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The Open Door of the Church

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the life of the Church has been affected not only by the turbulent changes on the world scene caused by the coronavirus pandemic and the Russian aggression in Ukraine but also by an internal transformation, whose aim is to deepen the understanding of what it means to be the Church today. Especially in this time of uncertainty, the Church should be careful to avoid being 'caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures'[1]; instead, she should be the motherly, homely place for everyone. The open door is an eloquent symbol of such emphasis. Gradual implementation of this attitude is a part of the vision of Pope Francis, for whom the Church is not 'a fortress but a tent able to enlarge her space (cf. Is 54:2) and give access to all'.[2]

Openness, in this line, should be a fundamental Christian attitude both to the world around and to one another within the church, which means also within its organisational structures and across the various states of life. Only then is for the Church possible to go forward, as Pope Francis underlines: '[E]ither she is on a journey always widening her space so that everyone can enter, or she is not a Church.'[3] That is why it is necessary to ask: In what ways is this openness being realised in the Church today, what challenges lie ahead, and what new paths are

[1] Pope Francis, 'Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*', 49, avaiable at https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html#V.%E2%80%82A_mother_with_an_open_heart.

[2] Pope Francis, 'General Audience 23 October 2019,' accessed September 26, 2022, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/audiences/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20191023_udienza-generale.html.

[3] Ibid.

opening up? This is the theme with which the present issue of AUC Theologica called 'The Open Door of the Church' comes.

The first two papers focus on the recent experience of the Church with synodality – a process that aims to bring the idea of an open Church into reality. In the first contribution called 'Synodality: The Church that Still Listens and Learns', Josef Mikulášek suggests the way how the Church could learn from the field of social sciences, namely from the construct of a community of practice, as the Church is, among others, also a social reality. In contrast to the one-directional flow of knowledge, the author highlights the necessity of adopting the *bottom-up* approach, which is attentive to the variety of experiences given by different contexts and local conditions. He then also shows how this notion is related to the idea of the ongoing Revelation.

The following article by Pavol Hrabovecký focuses on the theme of synodality in relation to J. H. Newman's understanding of the concept of *sensus fidelium* in the essay 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine'. In light of this text, the author lists some challenges of the current synodal process and warns against overemphasising only one part of the church. He underlines the need to avoid any extremes and that both lay people and pastors should be heard and walk together as a family.

Moving from systematic theology to the field of liturgical studies, the next article by Radek Tichý is devoted to Pope Francis' Motu proprio 'Spiritus Domini', according to which the liturgical ministries of lectors and acolytes have been open also to women. As the title 'Liturgical Ministries of Men and Women: Lectorate and Acolytate Then and Now' suggests, the author presents a historical development of these ministries and shows that this regulation of canon law is a return to tradition and part of organic development rather than a complete innovation.

The following article approaches the idea of openness in the context of the attitude of the Church towards sinners. In her paper called '*Fleat pro te mater ecclesia*: Images of the Church in Ambrose's Treatise *De Paenitentia*', Karolína Štauberová goes back to the times of Novatian heresy, according to which those who committed a serious crime were denied the possibility of penance and absolution. In contrast to the Novatians, she presents Ambrose's notion of the open Church towards sinners as rendered in his treatise *De Paenitentia*. In light of this historical experience, the author warns against any similar tendencies of Christians to perceive themselves as exclusive and close door to others.

Instead, she presents Ambrose's image of the Church as the inn, where everybody can be welcomed and cured, as an inspiration for today.

The final article 'The Stranger in the Bible: The Needy and the Brother' by Jiří Dosoudil deals with the theme of openness as concerns immigrants and refugees in the context of the contemporary Russian aggression in Ukraine. Exploring the attitude towards immigrants and foreigners in both the Old and the New Testament, the author shows that the Bible teaches us to approach strangers as brothers and to be prepared to help any person in need. By accepting strangers, Christians act according to the ideal of the gospel.

Although in the presented papers the theme of the open Church could have been touched only selectively, we hope that this issue of AUC Theologica can contribute to the academic debate on this important topic.

Barbora Šmejdová

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THEME
The Open Door of the Church

SYNODALITY: THE CHURCH THAT STILL LISTENS AND LEARNS*

JOSEF MIKULÁŠEK

ABSTRACT

This article addresses one specific aspect of the synodal vision of the Church which is currently discussed in the Catholic Church. This aspect consists of the vision of a Church that is still a Church learning who to be and how to be. Using the construct of a community of practice, adopted from the field of the sociology of learning (Etienne Wenger), I analyse how the synodal Church, preferring the theology of the local Church, is open to new learning. As I demonstrate in the article, such an understanding contains within it a rich heuristic for our understanding of Revelation of God, including implications for an understanding of continuing revelation, as well as a revision of the Church's concept of the Magisterium (sg.) in favour of the Magisteria (pl.). The article, therefore, shows a surprising point of view: How basic ecclesiological themes help us illuminate the Christian understanding of divine Revelation as an ongoing Revelation in human history.

Keywords

Community of practice; Learning Church; Synodality; Revelation; Ecclesiology; Vertical and horizontal accountability in the Church; Priority of the local Church.

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The Vatican Council II's reception is still a work in progress in the Catholic Church. Scholars in this field agree that we are currently experiencing the third phase of this reception. Its starting point is usually identified in 2013 and is linked to Jorge Mario Bergoglio's election

* This article has been supported by the Palacky University Olomouc grant IGA_CMTF_2022_009 ('New challanges for Systematic Theology and Philosophy').

to the office of the Roman pontiff.[1] While the first phase of this reception (1965–1985) underpinned an optimistic outlook on the implementation of the ecclesiology contained, especially in the Dogmatic Constitution of the Church *Lumen gentium*, the second phase (1985–2013) could be depicted as a silent dilution of the uniqueness and novelty of Vatican II.[2] This has significantly changed since 2013 both in the everyday life of the Catholic Church (Pope Francis's 'daily' hermeneutics of the Council in the form of homilies at morning Mass at St. Martha's House) and in the work of many brilliant theologians, who have been encouraged to return to genuine conciliar ecclesiology by the accent placed by Pope Francis on the category of the 'holy People of God', remarkably present in his speeches and documents published since his election in 2013.[3] Perhaps this 60-year period, running from Vatican II to the current day, reminds us that *to speak* and *to publish* new documents does not itself mean *to act*. What I would like to argue is that every reception must shape a concrete way of actualisation, paved by real, firm, convincing, and normative theological categories and visions. The other option is, as James Gustafson expressed, a 'theological reductionism'[4] of the Church's language ending in an abstraction that has no possibility 'to touch' real life.[5]

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1 See, for example, Massimo Faggioli, *Vatican II: The Battle of Meaning* (New York: Paulist, 2012).

