelled, provoking YHWH by their idolatry, arousing his wrath and making themselves equal to pagans who have no desire to invoke YHWH's name. To this "rebellious people who walked in a way that was not good" YHWH announced repayment (פעלה) for iniquities (Isa 65:1–7). In this declaration of repaying the people in full measure in

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[34] More see e.g. Grogan, "Isaiah," 510.
[35] Middlemas, "Trito-Isaiah's," 108–110.

Isa 65:6–7 we also have reference to the words of repayment /= recompense (פעלה) for the pious in Isa 61:8. In the context of these observations, it is plausible and reasonable to identify the aforementioned text groups, which on the one hand promote the idea of Israel's exclusivity as the people of God (Isa 60–64), and on the other hand testify in this respect to the inclusivist trend (Isa 56–59; 65–66), as coming from two successive extensions and redactional reworkings, and thus reflecting the two historically conditioned stages of the formation of the Book of Isaiah. Diachronically, they should be attributed to the post-exilic period, whereby the passages with the idea of exclusivism, ideologically close to the post-priestly edition of the "Book of Holiness," the post-exilic reworking of Deuteronomy and the history of Ezra, preceded those with inclusivist thought. The latter appear rather as a different voice in the discussion on identity, or as a reactionary and modifying response.

If we assume that the passage in Isa 6:12–13bα is a supplementary commentary to the statement in Isa 6:11 and historically the fruit of a next stage of the literary development of Isa 6, possibly dated to the post-exilic period, then the phrase in Isa 6:13bβ with the epithet "holy seed" would be an even later addition. In the words about the mission entrusted to the prophet in Isa 6:9–10, together with God's response to the prophet's question (Isa 6:11) and this additional commentary (Isa 6:12–13bα), one can see a proximity to the Trito-Isaiah passages discussed above with a hint of inclusivism, where conditional membership in the community of God's people and YHWH's repayment for the iniquities of his people are mentioned (e.g. Isa 65:1–7; 66:18–20). In Isa 6:13bβ, by contrast, we are already dealing with rather exclusive thought. Here is the text of Isa 6:13:

13a	ועוד בה עשריה	And though a tenth remain in it,
	ושבה והיתה לבער	it will be burned again,
13bα	כאלה וכאלון	like a terebinth or an oak,
	אשר בשלכת מצבת בם	whose stump remains when they are felled.
13bβ	זרע קדש מצבתה:	Its stump is a holy seed.

The Hebrew term מצבת (from נצב – "stand," "set up"), which occurs twice in Isa 6:13 (13bα and 13bβ), means that what is set up and stands firmly, continues standing, remains. It can be a pillar, a monument or memorial and also a tree stump. In Isa 6:13, the context of trees – terebinth and oak – that are felled suggests an understanding of מצבת precisely as "stump." In this case, it would be that small part of the tree that stands firmly, rooted in the ground, even after the tree has been burned and felled. Such a stump could also be a memorial to a tree.[36] In the phrase in v. 13bβ the term מצבת has the pronominal suffix ה- (f. sg.) referring to the עשריה ("a tenth")

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[36] This is the direction of the interpretation proposed by John D.W. Watts (*Isaiah*, 110), who translated the term מצבת in Isa 6:13 as "monument," which would be just a reminder of the nation that was destroyed, and of the reason for the destruction. Cf. also the reading of 1QIsaᵃ and emendation suggested by Samuel Iwry ("Maṣṣēbāh," 225–232).

of v. 13a. The מצבתה there therefore refers to the stump of that tenth part, which in the context of Isa 6:11–13 is to be understood as referring to the very small remnant of destruction foretold in the prophecy.

The expression "holy seed" used in the same phrase brings to mind Ezra 9:2, the only other place in the Hebrew Bible where this term is used. However, whereas in Ezra 9:2 "holy seed" defines the entire community of returnees from the Babylonian exile, who were to separate themselves from strangers because of their national-religious distinctiveness, in Isa 6:13bβ it can only be about a very small part of this people, about "a stump of the tenth." From a syntactic point of view, the phrase זרע קדש מצבתה in v. 13bβ is a nominal clause in which מצבתה should be considered the subject of the phrase in v. 13bβ, and זרע קדש the predicate. It corresponds to the translation: "Its stump (is) a holy seed." The substantive predicate (זרע קדש) identifies and describes the subject (מצבתה). In such a construction, it is on the predicate that special emphasis lies.[37]

The phrase in Isa 6:13bβ, as a later addition to the existing composition of the prophecy, introduces an element of hope. Its object, however, is not that a stump will remain of the holy seed, but that a holy seed will survive in the stump. The stump, which is a memorial of destruction, is also a holy seed. This means that the people who call themselves the people of YHWH will only survive as a "holy seed," not otherwise. They will survive only as a holy people who regard their holiness as God's gift and task, as a people conscious of their distinctiveness and blessed by God. Only for such a people is there a future. The meaning of the descriptor "holy seed" in Isa 6:13bβ, compared to the sense it has in Ezra 9:2, has thus been narrowed, and even "extremised," and in this aspect has become closer to the meaning of "holy seed" in Jubilees. YHWH's people, as unique among the nations by virtue of belonging to a holy God (*Jub.* 16:17–18), as long as they maintain their holiness, will survive even when this might no longer be expected. In Isa 6:13bβ we have a kind of redefinition of the term "holy seed," characterising YHWH's people, in relation to its meaning in Ezra 9:2. The "holy seed" is and remains the YHWH people, who maintain their holiness, refrain from profaning themselves and desecrating themselves by mixing with the "seed of the Gentiles" (cf. *Jub.* 30:7–15), who are not hardened, blinded and deaf to the words of YHWH (cf. Isa 6:9–10).

The semantic proximity of the descriptor "holy seed" in Isa 6:13bβ to the meaning it received in Jubilees suggests the diachronic placement of the phrase in Isa 6:13bβ in the same period as the Jubilees record. This would have been the advanced first half of the 2nd century BC. Israel's identity as the people of YHWH was then put to a great test. The challenge was to persevere in loyalty to the traditions of the fathers, to maintain purity and distinctiveness, to reject any defilement with paganism.

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[37] On the construction and function of nominal sentences see, e.g. Gesenius – Kautzsch, *Hebräische Grammatik*, 472–476.

Embracing these challenges with determination demonstrated an awareness of being a "holy seed," but it was also associated with the hope of perseverance and survival, and above all, a confirmation of what it meant to be a "holy seed."[38] The author responsible for the addition of Isa 6:13bβ can be seen among members of the Zadokite priestly family. Within their circle, there was an abiding awareness of holiness and its transmission from one generation to the next, and a hope for survival in confronting the aggressive Hellenisation of the Seleucids. They manifested an anti-Hasmonean attitude and were opposed to the integration of non-Israelites into the holy congregation of Israel, promoting ideas of purity and separation. It is likely that they were motivated to supplement the existing text of Isa 6 with the phrase in v. 13bβ by a desire to update and bring this Isaiah prophecy into their historical present.

An argument for dating the clause in Isa 6:13bβ in the 2nd century BC may be its absence from the Septuagint, and its presence in the Qumran manuscript – 1QIsaᵃ (זרע הקודש מצבתה).[39] Scholars date the scroll to about 125 BC.[40] The Qumran notation of the analysed descriptor differs from the Masoretic one in that it has זרע הקודש (קודש with an article). Most likely the scribe applied the term הקודש to the Qumran community. This sense is suggested by statements from other Qumran manuscripts, in which the הקודש or קודש is applied to community (עדת הקודש – "holy community" [1QSa 1:12]; אנשי הקודש – "the men of holiness" [1QS 5:13; cf. 8:17, 23]; יחד קודש – "holy fellowship" [1QS 9:2]).[41] These phrases express the belief that the Qumran community is sacred and as such replaces the temple as the place of atonement (cf. 1QS 5:6; 8:5–6).[42] Thus, in the Qumran community the idea of the "holy seed" expressed in Isa 6:13bβ received an interpretation specific to this fellowship.

Still further support for the thesis submitted above is provided by the text of Ezek 36:23bβ–38. There is a prophetic announcement of the restoration of Israel as God's people. God will perform this restoration for the sake of the reputation of his name, for the sake of his holiness and covenant faithfulness (especially Ezek 36:23bβ.27–28.32). The restoration will be thorough and complete. YHWH will cleanse his people from the sins and idolatry that have defiled them, and above all he will exchange their hearts (Ezek 36:24–26). It will be a replacement of the central

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[38] Reflections and instructions related to the test that God's people had to endure at that time can be found in the Book of Sirach. There are calls to righteousness and to remain faithful to God as a guarantee of survival (cf. Piwowar, "Wierność," 99–126).

[39] Urlich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls*, 342.

[40] E.g. Emanuel Tov ("The Text," 493): 150–125 BC, Peter Flint ("The Book," 230, 248): 150–125 BC, but in a more recent publication ("Interpreting," 162–163): 125–100 BC. The last clause Isa 6:13 is not found in the fragments of 4QIsaᶠ (= 4Q60) dated to the first half of the 1st century BC. From Isa 6 there are only a few phrases and words and v. 13 (frag. 11, 4) covers only]ה עשריה ושבה והית (ועוד ב]ה (Urlich, *The Biblical Qumran Scrolls*, 471).

[41] The text and translation: Parry – Tov, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 22–23, 32–34, 194.