2 See, for example, John Paul II's 1998 Motu proprio *Apostolos suos*, which significantly restricted the doctrinal autonomy of bishops' conferences against their promotion by *Lumen gentium* 23. See John Paul II, *Motu proprio Apostolos suos on the Theological and Juridical Nature of Episcopal Conferences* (21 May 1998), accessed April 23, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/my6ujrx3. More generally, the gradual disappearance of the category of the people of God is also due to the 1985 Second Extraordinary Synod of Bishops and its Relatio finalis, in which the image of the Church as communio is clearly preferred. See Dario Vitali, *Popolo di Dio* (Assisi: Cittadella Editrice, 2013), 181; Giuseppe Colombo, '"Il popolo di Dio" e il "mistero" della Chiesa nell'ecclesiologia postconciliare,' *Teologia* 10, no. 2 (1985): 97–169, here 107.

3 For an introduction to the theology of the People, see J. C. Scannone, *Theology of the People: The Theological and Pastoral Roots of Pope Francis* (New York: Paulist Press, 2021).

4 See J. M. Gustafson, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels: The Church as a Human Community* (New York: Harper, 1961).

5 The results of the first two (diocesan and national) phases of the Synod of Bishops of the Catholic Church (2021-2024) show some important points across countries in Europe: Lack of entrusted co-responsibility to all the baptised, lack of effective inclusion of women in decision-making processes in the Church (and thus not appreciating the specificity of the female perspective in decision-making), insufficient formation of informal spaces in the Church communities where pastoral visions are formulated in discussion, and insufficient care for newcomers and the marginalised, etc.

One of the fruitful approaches to the reception of the whole 'corpus' of the Vatican II documents is one that sees – based on the 'principle of pastorality'[6] – the crucial role of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei verbum* (and, especially its chapter 2) for the proper hermeneutics of both the event of Vatican II and all the published texts. There the holy People of God, the bearer of the *sensus fidei*, is seen as the active subject (this means the 'transmitter', not the object) of the *Traditio viva*.[7] The conciliar fathers insert consciously into the text what theologians Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger argued in conciliar years: 'Revelation always and only become a reality where there is faith.'[8] It means where it is possible to speak of the reception of the Revelation of God from within the human race.

The holy People of God are, therefore, still discovering themselves as active interpreters of God's message and its meaning for human life. The theology of Revelation and the theology of the Church – the latter as the collective act of faith of Christians – are necessarily closely connected. The text of *Dei verbum* thus overcomes the model of Revelation called 'instruction-theoretical'[9] and speaks of a *modus conversationis*[10] as the way God encounters humanity. What is the main difference between these two models? The latter differs significantly inasmuch as

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[6] On the centrality of this principle for the hermeneutics of the council and its documents, see Christoph Theobald, *La reception du concile Vatican II: Accéder à la source* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), 281–493. It is important to note here an important assumption of this approach: it can only be applied if we consider all the published documents, not just the official ones. Thus, also e.g. all the conciliar schemes, the entire conciliar discussion, the personal diaries of the participants (both bishops and theological experts). Or to be more concrete, the deep connection between the conciliar event and Pope Paul VI's encyclical letter *Ecclesiam suam* or the (unfortunately still little known) Pact of the Catacombs, i.e. the Pact signed by 42 Catholic bishops on the evening of 16 November 1965, in which they pledged to live the poverty of the common people they serve. See 'A group of Synod Fathers renews the "Pact of the Catacombs",' *Vatican News*, accessed April 15, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/76mpjb9w.

[7] Second Vatican Council, *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum* (November 18, 1965), 8.

[8] Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Offenbarung und Überlieferung* (Freiburg im Br.: Herder, 1965), 35.

[9] This model is usually linked to the theology of Divine Revelation as presented in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* of the First Vatican Council. See Max Seckler, 'Der Bergiff der Offenbarung,' in *Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie 2. Traktat Offenbarung*, eds. Walter Kern, Hermann J. Pottmeyer and Max Seckler (Freiburg im Br.: Herder, 1985), 60–83.

[10] See Pope Paul VI., *Encyclical on the Church Ecclesiam suam* (August 6, 1964), 70, where the dialogical character of Revelation itself and of the life of the Church is stressed. Accessed April 10, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/2p8uk62x.

here the *entire* People of God is part of the transmission process of Revelation, i.e., its real interpreters.[11] The whole Church is still learning *what* it means to live in communion with God. Here a heuristic function of the supernatural sense of the faithful for the faith is underlined and enhanced.

This fact can be understood in two slightly different ways: 1) As the 'theological theory' of the development of Christian doctrine inherited mainly from John H. Newman,[12] but also 2) as an interpretation of the Christian faith in the different contexts and historicity of human life. As Leonardo Boff once wrote on the creative reception of the Vatican Council II, the original 'message does not remain a cistern of stagnant water' but becomes 'a font of living water, ready to generate new meanings, by prolonging and concretizing the original meaning'.[13] The Revelation of God is not just a 'text' of articles of Christian faith (i.e. a doctrine), but more likely a still ongoing 'ground' where the original message generates new meanings, takes new forms, and shapes symbols.

As I will argue in the following paragraphs, to reshape the Church into its more synodal form, a methodological option is needed: to abandon the 'universalist ecclesiology'[14] (expressed exclusively in theological terms) and to prefer the theology of local churches. Since the Church is also a complex social reality and lives at many structural levels,[15] we are in search of a powerful heuristical model that could be appropriated from the realm of the social sciences and, especially, of the sociology of knowledge. Such a model and its correct theological appropriation demonstrate what kind of processes and what kind of dynamics are intrinsically present and inscribed within *each* social

[11] Christoph Theobald, 'The Theological Options of Vatican II: Seeking an 'Internal' Principle of Interpretation,' *Concilium* no. 4 (2005): 87–107.