[42] 1QS 8:5: בית קודש לישראל ... היחד – "the Yahad [shall be] … a temple for Israel" (Parry – Tov, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 32–33). Cf. Ringgren, "קדֹשׁ *qdš*," 1203–1204.

element of a person and a re-creation. This radical and great restoration will also result in prosperity, expressed in the rebuilding and repopulation of ruined cities and the fertility of desolate land. Ultimately also the nations around will know this great restoration of God's people (Ezek 36:33–38).[43] Ezek 36:23bβ–38, however, is not found in the papyrus 967, which contains the oldest Greek manuscript of Ezekiel. This papyrus is dated to the first half of the 2nd century AD, but its text is considered to be a testimony to the version of Ezekiel older than the Masoretic text and to be an older *Vorlage* of the "Old Greek" translation. It also has a different chapter order compared to the Masoretic text (12:1–36:23bα; 38–39; 37; 40–48). In the study of Ezekiel, the thesis has been put forward that the indicated changes in content and those in chapter order are the fruit of the activities of Septuagint translators in the 2nd century BC, who promoted pro-Hasmonean and anti-Zadokite tendencies, and of the representatives of Zadokite circles who reacted to these changes, who gave the final shape to the text of the book, interfering in it locally and expressing anti-Hasmonean tendencies.[44] The addition of Ezek 36:23bβ–38, where we read about the great restoration and the new creation of God's people, would have been a response to the religious-social and political turmoil of the Hasmonean era and the result of a heated debate over the identity of YHWH's community.

The "holy seed" motif in Isa 6:13bβ also communicates the idea of a great restoration of God's people, which will also be thorough. A small remnant of what is holy, and because it is holy, will survive. The "holy seed" will give rise to the reborn community of YHWH, which will rebuild the demolished cities and houses and populate the desolate land (cf. Isa 6:11b–13bα). This late supplement to the Hebrew text of Isaiah appears to correspond to the Zadokite perspective of perceiving the historical reality of the Hasmonean period of the 2nd century BC and expressing the Zadokites' concern for the purity, sanctity and distinctiveness of the community for which they felt responsible. In the historical formation process of Isaiah, the phrase Isa 6:13bβ would be a testimony to recent interventions in the prophetic text, later than the Trito-Isaiah passages, which display an international conception of the identity of God's people (Isa 56–60; 65–66).

Conclusions

The author of the phrase Isa 6:13bβ in the expression "holy seed" takes up the metaphorical meaning of the word "seed" known in the tradition on the patriarchs. The term "seed" is there referred to the community of a people who have believed

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[43] Cf. Alexander, "Ezekiel," 844–846; Konkel, "Das Ezechielbuch," 72–74; Pikor, "Stwórcze działanie," 81–83.
[44] E.g. Konkel, "Das Ezechielbuch," 59–78.

in God, the people of God, in the context of presenting them as the object of God's promise and its recipient, and as such the beneficiary of God's blessing and the mediator of that blessing to other nations. The designation of this seed as "holy" alludes to the conception of Israel's holiness expressed in the passages identified as testimony to the post-priestly (post-P) redaction of the Law of Holiness and the post-exilic *Fortschreibung* of Deuteronomy, and in the late-post-exilic story of Ezra. The holiness of the People of God is understood there as a gift of God, based on the act of election, and thus a task for the people to remain faithful to their relationship with God and to avoid all that is idolatrous. The epithet "holy seed" in Ezra 9:2, the only place in the Hebrew Bible where it occurs outside of Isa 6:13bβ, defines Israel's identity as God's people, indicating its uniqueness demanding separation from other nations.

The sense of the term "holy seed" in Isa 6:13bβ is close to the meaning of "blessed seed" in the statements of Trito-Isaiah, although more extreme. In this respect, the use of "holy seed" in Isa 6:13bβ shows greater similarity to the understanding of this expression in the Book of Jubilees, where it serves to emphasize the national-religious distinctiveness and exclusivity of Israel.

The phrase in Isa 6:13bβ can be seen as a reflection of the turmoil of the Hasmonean era and as a voice in the debate of the time about Israel's identity and future as God's people. Earlier opinions expressing ideas of the chosenness and uniqueness of this people, with calls for concern to preserve this status, began to be confronted with inclusive tendencies and the concept of international identity. This also found expression in the statements of Trito-Isaiah. The religious and political problems of Hasmonean times became the stimulus for evoking again the idea of national and religious exclusivism, based on the consciousness of chosenness, holiness, and continuance through faithfulness. The prophetic utterance in Isa 6:13bβ thus redefines Israel in a new historical situation, so attesting to the thesis of the relatively long and lively formative process of Isaiah.

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The Imprecatory Psalms in the Liturgy of the Hours after the Second Vatican Council: Reform, Reception and the Current State of the Debate

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Abstract: Since 1970, the Catholic Church has not used the so-called imprecatory Psalms and verses in the Liturgy of the Hours (in total, 122 verses have been removed). This article aims to analyze the presence of controversial fragments of the Psalms in the liturgy. It consists of four parts. First, it presents the history of the process that began during the Second Vatican Council and led to the decision to remove such fragments from the liturgy. What follows, is an overview of the reception and opinions on the imprecatory Psalms over the past fifty years. The next part of this study collects arguments in favor of removing the questionable texts from the liturgy as well as an argument in favor of keeping them in it. The article concludes with an appendix of all the texts from the Book of Psalms that have been removed from the Liturgy of the Hours. The author is personally in favor of leaving the unwanted verses in the liturgy.

Keywords: Psalms, imprecations, Second Vatican Council, Old Testament

All 150 Psalms had their place in the liturgy of the Catholic Church until the Second Vatican Council. Pope Paul VI's apostolic constitution *Laudis Canticum* "proclaiming prayerful service of God renewed upon the decree of the Second Vatican Council," promulgated on November 1, 1970, explains that "a few of the Psalms and verses that are somewhat harsh in tone have been omitted, especially because of the difficulties anticipated from their use in vernacular celebration."[1] The purpose of the following article is to present the history of the removal of imprecatory verses, analyze the problem under discussion from the perspective of half a century after this decision was made, and present a collection of arguments in favor of and against the presence of the imprecatory Psalms in the liturgy.

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[1]   See: https://adoremus.org/2007/12/laudis-canticum/#Anchor-Laudis-49575 (access 24.10.2022). In Latin: https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/la/apost_constitutions/documents/hf_p-vi_apc_19701101_laudis-canticum.html (access 21.10.2022).

1. The History of the Removal of Imprecatory Verses

The concept and definition of the imprecatory Psalms are not precise in the sense that not every Biblical scholar and not every denomination points to the same collection of entire Psalms or individual verses.[2] However, the term "imprecatory Psalms" itself has for a long time been established in modern Biblical studies, and its definition is rather clear.[3] These are primarily texts in which the Psalmist wishes broadly understood misfortune upon his enemies.

It would be greatly interesting to study the place of the Imprecatory Psalms in the Jewish and Christian liturgies over the past two thousand years. However, the author will limit himself to the turning point which was the Second Vatican Council because that time and place influenced the discussion and ultimate removal of the imprecatory Psalms and verses from the Liturgy of the Hours of the Catholic Church. It is worth at least mentioning that the synagogal liturgy recites these Psalms in a sotto voce, as if in an awareness of the fact that it is better to accept these words in silence than to remove them.[4] The Orthodox Liturgy of the Hours, which is also used in the Eastern Catholic Churches of the Byzantine Rite, recites the entire Psalter every week, dividing it into twenty *kathismata,* each consisting of three parts.[5] In the Anglican liturgy, Psalm 57 has been completely removed, while, in 1928, the imprecatory verses were placed in parentheses for those who would like to omit them.[6] Meanwhile, the reformed churches have completely removed twenty-one Psalms from the prayer.[7]

With regards to the Catholic Church, it was not so much the Second Vatican Council itself as the first years following it that had the greatest impact on the decision to remove certain fragments from the liturgy. In a sense, it all started at the Council.[8]

The first voices regarding the presence of the imprecatory Psalms appeared in the council hall on October 21, 1963, during the sessions devoted to the constitution on the liturgy. Cardinals Bacci and Ernesto Ruffini, three bishops, and two other Council fathers wanted to remove the imprecatory Psalms from the new Breviary as those that speak of revenge and those that do not sufficiently represent

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2   Simango – Krüger, "An Overview," 598.
3   For example, Chalmers, "The Imprecations" (1903); Barns, "The Psalms" (1908); Steinmetzer, "Babylonische Parallelen" (1912); Ubbelohde, *Fluchpsalmen* (1938); Miller, "Fluchpsalmen" (1943).
4   Bianchi, *Pregare i Salmi*, 38.
5   Holladay, *The Psalms*, 375–377; Mercenier – Paris, *La Priere*, 195–197; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kathisma (access 28.07.2018).
6   Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 490; Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms," 27–47; http://bible.oremus.org/?version=lp (access 20.02.2022).
7   Paquier, *L'Office divin*; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 491.
8   The main source documents are: Coetus IX, *Rapport general sur l'Office divin* [31 juillet 1966] (Aimé-Georges Martimort), Fondo Braga, Roma, 1–15; Marini, "Elenco degli «Schemata»," 548–596.

revelation. However, the great majority of the Council fathers opposed this proposal; its opponents included Bishop Guano and the abbots Prous and Reetz. Reetz said: "Ecclesia catholica [...] per saecula totum psalterium ex integro cecinit, et non est cur in saeculo vigesimo ab hac traditione declinet."[9]

During the voting on the new constitution, only two votes were in favor of accepting Point 91: "iuxta modum: supprimantur psalmi imprecatorii." An account from October 21, 1963, reveals that they were rejected. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the constitution on the liturgy, which was promulgated on October 4, 1963, makes no mention of the imprecatory Psalms. However, Article 91 of the constitution would be the basis for further debate: "So that it may really be possible in practice to observe the course of the hours proposed in Art. 89, the psalms are no longer to be distributed throughout one week, but through some longer period of time. The work of revising the psalter, already happily begun, is to be finished as soon as possible, and is to take into account the style of Christian Latin, the liturgical use of Psalms, also when sung, and the entire tradition of the Latin Church."

Pursuant to the motu proprio *Sacram liturgiam*, on January 25, 1964, Pope Paul VI summoned the *Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de sacra liturgia* to implement the constitution on the liturgy, including the compilation of new liturgical texts. Ultimately, fifty-three cardinals and bishops as well as more than two hundred experts and consultors became members of the Council (Consilium).[10] Its first president was Giacomo Cardinal Lercaro, who was succeeded by Benno Cardinal Gut; its secretary was Annibale Bugnini. The entire Council was divided into study groups responsible for the reform of individual books: the Missal, the Breviary, the Pontifical, the Martyrology, and the Ceremonial of Bishops. Because these books and texts consist of several elements, the appropriate number of sub-committees and experts was assigned to each book. Ultimately, thirty-nine study groups were formed.[11] The reform of the Breviary was entrusted to a total of nine study groups (*coetus*), eight specialized groups, a ninth coordinating group, and one responsible for the structure of the whole whose relator was Aimé Martimort. A third study group, *De psalmis distribuendis*, whose relator was Joseph Pascher, with Andre Rose as its secretary, and whose members were Angelo Paredi, Balthasar Fischer, Jorge Pinell, Herman Schmidt, and Vincenzo Raffa, was responsible for the arrangement of the Psalms. Work on the Breviary was essentially conducted on three levels: Study Group 3 (*coetus* III), Coordinating Group (*coetus* IX), and the General Assembly of the entire Council.

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9   "The Catholic Church has prayed the great Psalter in its entirety for centuries; thus, there is no reason why we should abandon this tradition in the twentieth century;" see Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori," 663.

10   A list of all the members of the commission can be found in Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 907–915.

11   Stefański, "Rola consilium," 298.

The first draft of this liturgical book appeared on April 16, 1964; it does not mention the topic of the removal of any verses. However, during the meetings of the study groups, especially in September 1964, there did appear discussions on whether *SC* 91 allows for the omission of certain fragments or not. During the vote of September 24, the majority of the third group was in favor of the position that *SC* 91 does not assume the rejection of certain Psalms (four in favor and two against). Two days later, Group 9 voted, achieving an even more unanimous position (eleven votes in favor of the integrity of the entire Psalter and one against). This topic was discussed on October 1 during the fourth session of the Plenary Council. Bishop Joseph Martin recalled that the Council did not accept the opinion of Cardinal Ruffini regarding the removal of certain Psalms from the Liturgy of the Hours. Ultimately, out of twenty-five fathers, twenty-one voted in favor of preserving all the Psalms. Four were opposed, arguing that the Council did not clearly prohibit the removal of certain Psalms, which was a sign that it allowed the freedom of choice.

During the remaining meetings in the fall of 1964 and throughout 1965, the Council's opinion upheld the traditional position regardless of whether the new Breviary would be divided into four weeks or two. However, publications in the media and discussions on liturgical reform began to increasingly influence its work.

On December 1, 1965, during the fourth session of the Plenary Council, one of the multiple proposals involved moving the imprecatory Psalms from the weekly cycle to another time. Martimort quoted Cardinal Lercaro, the President of the Consilium, who said during an international congress in Assisi that all Psalms should remain, although it would be worth considering dedicating them to another time than the ordinary weekly cycle. One of the archbishops explained that the difficulties related to the Psalter are subjective rather than objective in nature and result from a lack of understanding of the Biblical, patristic, and liturgical sense as well as medieval piety. The contingent removal of the imprecatory Psalms would lead to the removal of other Psalms. Another archbishop pointed out that there is no dogmatized principle according to which individual verses or psalms cannot be removed from the Breviary. Yet another German prelate reported on various complaints about these Psalms, such as that Carmelite nuns from Dachau wrote that they could not pray these Psalms as they think that they direct them against the Nazis. Meanwhile, Bishop Otto Spulbeck of Dresden-Meissen argued that at that time, the situation in Eastern Europe, which was under communist domination, demanded that the appropriate expressions *contra diabolum* should not be abandoned. Ultimately, in response to various voices, it was decided to send a detailed questionnaire to bishops and experts. Most bishops responded in favor of the use of the imprecatory Psalms at a different time in the liturgical year, while the experts supported keeping them in the weekly cycle.[12]

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12   Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori'," 666–667.

Another important element of this process of change was Cardinal Lercaro's letter sent to Martimort on April 5, 1966, in which he writes about the suggestion Pope Paul VI made to him during a March 18 audience. According to it, the imprecatory Psalms should be used during the periods of the year that most correspond to their content. It was uncertain whether this was the pope's private opinion or a more or less binding suggestion.

A little more than three months later, on July 31, 1966, Martimort sent to all the members of Group 9 a forty-one-page analysis. In it, he noted that the Anglican Church omits Ps 58 (however, it does not omit Ps 83), while the verses that can be omitted during recitation are in parentheses. In the reformed churches, meanwhile, twenty-one Psalms are omitted, while eight have been shortened. Finally, the Taizé community initially omitted five Psalms, while in the second stage, four Psalms were abandoned: all those that contained elements related to struggle, historical events and geographical places, or were simply too difficult.[13] After an analysis from the perspective of history, ecumenism, Christian exegesis, and spirituality, it proposed to follow the Anglican path, which meant granting to those who pray the possibility to omit several imprecatory Psalms and a certain number of similar verses. All these Psalms, however, should remain in the weekly cycle.

Such a proposal was accepted by the group of relators on September 26, 1966, with a strong majority in favor (twenty-three in favor, two against, two after amendments had been made, and two blank ballots) as well as on October 13 during the seventh session of the Plenary Council (twenty-four votes in favor, six against, and three empty ballots[14]). A general consensus was reached that a solution emerged that was satisfactory to all; this consensus lasted until 1968.

During the first synod of bishops from September 29 to October 29, the problem of the imprecatory Psalms was also discussed. During the vote on October 27, 122 Council fathers were in favor of keeping them in the ordinary cycle with the possibility of omitting them when the Liturgy of the Hours is prayed together with the people, while forty-nine were opposed.[15]

In a letter to Martimort, dated January 31, 1968, the new chairman of the Council, Cardinal Gut, presented the opinion of Pope Paul VI, who during an audience on January 3 seemed to prefer the selection of Psalms that were more appropriate to Christian prayer, assuming the omission of imprecatory and historical texts with the possibility of their use on special occasions.[16]

During a meeting of Group 9 on February 28, 1968, all these aspects were discussed once more, and it was decided to send the pope an inquiry asking if he would

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13   Stefański, "Dystrybucja psalmów," 473.
14   Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori'," 669.
15   Perrin, "Imprécations du Psautier," 72.
16   Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori'," 670.

firmly reject the previous solution and, if not, a version omitting three Psalms and problematic verses in other Psalms was prepared. It was emphasized that if the pope would at some point choose the version removing certain verses, this should be supported by solely psychological and subjective arguments resulting from contemporary sensitivities and not by claiming that these texts were not appropriate for Christian prayer.[17]

During the tenth session of the Plenary Council (April 16–30, 1968) at the level of Group 9, both the relators of individual groups and bishops who were present at the session maintained their support for the last compromise solution which had been achieved in the fall of 1966. It was decided to send the questionnaire to the pope, at the same time substantiating reasons in favor of such a response, although the decision was left to his discretion.[18]

On May 10, 1968, Martimort presented to the pope not only the position of the *Consilium* along with the results of the voting, in which the majority opposed the removal of any fragments, but also his own opinion, which was an expression of the minority position.[19] This opinion was accepted by the pope during an audience on May 18, 1968, and presented in a letter to Martimort that was relayed by Cardinal Gut on June 7, 1968. On the one hand, Paul VI upheld his earlier position and concurred with the opinion of Martimort and his secretariat: "Se desiderare ut omittantur e cyclo ordinario psalterii psalmi ex integro «imprecatorii» nempe psalmi 57,82 et 108 atque illae partes quae propositae erant ad libitum et ideo inter parentheses includenda."[20]

On July 16, 1968, Martimort informed the members of Group 9 of the pope's position. They were assembled in Ferrara di Monte Baldo (Verona) to edit the *Institutio Generalis de Liturgia Horarum*. Ultimately, this position was presented in the *General Instruction on the Liturgy of the Hours* (131) on February 2, 1971: "Three Psalms (58, 83, and 109) have been omitted from the psalter cycle because of their curses; in the same way, some verses have been omitted from certain Psalms, as noted at the head of each. The reason for the omission is a certain psychological difficulty, even though the Psalms of imprecation are in fact used as prayer in the New Testament, for example, Rv 6:10, and in no sense to encourage the use of curses."

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17   Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 671.
18   Stefański, "Dystrybucja psalmów," 477–478.
19   Twenty-four persons voted in favor of keeping Ps 58, 83, and 109; five were against, while one ballot was blank. Eighteen persons voted in favor of keeping the other verses, while seven opted for their removal, Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 501.
20   Paul VI's decision may have resulted from the fact that he always opted for a liturgy close to the people, at the same time citing St. Augustine: "It is better that we be reprimanded by grammarians than not understood by people" (*Ennarationes in Psalmos*, Ps 138:20), Perrin, "Imprécations du Psautier," 80.