[12] John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989). For a contemporary understanding of Newman's idea of the development of doctrine, see Pavol Hrabovecký, 'Esej o vývine doktríny a aspekty Newmanovej apologetiky na premýšlanie o viere v súčasnom kontexte,' *Studia Theologica* 22, no. 3 (2020): 111–125, doi: 10.5507/sth.2020.041.

[13] Leonardo Boff, 'Theology of Liberation: Creative Acceptance of Vatican II from the Viewpoint of the Poor,' in *When Theology Listens to the Poor* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 1–31, here 18.

[14] A synthesis of the discussion on the preference of the universal or local Church is offered by Kilian McDonnell, 'The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and Local Churches,' *Theological Studies* 63, no. 2 (2002): 227–250.

[15] See my 'Hope Through a Renewed Church. Epistemology of Complexity and its Challenges for Restructuralization of the Catholic Church,' *Acta Missiologica* 14, no. 1 (2020): 46–56.

reality. This way of thinking will be able to strengthen and feed the ongoing reflection of the ecclesiology of local churches.

In the first part of this article, I will therefore provide an analysis using a fresh and powerful model from within the theories of social organisations, especially from within the sociology of knowledge. Its analysis will empower us with highly effective skills and eye-opening ideas as to how the basic dynamics of *every* social organisation work. As I will argue in the second part of this text, an accurate, thoroughly wise, and audacious appropriation of these ideas will have a beneficial heuristic effect on how to understand the Church as a communion of churches based on a preference for the local churches' theology which is inherently an option for the synodal Church. The logic of the entire text, then, will focus on the depiction of the *learning* aspect of the Church, the community of Christ's disciples.

1. A Look into the Social Organisations' Theories

To be part of systematic theology means one thing for ecclesiology: this branch of theology focused on the phenomenon of the Church is not only a part of the system of theology but also requires a *systematic* understanding, capable of analysing all kinds of elements in the widest scale of epistemological tools. The following is therefore needed for a reflection on the Church. The Church – without any bracketing its divine origin and, thus, God's actions in history in and through the Church – is a social, i.e. formed by (and of) men, reality. Then, the Church – not as a metaphysical idea of the Church, but as a lived reality in human history – is obviously subjected to the human dynamics of human cooperation, forming shared practices, and discovering its social meaning, not to mention the entire range of written or unwritten symbolic codes that the Church lives by.[16] The Church's history is,

[16] Roger Haight argues: 'The localization and compartmentalization of theology is a temptation for many today. Some theologians have become seduced by the very systems of modernity and postmodernity which they attack. That is, they try to escape them by isolating the church from culture and conceiving of theology as a purely confessional and fideist discipline.' In Roger Haight, 'The Church as Locus of Theology,' *Concilium* no. 6 (1994): 13–22. See also the *Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes*, 62. From this point of view, it is crucial what P. Berger and T. Luckman call a *social construction of reality* to be described analytically as the series of processes of habitualisation, typing and the creation of the 'objective world' of humans carried by these processes. In P. L. Berger and T. Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967). In the

therefore, the ongoing process where the collective human intersubjectivity is expressed in 'statements and texts (…), but also through choices, actions, and events, through the development of institutions and the differentiation of roles, through the elaboration of rites and the codification of laws, and in a thousand other ways'.[17] This is, in other words, through the emerging structure of the Church's life. As we will see in the following paragraphs, to adopt the concept and method of a sociology of knowledge means decrypting and fruitfully analysing what would otherwise remain on the fringes of a systematic ecclesiology. The option I will argue for is the conscious interdisciplinary cooperation of the theologian with the tools offered by the social sciences. In the following text, I am going to discuss some elements which can be drawn from the thought of Etienne Wenger (born 1952), an American social organisations consultant. He, and his several colleagues, has been theorising about the construct of *Community of Practice* for more than two last decades.[18] A community of practice, he argues, is a kind of organisational unit, typically set into the net of a global organisation, which is an example of socially developed thinking.

1.1 Distributed knowledge

Communities of practice, as Wenger adds, develop everywhere.[19] These are not only random and voluntary connections of people arising for an instant or short-term target. Communities of practice are more likely of long-term durability and are characterised by the following three dimensions: mutual commitment, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire.[20] They can be formed both across global organisations or in local conditions.

Regardless of the field of human cooperation, communities of practice are based on the crucial role of shared knowledge whose sources

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proper philosophical-theological term, we can refer to what K. Rahner calls *Selbstvollzug* (self-constitution) of the Church. See Karl Rahner, *Sämtliche Werke. Band 19: Selbstvollzug der Kirche*, ed. K. H. Neufeld (Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder, 1995).

17 Joseph A. Komonchak, 'Lonergan and the Task of Ecclesiology,' *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston: Boston College, 1995), 50.

18 Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice. Learning, Meaning and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

19 Examples of communities of practice are offered by Wenger himself: companies like Hewlett–Packard, McDonald's or we could use the case of associations like the World Scouting or only religions.

20 For more details about *community of practice*'s analysis, see, Josef Mikulášek, *Chiesa come comunità di pratica* (Canterano: Aracne Editrice, 2019).

are the human beings themselves. Knowledge is not just information[21] which could be saved on a USB drive or in a written manual. Knowledge instead stems and is shared by those who dwell in a specific community based on some knowledge. The specificity of this kind of organisational unit is, therefore, to appreciate the fact that human knowledge has a dynamic and developing character, distributed in different persons. This means that the participation of a human being is an engine that the central organ of the organisation cannot hinder or limit the still continuing negotiation of the meaning of this practice: 'Knowledge is created, shared, organized, revised, and passed on within and among these communities.'[22] We can hardly imagine a branch of human research which would one day proclaim a 'golden era', i.e. the final stage of its knowledge. (Saying: 'Now we have reached the peak of our knowledge, we do not need any further research.')[23]

Communities of practice are not, however, automatic conflict-free environments. Wherever there are people and social interactions, conflicts, sooner or later, appear. One of the crucial questions in this regard is to take care of the kind of relationship between the central organ and the local communities within an organisation. What does their mutual relationship consist of? They are drifting between imminent paternalism or exaggerated control and, on the other hand, the complete freedom and autonomy of units. The task, therefore, is to seek a balanced proportion between *vertical accountability* (the central organ and local units) and *horizontal accountability* (intra-communitarian environment).[24]

Vertical accountability is an inherent part of every organisation. Its peak is a control centre which guarantees the organisation's future. It is therefore essential to predict interventions of the central organ in legitimate and necessary moments, whenever the inner stability is falling apart or when an exaggerated disharmony compromises the whole

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[21] Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott, and William M. Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice. A Guide to Managing Knowledge* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2002), 8–12.

[22] Etienne Wenger, 'Communities of Practice: Learning as a Social System,' *Systems Thinker*, 1998, accessed March 28, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/yc6zmav2.

[23] According to the National Register of Scientific and Technical Personnel, there were 154 scientific sectors in the 1950. Twenty years later, there were more than 900 of them. See Badaracco, *The Knowledge Link: How Firms Compete through Strategic Alliances* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1991).

[24] Etienne Wenger, 'Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems: The Career of a Concept,' in *Social Learning Systems and Communities of Practice*, ed. Chris Blackmore (London: Springer, 2010), 179–198.

organisation. Units, based on a shared and developed practice, need, however, estimation and support. They need to feel their contribution to the whole organisation when they will be appreciated, welcomed, and used, i.e. 'their voice will be heard'. This is one of the crucial moments to enhance *horizontal accountability*. Indwelling in a concrete (local) community – an individual human person is no longer a *neutral observer* but an *active practitioner* – increases the level of effective identification of members in the community. Therefore, a high level of trust and an active engagement in innovation and further development is guaranteed.[25] E. Wenger regrets any objection against downplaying the power of horizontally distributed accountability – 'A common mistake in organisations is to assume that horizontal relationships lack accountability.' He further specifies: 'Participation in a community of practice can give rise to very strong horizontal accountability among members through a mutual commitment to a learning partnership.'[26]

1.2 Learning and Practice: A Bottom-up Approach

The above-depicted ontology of communities of practice is reflected in the specific shape of learning and the further development of these communities. In any social organisation, earlier or later, a central organ is formed, which will have a control function regarding the local units of the organisation. Which direction in the flow of knowledge should be preferred between the centre and the regional units, and what kind of mutual relationships between them should exist? The *top-down* direction flows from the centre to the local environment. It is the working procedure that ensures control, harmony in the field of interest and unification of procedures, universally used. This approach has its dark side when its excessive use leads to the isolation of the centre from the peripheries, i.e. from the very places of the practice and life itself – 'the people in the headquarters do not understand ourselves' – and, therefore, to the loss of the identification of members in local units, since these cannot overcome their own feeling of being mere executors of the above coming commands. Their own efforts decline, and their creativity is close to zero.

For the healthy development of organisations – and, also, much more difficult to set the right balance – the *bottom-up* approach prefers

[25] Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, 15.
[26] Wenger, 'Communities of Practice and Social Learning Systems,' 195.

the voice and opinion of the local conditions in which the communities live. This strategy enables listening to the 'lived reality', as only practitioners can tell how the knowledge was put into action, where *knowledge* is no longer just a theory but their own practice (i.e., an embodied, developed, and evaluated theory). Therefore, these voices arising from different regions can realistically witness what kind of new views, new meanings, and new discoveries their practice brings. This *bottom-up* strategy is much more effective and valuable, especially in the epoch of historic-cultural changes, when it is desirable to allow the peripheries to speak out their own wisdom, their own contribution to the whole (and to the centre), without losing consciousness of their cohesion with the whole.

1.3 Distributed Communities

We are moving toward a discussion of the last of the elements by which a social organisation – developed in the form of communities of practice – can be depicted. As we have seen, the *top-down* and *bottom-up* are two distinct and contradictory (although both necessary in real life) ways through which an organisation is run. Thus, the question is: should a 'universalist' concept of the organisation be preferred (i.e. centralisation of power), or should there be, instead, a 'regional voice' preferred, which arises out of a variety of local settings and living conditions?

Using Wenger's terminology, we can speak of the difference between *locating* or *localising* single communities.[27] What do these terms mean? As Wenger argues, *localising* means the strategy within which vertical accountability is stressed, and the creativity of local communities is retrieved from them. They have no real access to decision-making; everything is planned in the 'centre'. The flow of knowledge is one-directional, *top-down*. In contrast, the term *locating* underlines the *bottom-up* orientation, which takes into serious account the experience, the variety of contexts and the originality of the local conditions. This could lead to the more successful implementation of the community in the given space, to the creation of new peripheral zones or of new, unpredictable kinds of practices, all this under the conditions of vivid contact with the local environment and with other social units in the

[27] Wenger, *Communities of Practice*, 260–262.

given location.[28] This is the way we can legitimately argue that *life is the source of new learning*.

E. Wenger emphasises that this is not an arbitrary superficial option. While every social organisation demands a certain level of 'alignment' (of its own local units), if its level is too high and exhibits extraordinary pressure on the single units, there is the danger of losing engagement and creative imagination on the side of the unit's members.

The neuralgic point, especially in the life of global organisations, is therefore as follows: How should the chance that a 'voice will be heard' be enhanced so that every community is 'visible' and 'meaningful' in the entire system? As the danger of fragmentation (i.e. of local diversification) can be varied, Wenger talks about so-called 'distributed communities' that associate single units according to their local participation and their cultural diversity.[29] At the global level, this means that a global organisation needs to be conceived as a community of regional communities, where each one must be seen as a *pars pro toto* in their autonomy. Speaking of this from a personalistic point of view, this indicates the crucial role and mission of coordinators of these distributed communities. These cannot be seen as mere 'superintendents' of the life of their communities (in the logic of the *top-down* strategy). They instead have to assume the role of being representatives and bearers of the 'voice' of the community entrusted to them. Their primary mission is not a *top-down* flowing of instructions, but they are more likely to be supporters and catalysers of the creativity of their community.[30] What is described here is a vision of an organisation's future that does not need to fear globalisation as a homologation regardless of the local environment. It is quite the opposite: an

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[28] Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, 169–170.