In sum, three Psalms were removed in their entirety (58, 83, and 109), while some fragments were removed from nineteen Psalms.[21] One verse was removed from six Psalms: 5:11; 54:7; 55:16; 110:6; 141:10; 143:12. A verse and a half or two verses were removed from four Psalms: 28:4–5; 31:18–19; 40:15–16; 56:7b-8. Three to five verses were removed from six Psalms: 21:9–13; 63:10–12; 79:6–7, 12; 137:7–9; 139:19–22; 140:10–12. Finally, more than five verses were removed from three Psalms: 35:3a, 4–8, 20–21, 24–26; 59:6–9, 12; 69:23–29.[22] In total, 122 verses, or about 5 percent of the Book of Psalms, were removed.[23]

All these Psalms remained only in the monastic Liturgy of the Hours; the removed verses were placed in parentheses.[24]

With respect to lectionaries, other principles guided the selection and arrangement of Psalms as there was no assumption that all should be proclaimed in their entirety during the Eucharist. However, it is worth noting that, with some small exceptions, the Liturgy of the Word also lacks the imprecatory Psalms. Some verses that had been removed from the Liturgy of the Hours remained: Ps 28:4–5; 35:20–21, 24–26, but others were also omitted: not only Ps 139:19–22 but also Ps 139:23–24. The lectionary also lacks, for example, Ps 60:10; 108:10: "Moab is my washbowl."[25]

2. Reception and Discussion after the Second Vatican Council

The removal of more than 120 verses from the Divine Office was generally well-received. When almost five thousand copies of the new version were sent to bishops and various Catholic communities around the world on January 17, 1969, the majority of the 873 responses expressed satisfaction with the results.[26] If this voting were held today, the majority would perhaps likewise be in favor of not changing what liturgical reform has decided. However, an overview of academic publications on the imprecatory Psalms during the last fifty years after the Council that have been written not only by Catholic Biblical scholars and theologians inclines one to posit the thesis that the further from the Council, the more voices demand the return of the removed Psalms.

In 1981, J. Carl Laney noted that just as Christians do not follow Old Testament diets, likewise the imprecatory Psalms should not be used in the era of the Church

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21 The text of the removed verses can be found in the appendix preceding the bibliography.
22 Holladay, *The Psalms*, 305.
23 Perrin, "Imprécations du Psautier," 68.
24 Lameri, *La liturgia delle Ore*, 36.
25 Holladay, *The Psalms*, 314.
26 Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 504.

of saints, in the era of the New Testament.[27] In this way, he refers to C.S. Lewis's well-known opinion preceding the Council that both the translation of these texts and their use are pointless.[28]

In 1992, Matías Augé, who studied the use of the imprecatory Psalms in monastic communities in antiquity, notices that imprecatory texts were used often, while their understanding was facilitated by allegorical interpretation. The meaning of these Psalms is more than merely historical. They must be used if the reader is to be aware of real difficulties.

In the 1994 monograph *Ein Gott der Rache. Feindpsalmen Verstehen*[29] Erich Zenger not only tries to understand the problematic verses; he also puts forth the thesis that they should not be removed. If the literary genre to which they belong is taken into consideration, with a serious approach to the problem of injustice, and if they are treated as a prayer and an act of speech, then they seem more necessary than appropriate. Beginning with his preface, the author makes no attempt to conceal that his aim is an apology for the use of the imprecatory Psalms both in private prayer and in the common liturgy.[30]

In two more articles published three years later, John Shepherd would argue that the imprecatory Psalms should neither be ashamed of nor avoided but rather should be treated as a still relevant and important part of God's Word.[31]

Also in 1997, Enzo Bianchi published a book devoted to a deeper reading of the Psalms; in it, he explicitly states that these verses have been removed from the liturgy because they have been misunderstood.[32] He asks rhetorically: Who gives us the authority to remove a single iota or line from the Word of God, which Christ Himself said shall not be removed? He argued that they remain because emotions of wrath are necessary in a world with so much injustice and to express solidarity with those who suffer.

The same year, Francis Watson wrote that the use of the imprecatory Psalms in the Christian liturgy can in no way be justified.[33]

In 2002, Joh Day spoke out in favor of the unwanted verses. He maintained that he was in favor of the thesis that both during the times of the New Testament and in modern times, the use of such prayers against the enemies of God and His people remains relevant.[34]

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27 Laney, "A Fresh Look at the Imprecatory Psalms," 43–44.
28 Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, 22.
29 The title of the Italian edition more faithfully reflects the author's thesis: *Un Dio di vendetta? Sorprendente attualità dei salmi "imprecatori"* (Milano 2005).
30 Zenger, *A God of Vengeance?,* 6.
31 Shepherd, "The Place of the Imprecatory Psalms," 27–47, 110–126.
32 Bianchi, *Pregare i Salmi*.
33 Watson, *Text and Truth*, 121.
34 Day, "The Imprecatory Psalms," 166–186.

In 2006, Reed Lessing emphasized that the Word of God is a two-edged sword and thus should be used not only as honey for human hearts but also as a sharp weapon that recalls God's harshness towards evil.[35]

Another approach was taken by Albert Cardinal Vanhoye, who in an interview with Lucas Teixeira published on September 19, 2008, on the website *Zenit. Il mondo visto da Roma* said that it was good that these verses have been removed. According to him, this is "necessary and useful from the perspective of the acceptance of the Word of God, that we can remove things that have been improved by Jesus."[36]

One year later, Roberto Spataro, who knew Cardinal Vanhoye's opinion, spoke out in defense of the unwanted Psalms, referring to the Church Fathers.[37] He quoted Gregory of Nyssa, Augustine, Jerome, and Chrysostom to arrive at the conclusion that the use of these Psalms during prayer not only can be tolerated; in fact, it can prove quite fruitful. However, the focus should be more on spiritual reading than on the historical-critical method.

In 2011, the author of this paper wrote an article presenting five positive appraisals of the Imprecatory Psalms.[38]

In 2013, Brent Strawn tried to explain the imprecatory Psalms in reference to gangsta rap (especially using the case of Ice Cube). This sub-genre of rap frequently deals with the topics of violence, drugs, and racism and in a sense "canonizes" words that are vulgar and very strong, but in this type of music, they are not considered unacceptable.[39] A similar approach should be adopted with regard to the imprecatory Psalms and greater emphasis should be placed on understanding their unique genre.

That same year, Daniel Nehrbass's dissertation on the therapeutic and preaching virtues of the imprecatory Psalms was published.[40] In addition to many historical problems and the presentation of a panorama of diverse opinions, Nehrbass aimed to demonstrate the relevance of the unwanted verses and their usefulness even in so-called anger therapy.[41]

In 2016, an expanded edition of James Adams' work was published for the first time since 1991.[42] Adams recalls that the unwanted verses are also Sacred Scripture. He specifies that although one cannot pray for the suffering of one's personal enemies, such prayer is acceptable when referring to God's enemies: sin, evil, and Satan.

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[35] Lessing, "Broken Teeth," 368–370.

[36] https://it.zenit.org/2008/09/19/la-sacra-scrittura-e-essenziale-per-conoscere-cristo/ (access 21.10.2022).

[37] Spataro, "È possibile pregare," 453–471.

[38] Węgrzyniak, "Granica miłości," 22–29. See also Węgrzyniak, "Kościół usunął z liturgii trzy tajemnicze psalmy".

[39] Strawn, "Sanctified," 403–417.

[40] Nehrbass, *Praying Curses.*

[41] In a review of Nehrbass's monograph, Abraham Kuruvilla (rev. of Nehrbass, *Praying Curses*, 91–92) accuses him of not resolving most of the problems related to the imprecatory Psalms, despite his ambitious goals.

[42] Adams, *War Psalms*.

In 2018, Jamie Grant, who was aware of the difficulties resulting from the use of the imprecatory Psalms in the liturgy, opted in favor of their use, emphasizing the proper understanding of these texts as a sub-genre of the Psalms of Lament.

One year later, two authors, Nicoletta Gatti and Daniel Yeboah, wrote about the phenomenon of the use of the imprecatory Psalms in Ghana.[43] One effect of the removal of these texts from the liturgy of Christian churches and considering them as un-Christian is that people defect to cults and other groups that pray using these texts. The authors put forth the hypothesis that these texts should be used in the liturgy as a powerful tool that makes it possible to see the world with the eyes of a victim.

In 2020, Charlie Trimm, who compared the texts about Babylon (Ps 137 and Jer 29:7 as well as Jer 50–51), arrived at the conclusion that it is possible to reconcile love for one's enemies with a prayer that God avenges their misdeeds. Ultimately, the aim is that it is God Himself, not man, who reacts to evil.[44]

Considering the works that appeared from the end of the Second Vatican Council until the present, a thesis can be formulated that although there is no unanimous agreement with respect to the use of the imprecatory Psalms in the liturgy, there is a visible tendency to defend these Psalms and pray using them. To these opinions, one can add the experience of people who participated in more than a dozen lectures on Ps 83 that the author of this article gave in Kraków in 2016.[45] Upon the conclusion of these lectures, they asked in amazement why this Psalm had been removed from the liturgy since there was nothing "bad" in it.

3. Arguments in Favor of Removing Imprecatory Verses from the Liturgy

The arguments that have appeared from the beginning of the discussions on imprecatory verses in the Liturgy of the Hours and that are still used to support their removal from the liturgy are as follows:

1) These verses do not represent the fullness of revelation received in Jesus Christ.[46]

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43 Gatti – Yeboah, "Cursing Back to Life?," 1–29.
44 Trimm, "Praying for the Peace," 13–33.
45 Węgrzyniak, "Środy Biblijne," https://wegrzyniak.com/biblista/srody-biblijne.
46 This opinion was expressed in the council auditorium on October 21, 1963; Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 663.