[29] Ibid., 113–137. A simplistic vision of the transcultural communication within a global organisation could overlook the following dynamics: 'People from different cultural backgrounds can have very different ways of relating to one another and to the community, and this is likely to affect the development of global communities. People's willingness to ask questions that reveal their 'ignorance', disagree with others in public, contradict known experts, discuss their problems, follow others in the thread of conversation – all these behaviours vary greatly across cultures.' Ibid. 118.

[30] 'They pay particular attention to voices, levels of participation, and issues of power. They are the guardians of trust and relationships in the group. They are aware of constituencies, boundaries between them, and diverging perspectives and learning needs.' (Etienne Wenger and Brenda Wenger–Trayner, 'Leadership Groups. Distributed Leadership in Social Learning', 12, accessed April 17, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/5at8cnp5.)

'authentic globalisation' can turn into a process of growing up for both the single units and the entire system.

2. The Learning Church

Social science's approach to the dynamics of knowing as a distributed and developing process contains enormous potential for ongoing work in ecclesiology, especially in solving questions about the methodological option between the universalist and the local Church's theology. As Joseph A. Komonchak, an American Catholic ecclesiologist, reminds us, a 'systematic inquiry asks (further) questions about what is taken for granted'.[31] Is it not true that merely the opening up of systematic-theological issues to an interdisciplinary research (which is powerfully applicable, especially in the realm of ecclesiology) helps us cross the path from a superficial, naïve (and sometimes also potentially dangerous) common sense to elaboration of a theory which – based on a meticulous analysis and on a wide register of methodological procedures – becomes normative, i.e. normatively orienting every future church's realisation?[32] This is what is meant by the transition from *speaking* of *Lumen gentium* to *realisation* of its paragraphs.

In the following text, I am therefore going to argue that the above-presented construct of communities of practice can serve as a heuristic model able to grasp and manage the basic aspects of the ecclesial life of Christians and thus can be fruitful and healing for Catholic ecclesiology. The pallet of discussed issues is broad and goes beyond the limits of this article. I will therefore limit my argumentation only to 1) the Church's structures performed as a global community of practice (a fundamental-ecclesiological issue) and 2) the inner dynamics

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[31] Joseph A. Komonchak, 'Ecclesiology and Social Theory,' *Foundations in Ecclesiology*, ed. Fred Lawrence (Boston: Boston College, 1995), 58. A few pages later, Komonchak legitimises the interdisciplinary nature of method in ecclesiology by asking: 'How can one work out a systematic ecclesiology without working out first such terms as 'individual,' 'community,' 'society,' 'meaning,' 'change,' 'structure,' 'institution'?' Ibid., 69.

[32] Compare the two approaches described by Bernard Lonergan as different points of view of one same reality: 'There is a systematic exigence that separates the realm of *common sense* from the realm of *theory*. Both of these realms, by and large, regard the same real objects. But the objects are viewed from such different standpoints that they can be related only by shifting from one standpoint to the other.' Bernard Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press 1990), 81.

of the *bottom-up* learning process included in such an outlook of the Church conceived as the Church of churches (a fundamental-theological issue).

2.1 The Centre and the Periphery

As demonstrated in the previous paragraph, the *bottom-up* managerial approach bears an awareness of the diversity of local units that are gathered in one global community without being subject to excessive centralisation.[33] As Yves Congar wrote in his book *True and False Reform in the Church*, 'we might obtain tranquillity and a peaceful conformity (…) by police measures, but at the same time we risk destroying any taste for initiative and any possibilities for creative activity.'[34] We should consequently ask ourselves: what ways of reform are urgent in our current time to keep us from getting to that point? The Church structures conceived as synodal and 'walking together' outline the concrete shape of what Congar argues as inner Church reform: to *heal the Church through the Church itself* and not to wait – or blame – for reform pressure from the outside.[35]

Although it might sound too easy, it is nevertheless still pertinent to stress the term usually used for those who follow Jesus in their own life from the Gospel stories: we all are His *disciples*. The entire Body of Christ, the Church, *must* think of itself as a community of disciples, whose Lord, the Master, is only one, Jesus Christ. Did the Church not lose Jesus's appeal quoting that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of truth, 'will guide you into all the truth' (John 16, 12-15)? Is not this Gospel quotation confirmation of the fact that the Revelation of God is still *in actu* and, therefore, Christians still need to be attentive to Him?[36]

The image used by Pope Francis for his vision of the Church is relatively well-known in the theological circles of the Catholic Church:

[33] See Yves Congar, *True and False Reform in the Church* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2011), 204.

[34] Ibid., 204.

[35] At this point we could oppose the reference to Gaudium et Spes 4, where the topic is the 'signs of the times'. I am referring to one concrete point here: under the influence of the signs of the times there was a clarification about the pastoral character of Vatican Council II in the time of its planning and preparing.

[36] For the discussion of the ongoing (dependent) Revelation, I refer to Gerald O'Collins, *Revelation. Towards a Christian Interpretation of God's Self-revelation in Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 101–120.

The 'inverted pyramid'[37] where the part that needs to be focused on is the broadest 'base' that speaks of the Church as the holy faithful People of God (cf. LG chap. 2). The inverted pyramid is not only an affective expression of the proximity to everyone or, on the other hand, a repeated term on the lips of clericalism's opponents. It is instead a model of the whole Church's structure and its base. What kind of heuristic potential may be grasped from this point of view? That the relationship between communities in their local settings and the central governing body clearly needs to be described as follows: The central body is at the service of those who live and act in local communities. The *raison d'être* of the whole central organ is predominantly to support the local communities. To put it in another way: The nature of the mission of *the one* (i.e., of the whole Roman Curia apparatus, of the Roman Pontiff, but also on the local level: the mission of the bishop) needs to be legitimated by a view from below, from the base, i.e., from *all*. The first is in service to all who are united in the same Christian dignity by baptism. To all those who are co-bearers of the responsibility, that is an essential and reciprocal characteristic of equal dignity (LG art. 9–10). How else can the equality of baptismal dignity be described if not through the effective ways in which it is realised? Is it not the case that chapter 2 of Lumen Gentium is thus far more of a vision, a dream, a desire, than an already realised description of what the *proprium* is for all Christians?

One more point is worth mentioning here. The above-analysed construct of Wenger concerning the community of practice shows us clearly the proper place of the representative of each local (or at a higher level: distributed) community – that is, the person we would call a bishop in Christian terminology. In principle, three types of considerations about its function would be possible. Either as 1) an engaged reporter of the central authority (*top-down* management), 2) as a neutrally understood intermediary between the local and the global level (practically difficult to imagine and theologically unjustified), or 3) as a representative of the local community, whereby by belonging to it and 'coming from it' he received a mandate to represent the local community on a global scale. While the first two options would indicate the bishop's position 'outside/

[37] Pope Francis, *Address at the Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops* (October 17, 2015), accessed April 20, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/2vc3jx4y.

indifferent' to the local community, the third option expresses his position as the father and shepherd of the whole *Portio Populi Dei* entrusted to him. He is the bishop, who represents his own local community in the *communio ecclesiarum* of the global Church. It seems that the ongoing reforms in the Catholic Church – the Roman Curia's reform[38] or the ongoing Synod of Bishops[39] – suggest a sensitivity in this direction. Through their full application, it is possible to ensure that the central body is not isolated from the regions and that a process is opened through which the regions' problems are 'represented' in the Roman Curia.[40]

2.2 An Ongoing Revelation?

We have to ask ourselves at this point: What do the bishops promote and represent? Here we have to realise how our basic understanding of the Church touches on the real foundation of Christianity, which is the Revelation of God. If the whole of Christianity is based on the reality of the Divine Revelation and his permanent presence, the entire Church is the ongoing narration of the founding *memoria Iesu Christi*, which has not yet been exhausted but is being given new consequences. The Church is a community of narration (not just of static repetition) and thus reviving (and revitalising) the consciousness of Christ's presence in human history.[41] Is it possible to think that, through mutual listening, the Orbis (i.e. *the entire world*) constantly brings to the Urbs its hopes and its requests, and thus brings to the whole (to the global community) much more, the divine-human reality, new manifestations of God's revelation (discovered and applicable *today* because of God's desire *today*)?

In this sense, I argue, it would be partial and extremely limiting to relegate the role of *sensus fidelium* only to the *receptive* function of the

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[38] Pope Francis, *Apostolic Constitution on the Roman Curia and its Service to the Church and to the World Praedicate Evangelium* (March 19, 2022), accessed April 20, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/2aehx6pw.

[39] The synodal process of consultation of the People of God began in October 2021 in all the dioceses of the Catholic Church all over the world. The next stage will be celebrated in February/March 2023 by the Presynodal meeting of single continents. The peak of the entire synodal process will be the celebration of the 16th Ordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2023 and – according to the recent announcement – its continuation in October 2024..

[40] See Congar, *True and False Reform*, 262.

[41] For this point of view, I suggest the work of Ghislain Lafont, *Imaginer l'Église catholique* (Paris: Cerf, 1995).

Magisterium of the Church.[42] I find very illuminating the words of Yves Congar in this context. He compares an 'intellectualist' and a 'realist' vision of the life of the Church (i.e. the locus of recognition of the divine revelation), which – not coincidentally – closely resembles the two distinct conceptions of divine revelation that have been commented on in the recent history of Catholic fundamental theology.[43] The Revelation of God cannot be 'grasped' by humans as a *reine Vernunft*, as a few sacred texts/doctrines. Congar instead argues that 'Christianity is a reality' that 'was given to us as a life to be received and practiced and not simply as a text to be consulted'.[44] We are opening here a new chapter in the treatise on divine revelation that will be aware that '(T)he revelation of God cannot be received except in fragile human vessels, limited by the particularities of time and place.'[45] Thus, God's 'grace supposes (*a specific human*) culture' and that 'God's gift becomes flesh in the culture of those who receive it'.[46] As can be seen above, it is not the central organ but rather the single local communities which are the true places of the life of the *Christian faith as a social practice*. These latter are the 'bodies' of the uniqueness of the Holy Spirit's presence, shaping the 'people of many faces' and of the local conditions in which these people live.[47]

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[42] This means to reconstruct the *Magisterium* to the *Magisteria*. See Peter C. Phan, 'From Magisterium to Magisteria: Theologies of the Learning and Teaching Functions of the Church,' *Theological Studies* 80, no. 2 (2019): 393–413. A similar way is suggested by Ormond Rush, 'A Synodal Church. On Being a Hermeneutical Community,' in *Beyond Dogmatism and Innocence: Hermeneutics, Critique, and Catholic Theology*, eds. Bradford E. Hinze and Anthony Godzieba (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2017), 160–175.

[43] For a deeper analysis of Revelation as a 'doctrine' and as a 'symbolic mediation', see Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, 1983), 36–52 and 131–154.

[44] Congar, *True and False Reform*, 274.

[45] Avery Dulles, 'The Church Always in Need of Reform: *Ecclesia Semper Reformanda*,' in *The Church Inside and Out* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1974), 37–50. See also two contributions in the recent volume *Sinodalità e riforma. Una sfida ecclesiale*, eds. Rafael Luciani, Serena Noceti, and Carlos Schickendantz (Brescia: Queriniana, 2022). Chap. 1: Myriam Wijlens, '"La Chiesa è convocata in sinodo". Sfide teologiche e canoniche sul sinodo 2021–2023,' 29–61, esp. 40–42 on a new understanding of Revelation based on DV and LG, and chap. 11: Ormond Rush, 'Sinodalità, tradizione e consenso,' 225–238.

[46] Francis, *Apostolic Exhortation on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World Evangelii Gaudium* (November 24, 2013), 115, accessed April 25, 2022, https://tinyurl.com/n3mryv4e.