2) These verses contain very difficult expressions that are incompatible with modern-day sensibilities.[47] Thus, the motivation for their removal is purely psychological.[48]

3) These verses should not be recited by all but only by those who have a deeper knowledge of Sacred Scripture so that they may use it with the proper understanding and spiritual benefit.[49] Because liturgical reform encourages all people to actively participate in the liturgy, it is better to remove difficult verses, bearing in mind that not everyone is properly prepared.[50] The lack of a Biblical sense, patristic and liturgical tradition, and the disappearance of medieval piety make it impossible to properly understand them.[51]

4) When reciting these verses, people, especially the young, feel a certain spiritual distaste.[52] Thus, it should be unsurprising that Christians find it difficult to internalize some Psalms during prayer.[53]

5) When reciting these verses, some think ill of people who resemble the Psalmist's enemies.[54]

6) Difficulties arise when the Psalms are recited in vernacular languages. Thus, if it is decided to celebrate the liturgy in vernacular languages, it is better to abstain from using these Psalms.[55]

7) The Liturgy of the Hours is a form of prayer, and some expressions of anger and hate do not facilitate unity with God and praise of Him, even though they demand great familiarity with Biblical culture. Keeping them in parentheses for optional use would be a sign that the intention is to keep them only formally.[56] It is better to select texts that are more appropriate to Christian prayer.[57]

8) The entire Old Testament is not used in the Liturgy of the Hours; thus, why not select only some Psalms if it is only some fragments of the Old Testament that are selected anyway.[58]

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[47] Such an opinion was presented by, for example, Mortimort during his audience with Paul VI on November 10, 1966; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 495.

[48] The opinion of Group IX expressed on February 28, 1968; Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 671; Pascher, "Il nuovo ordinamento," 161–162.

[49] This opinion was expressed at the Synod of Bishops on October 26, 1967; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 498.

[50] See Lameri, *La liturgia delle Ore*, 36.

[51] This opinion was expressed on December 1, 1965; Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 666.

[52] This opinion was recorded during the ninth session of the Plenary Council (December 10, 1967); Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 499.

[53] Lameri, *La liturgia delle Ore*, 38.

[54] The opinion of Carmelite nuns interned in Dachau; Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 667.

[55] Paul VI, *Laudes Canticum*; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 499; Lameri, *La liturgia delle Ore*, 36.

[56] Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 500.

[57] Paul VI's opinion from January 3, 1968; Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 671. Likewise, John XXIII was in favor of choosing more beautiful Psalms and those that have greater relevance to Christian revelation; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 499.

[58] Martimort's opinion included in a report to Paul VI (May 10, 1968); Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 503.

9) The Constitution on the Liturgy did not take a unanimous position on the impossibility of the removal of certain verses.[59]

4. Arguments in Favor of an Integral Reading of the Psalter

1) Jesus did not reject any Psalm; on the contrary, He prayed all the Psalms.[60]
2) For centuries, the Church has recited the entire Psalter; thus, there is no reason to change this tradition.[61]
3) The imprecatory Psalms are also inspired by the Holy Spirit. They are also God's Word, a prophetic text that is good and holy. To remove them would be an affront to the Holy Spirit.[62] The grace of the Holy Spirit supports those who sing them with faith and good will.[63]
4) The removal of these verses does not resolve the problem of Biblical curses.[64] Sooner or later, believers will be confronted with the proper understanding of these fragments of the Bible that are also God's word.
5) The Council fathers did not intend to remove any fragments from the Psalter. Both the discussion in the Council auditorium on October 21, 1963, and all the votes during the Council's work (*Consilium ad exsequendam Constitutionem de sacra liturgia*) at each of its levels as well as the position of the first Synod of Bishops are evidence that the majority was always in favor of keeping all the Psalms in the liturgy.[65]
6) The Psalms are not recited in one's own name but *in persona Christi et Ecclesiae*; thus, efforts to feed the soul are necessary.[66] In the Christian interpretation, praying these Psalms is carrying the cries of the tormented to God. Jesus took upon

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59 An opinion presented on October 1, 1964, as part of the discussion on the understanding of *SC* 91; Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 665. A similar opinion was presented on December 1, 1965, when one archbishop asked where is it dogmatized that all the Psalms must be recited in the liturgy; Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 667.

60 Bianchi, *Pregare i Salmi*, 32–33.

61 Such was the argumentation of the abbot Reetz during his speech on October 21, 1963; Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 663.

62 Raffa, "I salmi 'imprecatori,'" 672.

63 Lameri, *La liturgia delle Ore*, 102.

64 "La nostra opinione e che i salmi o i versetti imprecatori vanno lasciati: non possono essere aboliti, perché sono la parola di Dio! Se non li comprendiamo, facciamo come i rabbini che consigliano di leggerli sottovoce, senza proclamarli con canto, ma lasciamoli, affinché la parola di Dio sia intatta" (Bianchi, *Pregare i Salmi*, 39).

65 Louis Bouyer even claims that the promoter of the removal of the Psalms was Annibale Bugnini, who successfully pushed for this despite the skepticism of the Council, groundlessly (according to Bouyer's opinion) referring to the pope's will; Bouyer, *Memories*, "Chapter XII: Around a Council."

66 The opinion of Martimort from December 1, 1965; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 486.

Himself all curses (see Gal 3:13); thus, praying using these words means being in solidarity with Christ and other people.[67]

7) These Psalms should be read in accordance with their literary genres, not according to the feelings of those who read them.[68] In their literary genre, the imprecations do not seek vengeance but rather God's intervention to restore justice.[69] If this restoration of justice involves levying a punishment, like almost every restoration of justice, then one cannot consider it improper to ask God for punishment for His enemies, especially if the dispensing of justice is left to God.[70] An aim of the literary genre of imprecations in the life of both individual persons and the Church and world is to mention one's enemies at every level and every form of injustice by name.[71]

8) These Psalms bring great spiritual benefit, including when they are said during prayer, under the condition that one is capable of distinguishing between that whose value is immutable and the variable elements of human language. Although they are not the highest form of prayer, when read considering the Paschal Mystery they take on additional significance and meaning.[72] And it is indispensable to, as much as possible, "improve [one's] understanding of the liturgy and of the Bible, especially of the Psalms" (*SC* 90) and realize how to proceed so that they may become one's own prayer.[73]

9) This is appropriate as an expression *contra diabolum* for people who are experiencing oppression. To throw these verses out would be akin to forgetting contemporary enemies, including Satan.[74] Particularly difficult situations demand reciting the entire Psalter.[75] To decline to do so would be akin to standing before God and pretending that it would be improper to mention certain things.

10) The lack of an objective criterion for the removal of certain verses leads to the danger of subjectivism.[76] If these fragments are removed today, what can stop removing others in the future?[77]

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67 Menichelli, *I salmi*, 60; Zenger, "Die Gotteszeugenschaft," 37.
68 Sessa, "Sal 137," 132; Althann, "The Psalms," 7; The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration*, no. 128.
69 Menichelli, *I salmi*, 58; The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration*, no. 128.
70 Bianchi, *I Salmi*, 59. The Jews also understood the imprecatory Psalms as a plea for the conversion of sinners (Berakhot 10a); Bianchi, *Pregare i Salmi*, 41.
71 Sessa, "Sal 137," 132, 170; Anderson, "King David," 270.
72 The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Jewish People*, no. 48.
73 Lameri, *La liturgia delle Ore*, 102.
74 Jacquet, *Les Psaumes*, 142.
75 The opinion of Bishop Spulbeck expressed on December 1, 1965; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica,* 486, Article 13.
76 The opinion of Martimort from December 1, 1965; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 486. The same opinion was expressed by the tenth session of the Plenary Council; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 487.
77 The opinion of one of the members of the group on October 19, 1965; Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 487. The same with Bianchi, *Pregare i Salmi*, 38.

11) Their removal attests to the fact that the emphasis has been shifted from the text to the reader.[78] And man is to be a servant of the Word, not its master.

12) The removal of verses was partly due to the incompetence of advisors, often intensified by frequently repeating that these Psalms cannot be sung by the supplicant of the New Testament. If they have been removed, this is perhaps because they have not been properly understood. To use the Psalms for prayer as they are (that is, without properly explaining them) is like giving children stones instead of bread, but not giving them at all would reduce their food rations.[79] St. John Chrysostom wrote: "In order to understand this Psalm well, we need to use all our intelligence. If one interprets these words as they have been written, they are an obstacle to listeners who do not think about them."

13) Their presence will incline one to appreciate the interpretation of the Bible used by the Church Fathers and not limit oneself to the historical-critical method.[80] The removal of the Psalms would be justified if the Bible were read only through a historical and critical lens. If, however, one applies the *sensus plenior* according to the principles presented by the Fathers, the richness of such a reading becomes evident.[81] Here, one should appreciate a reading that above all sees Satan in one's enemies or one that understands these verses not as malediction but rather as prophecy.[82] This is not so much desiring misfortune as speaking about the consequences of the specific behavior of one's enemies.

14) In the liturgy, one cannot limit oneself to beautiful feelings for people are also filled with wrath and bitterness (see Eph 4:6). There also exists good and holy anger. Even if one does not have it within oneself, one expresses it in the name of those who are suffering at the moment.[83] To remove it would be akin to forgetting about those who suffer and solely focusing on oneself.[84] To pray using these Psalms is to listen to the cries and imprecations of wounded people, transforming them into righteous and pious cries.[85] If imprecation is an expression of anger at evil, a lack of imprecation can even amount to complicity in evil.[86]

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78   Braulik, *L'esegesi anticotestamentaria*, 67.
79   Bianchi, *Pregare i Salmi*, 37.
80   Braulik, *L'esegesi anticotestamentaria*, 75; Augé, "I Salmi imprecatori," 57.
81   Spataro, "È possibile pregare," 471.
82   Chrysostomus, *Expositio in Psalmum 58* (PG 55, 260).
83   Miller, "The Hermeneutics," 160, 163.
84   Bianchi, *Pregare i Salmi*, 37.
85   Spataro, "È possibile pregare," 463.
86   Sessa, "Sal 137," 168. See also The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration*, no. 128; see http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/pcb_documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020212_popolo-ebraico_it.html (access 1.08.2018).

15) We should be conscious of the fact that normally reading Scripture, including incomprehensible texts, helps man. According to the Eastern tradition, such a reading "cleanses the heart and soul."[87]

Conclusion

Taking into consideration the pros and cons of the presence of imprecatory verses in the liturgy, the following conclusions are reached:

1) Considering the lack of dogmatic contraindications and considering pastoral issues, the decision to remove certain verses should not be greatly controversial. One may disagree with it, but it should be respected, not attaching too much importance to such a position.

2) However, it would be better to leave all the imprecatory verses so the Word of God can also be an intellectual challenge, an incitement to humility, an impulse to experience the mystery, and resignation from a world in which the truth must be pleasant. Removing difficult fragments from the Bible at first glance may seem fruitful and sensible, but in the long term, it risks a perversion of understanding the proper meaning of Divine Revelation, which becomes the truth for one's salvation as long as one is capable of accepting them in their entirety.

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87 Martini, *Il desiderio di Dio*, 15.

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Appendix

A List of Verses from the Book of Psalms Removed from the Liturgy of the Hours[88]

Ps 5:11
[11] Declare them guilty, God; make them fall by their own devices. Drive them out for their many sins; for they have rebelled against you.

Ps 21:9–13
[9] Your hand will find all your enemies; your right hand will find your foes!
[10] At the time of your coming you will make them a fiery furnace. Then the LORD in his anger will consume them, devour them with fire.
[11] Even their descendants you will wipe out from the earth, their offspring from the human race.
[12] Though they intend evil against you, devising plots, they will not succeed,
[13] For you will put them to flight; you will aim at their faces with your bow.

Ps 28:4–5
[4] Repay them for their deeds, for the evil that they do. For the work of their hands repay them; give them what they deserve.
[5] Because they do not understand the LORD's works, the work of his hands, He will tear them down, never to rebuild them.

Ps 31:18–19
[18] Do not let me be put to shame, for I have called to you, LORD. Put the wicked to shame; reduce them to silence in Sheol.
[19] Strike dumb their lying lips, which speak arrogantly against the righteous in contempt and scorn.

Ps 35:3a, 4–8, 20–21, 24–26
[3] Brandish lance and battle-ax against my pursuers. […]
[4] Let those who seek my life be put to shame and disgrace. Let those who plot evil against me be turned back and confounded.
[5] Make them like chaff before the wind, with the angel of the LORD driving them on.
[6] Make their way slippery and dark, with the angel of the LORD pursuing them.
[7] Without cause they set their snare for me; without cause they dug a pit for me.
[8] Let ruin overtake them unawares; let the snare they have set catch them; let them fall into the pit they have dug. […]
[20] They speak no words of peace, but against the quiet in the land they fashion deceitful speech.
[21] They open wide their mouths against me. They say, "Aha! Good! Our eyes have seen it!" […]

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88   Translations from the *New American Bible* (2010).

[24] Defend me because you are just, LORD; my God, do not let them rejoice over me.

[25] Do not let them say in their hearts, "Aha! Our soul!" Do not let them say, "We have devoured that one!"

[26] Put to shame and confound all who relish my misfortune. Clothe with shame and disgrace those who lord it over me.

Ps 40:15–16

[15] May those who seek to destroy my life be shamed and confounded. Turn back in disgrace those who desire my ruin.

[16] Let those who say to me "Aha!" Be made desolate on account of their shame.

Ps 54:7

[7] Turn back the evil upon my foes; in your faithfulness, destroy them.

Ps 55:16

[16] Let death take them; let them go down alive to Sheol, for evil is in their homes and bellies.

Ps 56:7b–8

[7] they watch my every step; they lie in wait for my life.

[8] They are evil; watch them, God! Cast the nations down in your anger!

Ps 58

[1] For the leader. Do not destroy. A miktam of David.

[2] Do you indeed pronounce justice, O gods; do you judge fairly you children of Adam?

[3] No, you freely engage in crime; your hands dispense violence to the earth.

[4] The wicked have been corrupt since birth; liars from the womb, they have gone astray.

[5] Their venom is like the venom of a snake, like that of a serpent stopping its ears,

[6] So as not to hear the voice of the charmer or the enchanter with cunning spells.

[7] O God, smash the teeth in their mouths; break the fangs of these lions, LORD!

[8] Make them vanish like water flowing away; trodden down, let them wither like grass.

[9] Let them dissolve like a snail that oozes away, like an untimely birth that never sees the sun.

[10] Suddenly, like brambles or thistles, have the whirlwind snatch them away.

[11] Then the just shall rejoice to see the vengeance and bathe their feet in the blood of the wicked.

[12] Then people will say: "Truly there is a reward for the just; there is a God who is judge on earth!"

Ps 59:6–9, 12–16

[6] You, LORD God of hosts, are the God of Israel! Awake! Punish all the nations. Have no mercy on these worthless traitors. Selah

[7] Each evening they return, growling like dogs, prowling the city.

[8] Their mouths pour out insult; sharp words are on their lips. They say: "Who is there to hear?"

[9] But you, LORD, laugh at them; you deride all the nations. […]

¹² Slay them, God, lest they deceive my people. Shake them by your power; Lord, our shield, bring them down.

¹³ For the sinful words of their mouths and lips let them be caught in their pride. For the lies they have told under oath

¹⁴ destroy them in anger, destroy till they are no more. Then people will know God rules over Jacob, yes, even to the ends of the earth. Selah

¹⁵ Each evening they return, growling like dogs, prowling the city.

¹⁶ They roam about as scavengers; if they are not filled, they howl.

Ps 63:10–12

¹⁰ But those who seek my life will come to ruin; they shall go down to the depths of the netherworld!

¹¹ Those who would hand over my life to the sword shall become the prey of jackals!

¹² But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by the Lord shall exult, but the mouths of liars will be shut!

Ps 69:23–29

²³ May their own table be a snare for them, and their communion offerings a trap.

²⁴ Make their eyes so dim they cannot see; keep their backs ever feeble.

²⁵ Pour out your wrath upon them; let the fury of your anger overtake them.

²⁶ Make their camp desolate, with none to dwell in their tents.

²⁷ For they pursued the one you struck, added to the pain of the one you wounded.

²⁸ Heap punishment upon their punishment; let them gain from you no vindication.

²⁹ May they be blotted from the book of life; not registered among the just!

Ps 79:6–7, 12

⁶ Pour out your wrath on nations that do not recognize you, on kingdoms that do not call on your name,

⁷ For they have devoured Jacob, laid waste his dwelling place. […]

¹² Turn back sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors the insult with which they insulted you, Lord.

Ps 83

¹ A song; a psalm of Asaph.

² God, do not be silent; God, do not be deaf or remain unmoved!

³ See how your enemies rage; your foes proudly raise their heads.

⁴ They conspire against your people, plot against those you protect.

⁵ They say, "Come, let us wipe them out as a nation; let Israel's name be remembered no more!"

⁶ They scheme with one mind, they have entered into a covenant against you:

⁷ The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites, of Moab and the Hagrites,

⁸ Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek, Philistia and the inhabitants of Tyre.

⁹ Assyria, too, in league with them, backs the descendants of Lot. Selah

¹⁰ Deal with them as with Midian; as with Sisera and Jabin at the wadi Kishon,

[11] Those destroyed at Endor, who became dung for the ground.

[12] Make their nobles like Oreb and Zeeb, all their princes like Zebah and Zalmunna,

[13] Who made a plan together, "Let us take for ourselves the pastures of God."

[14] My God, make them like tumbleweed, into chaff flying before the wind.

[15] As a fire raging through a forest, a flame setting mountains ablaze,

[16] Pursue them with your tempest; terrify them with your storm-wind.

[17] Cover their faces with shame, till they seek your name, LORD.

[18] Let them be ashamed and terrified forever; let them perish in disgrace.

[19] Let them know that your name is LORD, you alone are the Most High over all the earth.

Ps 109

[1] For the leader. A psalm of David.

[2] O God, whom I praise, do not be silent, for wicked and treacherous mouths attack me. They speak against me with lying tongues;

[3] with hateful words they surround me, attacking me without cause.

[4] In return for my love they slander me, even though I prayed for them.

[5] They repay me evil for good, hatred for my love.

[6] Appoint an evil one over him, an accuser to stand at his right hand,

[7] That he may be judged and found guilty, that his plea may be in vain.

[8] May his days be few; may another take his office.

[9] May his children be fatherless, his wife, a widow.

[10] May his children wander and beg, driven from their hovels.

[11] May the usurer snare all he owns, strangers plunder all he earns.

[12] May no one treat him with mercy or pity his fatherless children.

[13] May his posterity be destroyed, their name rooted out in the next generation.

[14] May his fathers' guilt be mentioned to the LORD; his mother's sin not rooted out.

[15] May their guilt be always before the LORD, till their memory is banished from the earth,

[16] For he did not remember to show mercy, but hounded the wretched poor and brought death to the brokenhearted.

[17] He loved cursing; may it come upon him; he hated blessing; may none come to him.

[18] May cursing clothe him like a robe; may it enter his belly like water, his bones like oil.

[19] May it be near as the clothes he wears, as the belt always around him.

[20] May this be the reward for my accusers from the LORD, for those speaking evil against me.

[21] But you, LORD, are my Lord, deal kindly with me for your name's sake; in your great mercy rescue me.

[22] For I am poor and needy; my heart is pierced within me.

[23] Like a lengthening shadow I am gone, I am shaken off like the locust.

[24] My knees totter from fasting; my flesh has wasted away.

[25] I have become a mockery to them; when they see me, they shake their heads.

[26] Help me, LORD, my God; save me in your mercy.

[27] Make them know this is your hand, that you, LORD, have done this.

[28] Though they curse, may you bless; arise, shame them, that your servant may rejoice.

[29] Clothe my accusers with disgrace; make them wear their shame like a mantle.

³⁰ I will give fervent thanks to the LORD; before a crowd I will praise him.
³¹ For he stands at the right hand of the poor to save him from those who pass judgment on him.