[47] See Georgia Masters Keightley, 'If the Church Makes the Laity, the Laity Make the Church: *Ecclesiology and the 99 Percent*,' in *A Realist's Church. Essays in Honor of Joseph*

3. New Challenges in the Ongoing Synodal Reshaping of the Church

The outlined interdisciplinary approach to foundational ecclesiological issues opens up a number of questions and points out possible paths to solve them. The synodal Church is still more a *task to be fulfilled* than a settled reality which we are able to overview in its complexity, structures, and dynamics of life. The synodal Church is, intrinsically, a Church that still *learns* itself. Specifically, learning *what* it means to be the Church of Christ and *how* to be it in terms of the effectiveness and structures of the Church itself that implement what is written in *Lumen gentium*, chapter 2.[48]

The appropriated construct of the community of practice opens up many topics in the field of fundamental theological reflection when carefully analysed. These are, for example: What steps need to be taken to make the life of Christians in their local communities *meaningful* and *meaning making*? If, as is evident, we are led to rethink our understanding of Christians from mere *consumers* to *producers* of new meanings, then we can ask: What implications does this shift have for understanding the living tradition and God's ongoing Revelation? And this, in turn, means: What form is to be given to the authoritative teaching in the Church so that it is truly authentic teaching in which the whole people of God can participate? It means: Is the whole Church an *Ecclesia docens*? On the other hand, the outline of the local church theology shows us how helpful and fruitful it is to turn our mental image of the 'boundaries' of the church into 'peripheries' in a perpetual dialogue and negotiation with the local conditions. And therefore: How is Christianity ready, institutionally equipped, and willing to be still an *Ecclesia discens*, that must continue to live in a position of listening and learning not only from external motives but also from its own internal need to understand itself?

These and other questions must be perceived as consequences of God's ongoing Revelation that leads the Church itself into a deeper truth

A. Komonchak, eds. Christopher D. Denny, Patrick J. Hayes, and Nicholas K. Rademacher (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015), 185–201, especially 194–196.

[48] Here the dignity and co-responsibility of all the baptised, of the whole People of God, is described.

about itself of *who* the Church is and *how* to be that.[49] The questions arising from this thesis require an *effective* application of synodality that does not remain merely *affective* talk. Several of the themes raised in this article show that 'spiritual' issues (i.e. identification and participation of Christians) are directly related to 'structural' issues, i.e. to the image of the Church as holy People of God on the journey.

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[49] 'Calling existing forms into question, if that must be done, should proceed not from a weakening but from a strengthening of fidelity. Without that, instead of adaptations, you end up with mitigations that will only be sterile.' In Congar, *True and False Reform*, 298.

JOHN HENRY NEWMAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE *SENSUS FIDELIUM* AND THE CURRENT CHALLENGES OF SYNODALITY

PAVOL HRABOVECKÝ

ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to offer Newman's original intuitions about the concept of the *sensus fidelium*, which is of great importance to the Synod for the Synodal Church. The study presents the context and ideas of Newman's article 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine' from the *Rambler* (1859). Then, it offers some of the primary challenges of the current synodal process in dioceses with questions to which Newman may offer the proper angle. In this way, the need for proper discernment of the *sensus fidelium* is to be pointed out so that both pastors and laity may live in the Church as in a true family.

Keywords

J.H. Newman; Sensus fidelium; Sensus fidei; Synodality; Hierarchy; Laity

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The Synod for a synodal Church (2021–2023) is one of the most important events in the past years regarding the contemporary life of the Catholic Church. Not simply because it attempts to collect information about the Church from the whole world, from many different areas and worldviews, but especially because it emphasises our common goal: to live in the Church of Christ as a communio. All people, the whole People of God, walk together as a family towards our Father. But if the language about the family is used, then it is necessary to think about whether the Church has the tools to ensure that relationships within it are indeed maintained as relationships within the real family. We must ask whether the Catholic Church has the means to order the relationships in the Church as a family so that the decision-making is

founded upon a prayerful discernment of all members of the family. One of the instruments that could help the Church achieve such a goal is the *sensus fidei*, the supernatural sense of faith mentioned by the Second Vatican Council in its Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium* 12 and 35, and which is so dear to Pope Francis, who sees its potential in developing correct relationship between the hierarchy and the laity.[1]

In his address on the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis referred directly to the *sensus fidei* of the people of God:

> After stating that the people of God is comprised of all the baptised who are called to 'be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood' (Lumen Gentium 10), the Second Vatican Council went on to say that 'the whole body of the faithful, who have an anointing which comes from the holy one (cf. 1 *Jn* 2:20,27), cannot err in matters of belief. This characteristic is shown in the supernatural sense of the faith (*sensus fidei*) of the whole people of God, when 'from the bishops to the last of the faithful' it manifests a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals)' (Lumen Gentium 12).[2]

Then, he presents a vision of how the *sensus fidei* is to be manifested not only as a one-time event during the Synod of Bishops but as the reality of a Church that always listens:

> A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realises that listening 'is more than simply hearing'. It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome: all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the 'Spirit of truth' (*Jn* 14:17), in order to know what he 'says to the Churches' (*Rev* 2:7).[3]

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1 See: Pope Francis, *Apostolic Constitution Episcopalis Communio on The Synod of Bishops*, 5. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_constitutions/documents/papa-francesco_costituzione-ap_20180915_episcopalis-communio.html#_edn29.

2 Ceremony Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the Institution of the Synod of Bishops, 'Address of His Holiness Pope Francis,' 17. October 2015. https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html. See also: Pope Francis, *Episcopalis Communio*, 5.

3 'Address of His Holiness Pope Francis,' 17. October 2015.

This theological concept of the *sensus fidei* indeed enjoys great popularity today. In 2014, a document of the International Theological Commission *Sensus fidei in the Life of the Church* was published. The ideas of this document, together with those of Pope Francis, have contributed to introducing the *sensus fidei* – together with the *sensus fidelium* – as one of the leading concepts of the present Synod. It suffices to point out how this concept is repeatedly mentioned in the official documents of the Synod. Official Vademecum of the Synod states:

> …the teaching authority of the Pope and the bishops is in dialogue with the *sensus fidelium*, the living voice of the People of God (cf. Sensus Fidei in the Life of the Church, 74). The path of synodality seeks to make pastoral decisions that reflect the will of God as closely as possible, grounding them in the living voice of the People of God… It is noted that collaborating with theologians – lay, ordained, and religious – can be a helpful support in articulating the voice of the People of God expressing the reality of the faith on the basis of lived experience.[4]

Nevertheless, questions about the *sensus fidei* persist, especially the questions regarding the practical discernment of when the *sensus fidei* manifests itself and when it is perhaps merely the opinion of a believer or even of a larger community (or a particular Church). For, as the document *Sensus fidei in the Life of the Church* says, there is a difference between a simple opinion and the expression of the *sensus fidei*: 'It is clear that there can be no simple identification between the *sensus fidei* and public or majority opinion. These are by no means the same thing.'[5] Moreover, Declan Marmion draws attention to even more serious questions concerning the substance of the *sensus fidei*: 'The neuralgic issue is how to determine the *sensus fidei*. Whose *sensus*? Which *fidelium*?'[6]

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[4] *Vademecum for The Synod on Synodality*. Official Handbook for Listening and Discernment in Local Churches: First Phase [October 2021 – April 2022] in Dioceses and Bishops' Conferences Leading up to the Assembly of Bishops in Synod in October 2023, chapter 1.3, https://www.synod.va/en/news/the-vademecum-for-the-synod-on-synodality.html.