Ps 110:6
Who judges nations, heaps up corpses, crushes heads across the wide earth

Ps 137:7–9
⁷ Remember, LORD, against Edom that day at Jerusalem. They said: "Level it, level it down to its foundations!"
⁸ Desolate Daughter Babylon, you shall be destroyed, blessed the one who pays you back what you have done us!
⁹ Blessed the one who seizes your children and smashes them against the rock.

Ps 139:19–22
¹⁹ When you would destroy the wicked, O God, the bloodthirsty depart from me!
²⁰ Your foes who conspire a plot against you are exalted in vain.
²¹ Do I not hate, LORD, those who hate you? Those who rise against you, do I not loathe?
²² With fierce hatred I hate them, enemies I count as my own.

Ps 140:10–12
¹⁰ Those who surround me raise their heads; may the mischief they threaten overwhelm them.
¹¹ Drop burning coals upon them; cast them into the watery pit never more to rise.
¹² Slanderers will not survive on earth; evil will hunt down the man of violence to overthrow him.

Ps 141:10
¹⁰ Let the wicked fall into their own nets, while only I pass over them safely.

Ps 143:12
¹² In your mercy put an end to my foes; all those who are oppressing my soul, for I am your servant.

SHORT STUDIES/PRZYCZYNKI

Our Daily Bread Is At Risk: The Term *rōzīq/g* as *Vorlage* for *ἐπιούσιος* in Lord's Prayer

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Abstract: This note proposes a new hypothesis, claiming that the word ἐπιούσιος of the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6:11 and Luke 11:3 was an attempt to translate *rōzīq/g*, a Middle Iranian loan word in Jesus' Hebrew/Aramaic, meaning "nourishment provided by God's mercy day to day," and not merely "daily [bread], needed for the day/for today."

Keywords: Lord's Prayer, Pater Noster, Aramaic, Iranian loan words in Semitic, Middle Iranian, Middle Persian, Arabic, Swahili, risk, daily bread

The Lord's Prayer (*Pater Noster*) in Matthew's Gospel reads τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον (6:11). The word ἐπιούσιος does not appear anywhere in the Greek language except in the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6:11 and Luke 11:3, as pointed out by Origen (*Or.* 27.7). The Latin translator, St. Jerome, also realized that there was a problem and was therefore uncertain as to the true meaning of the word (*Comm. Matt.* 1.6.10); he translated it as *cotidianum* in Luke 11:3, and *supersubstantialem* in Matt 6:11.

1

The examples of Origen and St. Jerome demonstrate that a crucial word in the most important Christian prayer was not clear for the first Christian generations, even for the Greek translator (oral interpreter?) of Jesus' Aramaic or Hebrew, or Hebrew-cum-Aramaic prayer, and the awkward ἐπιούσιος was an attempt to render a word lacking in the translator's/interpreter's Greek. Much ink was spilled trying to understand the meaning of ἐπιούσιος, but the literature on the subject is too vast to review here[1].

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[1] For the *status quaestionis* see Carmignac, *Recherches*, 118–221; Gupta, *The Lord's Prayer*, 95–97; Black, *The Lord's Prayer*, 150–157.

2

The Syriac version in both Matt 6:11 and Luke 11:3 is *laḥmā də-sunqānā*['*]*n* and the Armenian is *hac' hanapazord*, "bread of our need" (the Georgian is "of existence"). However, the Curetonian Gospels[2] use *ʾammīnā*, "lasting," somewhat reminiscent of Exod 17:12, ויהי ידיו אמונה, "so his hands were steady." As a rule, new versions translate "daily" as "of today," "of everyday," etc. One Dutch translation stands alone with "that we need," apparently grasping correctly that the original word must have been a substantive (as in Syriac and Armenian).

3

What is important about the Arabic translation is the remarkable fact that it did not exist before the rise of Islam: strange, however, since Arabic- and South-Arabian Christians of the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula and adjacent countries must have already known the prayer (in which language did they say it?). Hans Winkler,[3] on p. 244, juxtaposes the Greek Lord's Prayer to al-Fātiḥah and the Lord's Prayer in Arabic:

244   H. WINKLER.

Greek	al-Fātiḥah	Arabic Lord's Prayer
Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς	بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم	ربنا الله الذى فى السماء
1. Ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου·	الحمد لله رب العالمين	تقدس اسمك
2. ἐλθάτω ἡ βασιλεία σου·	الرحمن الرحيم	امرك فى السماء والارض
3. γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς·	مالك يوم الدين	كما رحمتك فى السماء فاجعل رحمتك فى الارض
4. Τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον·	اياك نعبد واياك نستعين	—
5. καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν·	اهدنا الصراط المستقيم	اغفر لنا حوبنا وخطايانا (انت رب الطيبين انزل رحمة من رحمتك وشفاء من شفائك على هذا الوجع)
6. καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν,	صراط الذين انعمت عليهم	
7. ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ. (Ἀμήν).	غير المغضوب عليهم ولا الضالين (آمين)	

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2   Burkitt, *Evangelion da-Mepharreshe*; Kiraz, *Comparative Edition*, I–IV.
3   Winkler, "Fātiḥa und Vaterunser," 238–246.

We can see here that what is missing in al-Fātiḥah is verse 4 of the Lord's Prayer, the Daily Bread (but see the variant reading of al-Fatiḥah, *al-Razzāq al-raḥīm*, instead of *al-Raḥmān al-raḥīm*[4]).

4

The Hebrew translation by Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890) reads לֶחֶם חֻקֵּנוּ which can roughly be translated as "bread of our measure/law/justice/the-real-thing." Obviously, this translation was based on Prov 30:8, הַטְרִיפֵנִי לֶחֶם חֻקִּי, "Feed me with the food allotted to me" (the Syriac is "Give me a living sufficient for me").

5

The author of the Lord's Prayer must have had this verse in the back of his mind, but it is also clear that he did not use the Hebrew word from Prov 30:8, but rather another word with a similar – for him – meaning.

6

In my opinion, the original Hebrew/Aramaic word, in the eyes of the earliest Greek translator of the Lord's prayer, was an Iranism, *rōzīq/g*, an adjective form from the Middle Iranian word for "day," *rōz*. This word, *rōzīq/g*, *does* exist in Judeo-Aramaic and in other languages in contact with Middle Iranian, such as Syriac, Armenian, and Arabic. Though derived from the word for "day," the word *rōzīq/g* means "that which one has to work for in order to be fed / to provide provision needed on a *daily* basis/daily wage," and the New Persian *rōzī* means "day's provisions" as well as "destiny/fate," while *rōzīna* means "daily allowance / daily wages / of everyday." For Jewish Aramaic, cf. *rōzīqā*, *rōzīnqā*, "daily bread,"[5] clearly thus translated under the influence of *English* translations of the Lord's Prayer. Syriac uses *rōzīqā* and Armenian has *řočik*, "täglicher Unterhalt, Nahrung, Lebensmittel."[6]

7

I firmly believe that I am not the first to realize that ἐπιούσιος is a translation of **rōzīq/g*. It was the Swahili translator, a learned missionary,[7] who grasped, by Divine

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4   Jeffery, "A Variant," 158–162.
5   Sokoloff, *A Dictionary*, 1063b–1064a.
6   Hübschmann, *Armenische Grammatik*, 234.
7   Johann Ludwig Krapf (1810–1881), a German Lutheran in the service of the Anglican Church Missionary Society, or the English Bishop Edward Steere 1828–1882)? See Vilhanova, "Biblical Translations," 80–89.

grace and mercy, the semantics (and the root!) behind the Greek word ἐπιούσιος. Swahili has a word borrowed from Arabic, *riziki*, "what is needed for the living."

8

The Arabic verbal root *rzq*, "to provide provision needed on *daily* basis / to provide with the means of subsistence (said of God) / endow, to bless,"[8] *razaqa*, "to provide nourishment," *rizq*/*arzāq*, "means of living, daily bread, boon, blessing (of God), wealth, fortune [cf. New Persian *rōzī* above, "day's provisions" and "destiny / fate"], income, pay, wages," and *al-Razzāq*, "the Maintainer, the Provider (one of the 99 attributes of God)."[9] Through the vehicle of the Arabic *rizq*, a back-formation of the borrowed Persian **rōzīq*, the word entered the languages of Europe as *risk*, *Risiko*, etc.

9

The Iranian loan word, *rōzīq*/*g* רוזיק/ג, used in Jesus' Hebrew/Aramaic rhymes with another well-attested Middle Iranian loan word in Jewish Aramaic, *ṭōzīg*/טוזיג, "picnic" (also seen in Armenian and in other languages, meaning "provisions for a journey"). Due to Iranian words in Qumran unattested previously (like נחשיר, "eschatological hunting"[10]) or unattested in the specific meanings used, the hypothesis seems quite convincing that Jesus' word behind ἐπιούσιος was *rōzīq*/*g*, "nourishment provided by God's mercy day to day while we take our risks to achieve it," and not merely "daily-needed [bread]."

10

As a day-hire would say today in Arabic, *yā Rabb, jibnī rizqī*/*rizq yōmītī il-yom*, "O Lord, give me my day-worker's wages/my living," while using the Arabic *yawmiyeh*, from the word "day," *yawm*/*yōm*, or *rizq*, "means of living, God's blessing".

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8   The Arabic examples are quoted from Wehr, *Dictionary*, 336b–337a.
9   The fact that no Arabic translation known to me uses *rizq* for ἐπιούσιος indicates, in my view, that there were no pre-Islamic translations of the Lord's Prayer into Arabic.
10   *War of the Sons of Light Against the Sons of Darkness* I, 9–11, אל לפני חזק ונחשיר קרב כיתיים בו נפול וביום, "on the day when the Kittim fall there shall be a battle and horrible carnage before the God."

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REVIEWS/RECENZJE

Verbum
Vitae

Angelika Berlejung – Michèle Daviau – Jens Kamlah – Gunnar Lehmann (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Material Culture in the Biblical World. A New Biblisches Reallexiko*n (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2022). Ss. 1231. 169,00 €. ISBN 978-3-16148966-2

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Nowa *Encyklopedia* jest w istocie – jak wskazuje to już jej podtytuł – kontynuatorką koncepcji wydanego po niemiecku leksykonu archeologicznego *Biblisches Reallexikon* z 1937 (Mohr Siebeck). Jego uaktualnioną wersję wydano w 1977 (RBL²) pod redakcją Kurta Gallinga, i to wydanie z powodzeniem przywoływane jest do dziś w wielu publikacjach. Jak łatwo policzyć, od jego ukazania się minęło niemal 50 lat. Od tego czasu wzrosła znacząco nie tylko liczba artefaktów i wraz z nimi wiedza archeologiczna o materialnej spuściźnie starożytności świata biblijnego, ale zmieniły się też znacząco metody badań archeologicznych. Z tych między innymi względów w roku 2007 narodził się pomysł opracowania nowego, zaktualizowanego leksykonu archeologicznego. Wydawnictwo Mohr Siebeck powierzyło rolę głównego redaktora Angelice Berlejung z Uniwersytetu w Lipsku. Do grona współredaktorów zaproszono w roli „Area Editors" również P.M. Michèle Daviau z Wilfried Laurier University w Waterloo (Ontario) w Kanadzie, Jensa Kamlaha z Uniwersytetu w Tybindze oraz Gunnara Lehmanna z Uniwersytetu Beersheva w Izraelu. Nowy leksykon – w odróżnieniu od swoich poprzedników – wydany został w języku angielskim. Z tego względu zmianie uległ również proponowany skrót bibliograficzny – EBW zamiast BRL. Jak łatwo zauważyć, od inicjatywy projektu do jego ukończenia minęło 15 lat. Angelika Berlejung stwierdza we wstępie („Foreword", VII), że „…największym wyzwanie dla redaktora i autorów była selekcja tego, co najważniejsze spośród istniejącego i nieustannie na nowo odkrywanego materiału, i sformułowanie sensownej syntezy. W pewnym sensie ta książka jest więc towarzyszem «trwającej pracy» nad realiami i w żadnym wypadku nie jest ostatnim słowem". W istocie niektóre hasła zawarte w tej encyklopedii były udostępniane już od pewnego czasu czytelnikom w formie elektronicznej m.in. na platformie academia.edu. Przy opracowywaniu tej encyklopedii wykorzystano nie tylko najnowsze dane archeologiczne i zgromadzono obfitą, aktualną literaturę do poszczególnych haseł, ale zastosowano również najnowocześniejsze środki techniczne, Internet oraz komputerowe programy edytorskie. Jak pisze dalej główna redaktorka: „wszystko to stanowiło dla nas dużą pomoc".

Encyklopedie archeologiczne dotyczące m.in. świata biblijnego istnieją już na rynku wydawniczym. Warto wspomnieć chociażby pięciotomową *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* z lat dziewięćdziesiątych XX w., przygotowaną pod redakcją Ephraima Sterna (Jerusalem) (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society & Carta – Simon & Schuster 1993–2008) I–V. Niemniej ideą przewodnią tej encyklopedii było opracowanie historii i samych odkryć dokonanych w poszczególnych miejscach Ziemi Świętej. EBW proponuje inne – tematyczne podejście do zagadnień archeologicznych związanych ze światem biblijnym i tym samym – wspomnianą przez Angelikę Berlejung – syntezę wiedzy o poszczególnych tematach. Nowa *Encyclopedia* to dzieło w pełnym tego słowa znaczeniu międzynarodowe. Lista autorów z 15 krajów świata wybranych do przygotowania poszczególnych haseł jest imponująca (s. 1228–1229: 72 nazwiska) i bez wątpienia ich dobór wynikał z unikalnej wiedzy, jaką każdy z nich posiadał w poszczególnych, powierzonych im do opracowania dziedzinach.

Redaktorzy ograniczyli zakres swoich opracowań do materiału archeologicznego z terenów południowego Lewantu. Tam, gdzie było jednak konieczne, włączali w formie odniesień i porównań również dane archeologiczne z Syrii, Libanu, Egiptu i Mezopotamii. Opracowania nie ograniczają się wyłącznie do zgromadzenia i podania suchych danych, lecz starają się dokonywać syntezy oraz interpretacji, biorąc pod uwagę kontekst kulturowy południowego Lewantu, jego ekonomię, rozwój technologiczny, sztukę i religię (s. XVII). „EBW prezentuje i dokumentuje materialną kulturę, opierając się na danych archeologicznych, epigraficznych i ikonograficznych w porządku historycznym" (s. XVII). Jak zapewniają w końcu autorzy tego ambitnego dzieła: „EBW prezentuje i dokumentuje aktualny stań badań" (s. XVII).

W sumie główna część tego dzieła zawiera 120 haseł. Opracowane są one nieco inaczej niż w przypadku BRL[2]. Tym razem autorom nie chodziło o stworzenie kolejnego „biblijnego podręcznika" archeologicznego. Z tego powodu liczba odniesień biblijnych jest tu znacznie mniejsza niż w poprzednim *Leksykonie*. Jak zaznaczono we wstępie, nowa *Encyklopedia* ma być tym razem „leksykonem kultury materialnej *w świecie biblijnym*" (s. XVII). W tej formie poszczególne hasła stanowią użyteczne uzupełnienie do ogólniejszych opracowań na temat archeologii biblijnej, jak choćby *Archäologie der biblischen Welt* Dietera Viewegera (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2003).

Każde z haseł ma podobną strukturę (s. XVIII), choć w niektórych z nich nie zawsze wszystkie te elementy znalazły zastosowanie. Paragraf pierwszy zawiera ogólne wprowadzenie, szkic problemu, definicje, określenie kryteriów identyfikacyjnych, szkic funkcji i/lub wspomnienie odpowiednich słów hebrajskich. Paragraf drugi opisuje podstawowe typy, główne elementy charakterystyczne, fenomenologię, informacje na temat dystrybucji geograficznej i/lub lokalnych/importowanych produktów. Paragraf trzeci opisuje materiał archeologiczny wraz z miejscem jego pochodzenia. Z kolei paragraf czwarty poświęcony jest opisowi diachronicznemu poszczególnych

znalezisk (epoki brązu i żelaza, okres babilońsko-perski, krótki szkic okresu helleni-stycznego). W każdym z tych okresów akcent pada na najstarsze i najnowsze przy-kłady. Paragraf piąty stanowi krótką syntezę. Opisuje się w niej główne typy, motywy itp., szkicuje dzieje rozwoju, główne zmiany i główne lokalizacje. Ostatnie dwa para-grafy (szósty i siódmy) zawierają odpowiednio odniesienia i korelacje biblijne, o ile takie są dostępne, oraz bibliografię. Ta ostatnia w każdym niemal przypadku jest im-ponująca i bardzo aktualna.

Poza hasłami *Encyclopedia of Material Culture* zawiera ważne wstępy. Pierwszy z nich – „Chronological Problems and the Chronology of the EBW" (s. XIX–XXVIII) – poświęcony jest dyskusji nad samą chronologia, w tym także chronologią biblijną, oraz założeniami przyjętymi przez autorów tego dzieła. Drugi wstęp – „Archaeology and Cultural History" (s. XXIX–LIII) dotyczy celów, metod i historii badań i zawiera „Diachronic Cultural History", czyli syntetyczny schemat chronologiczny od epoki neolitu aż po okres hellenistyczny. Trzeci wstęp („Epigraphy", LIV–LXII) stanowi omówienie materiału epigraficznego i metodologii badawczej z nim związanej, zaś czwarty („Iconography", LXIII–LXXIII) – dotyczy tych samych zagadnień w odnie-sieniu do materiału ikonograficznego. Cennym uzupełnieniem dzieła są również indeksy: imion personalnych (s. 1162–1167), imion boskich (s. 1169–1172), nazw miejsc (s. 1173–1206) oraz indeks tematyczny (s. 1207–1227). W uzupełnieniu dodać trzeba, że wiele haseł zawiera szczegółowe mapy (w sumie 27) i rysunki odwzorowu-jące omawiane artefakty. Wykaz ich rozmieszczenia, jak i wskazanie na źródła ich pochodzenia znajdują się na początku *Encyklopedii* (s. XIII–XV).

W całości omówioną tu *Encyklopedię* uznać można za dzieło bardzo udane i god-nie zastępujące klasyczny już dziś *Biblisches Reallexikon*. Poza cennym i aktualnym materiałem faktograficznym docenić należy w nim przede wszystkim ciekawe syn-tetyzujące interpretacje dokonane przez poszczególnych autorów. Krótkie, ale pre-cyzyjne i celne podsumowania pozwalają czasem ominąć żmudne przedzieranie się przez analizę poszczególnych artefaktów – o ile nie jest to konieczne – i dotrzeć do tego, co z nich najistotniejszego wynika. To duże ułatwienie pracy, zwłaszcza dla bi-blistów, kiedy nie zawsze ważny jest materiał archeologiczny, a właśnie podstawo-wa funkcja i znaczenie danego przedmiotu (np. kosmetyki, biżuteria, meble, pieczę-cie), elementu architektonicznego (np. dom, dach, brama, sanktuarium, ogród) czy dziedziny życia (np. gry, zabawy, handel, kult).

Nowa *Encyklopedia kultury materialnej w świecie biblijnym* z tych i wielu innych powodów godna jest zauważenia. Jak na tego typu opracowanie również cena nie jest wygórowana. Warto, aby znalazła się, jeśli nie w zasobach prywatnych, to przynaj-mniej na półkach bibliotek wydziałowych.