[5] International Theological Commission, *Sensus fidei in the Life of the Church*, 118. Available at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_20140610_sensus-fidei_en.html.

[6] Declan Marmion, "'A Church that Listens": Synodality in the Life and Mission of the Church,' *New Blackfriars* 102, 1100 (2021): 453, doi:10.1111/nbfr.12609.

Because of the complicated questions posed here and even more complicated answers that could arise from them, let us return to one of the most interesting intuitions about the *sensus fidelium*, which were at the same time quite moderate: to John Henry Newman and his groundbreaking work in the article 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine', published in the July 1859 issue of the Rambler.[7] By presenting the context and content of the article as well as Newman's treatment of the *sensus fidelium*, we shall highlight some important ideas that should be taken seriously regarding the challenges the current synod brings with itself. The matter in scope regards the very nature of engaging the lay faithful in the life of the Church – dogmatically as well as practically. Exploring Newman's views thus can help us order relationships in the Church, our home, and avoid falling short of exaggerated expectations.

1. Context of the Article and its Topic

Newman was not the first modern theologian who dealt with the *sensus fidelium*. John J. Burkhard offers a historical overview of theological perspectives on the *sensus fidelium*, and with Newman he confirms that he already had a solid foundation on which to build.[8] Newman, in Burhkard's opinion, was, however, the first who

[7] In this article, we discuss Newman's intuitions about the *sensus fidelium*, which predate the current distinctions between *sensus fidei*, *sensus fidelium*, and *consensus fidelium*; hence, we will refer to them in the spirit of Newman's article and not in the precise distinctions of current theology. For Newman's understanding of *sensus* and *consensus fidelium* and its further development in theology see: Fáinche Ryan, 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine: From Newman to the Second Vatican Council and Beyond,' *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 106, no. 423 (2017): 340-358. Gerard Mannion summarises the current nuances between these three concepts as follows: 'While *sensus fidei* refers to the believer, *sensus fidelium* refers to what is believed and so has an objective dimension, whereas *consensus fidelium* adds the notion of "universal agreement" to the latter concept. *Sensus fidelium* is often equated with the notion of *sensus Ecclesiae* (i.e., the sense or mind of the church) on a given matter (e.g. in the documents of the sixteenth century Council of Trent).' Gerard Mannion, 'Sensus Fidelium and the International Theological Commission. Has Anything Changed between 2012 and 2014?' in *Learning from All the Faithful: A Contemporary Theology of the Sensus Fidei*, ed. Bradford E. Hinze, Peter C. Phan (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, an Imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers. Kindle Edition, 2016), 71.

[8] John J. Burkhard, OFM Conv. *The Sense of the Faith in History. Its Sources, Reception, and Theology*. (Collegevile, MN: Liturgical Press Academic, 2022), 85.

> contributed to the fact that the 'sense of the faithful' would no longer remain merely a fine point of technical theology known only to scholars and clerics. Newman moved the 'sense of the faithful' into the very life of the church where practical and theoretical decisions are made.[9]

For a better understanding of the circumstances in which Newman's article 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine' was published, we mention that only recently, in 1854, the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary was dogmatically defined by Pope Pius IX and that the entire Catholic world was involved in the preparation of this definition through the consultation of the bishops on the faith of the faithful. It was this significant fact that prompted Newman to address the testimony of the whole Church as an important element for possible future magisterial definitions. In his article, however, Newman is not concerned with the consultation of bishops on the opinion of their faithful but with the consultation of the faithful themselves. This fact was astonishing and original at the time.[10]

Why did Newman come up with such a concept? As with most of Newman's groundbreaking ideas, this one was born out of a very practical and timely reason: because of disagreement with his ideas.[11] For when the May issue of the journal *Rambler*, whose editor was Newman himself, came out, there was an uproar over the words that bishops should consult the lay faithful in matters that concern them – at this point, the matter of debate was education. Bishops were shocked that they should 'consult' laity.[12] When criticism of the article reached Newman, he stood by those words once more and even stressed that the lay faithful should be consulted exactly as they were before the definition of the Immaculate Conception: 'If even in the preparation of a dogmatic definition the faithful are consulted, as lately in the instance of the

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[9] Burkhard, *The Sense of the Faith in History*, 85.

[10] Let us note that while today we use the term 'faithful' in a sense of the laity together with the hierarchy, in Newman's times 'faithful' meant only the laity.

[11] For a closer view on Newman's life at the time of writing the article, see: Ian Ker, *John Henry Newman: A Biography* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 463-489.

[12] Newman's main accuser was Dr. John Gillow, a priest and a professor of Philosophy and Theology at the Ushaw College. He criticised Newman as he understood that the infallible portion of the Church would have to consult the fallible one. He even said that this principle is 'at least *haeresi proxima*'. See C. S. Dessain et al (eds.), *The Letters and Diaries of John Henry Newman* XIX (The Birmingham Oratory, 1969), 134. Volumes cited hereafter as *LD*.

Immaculate Conception, it is at least as natural to anticipate such an act of kind feeling and sympathy in great practical questions…'[13]

The July article is, therefore, Newman's return to this misunderstanding and his desire to engage more deeply with the role of the laity in the Church. First, he addresses the linguistic problem caused by his use of the English word 'consult'. This, according to Newman's opponents, implied that in order to define doctrine, it is necessary to consult with the laity and only then proceed with the definition. Newman explains that the word 'consult' in English does not in all cases mean 'to consult with someone', but in a general, broader sense of the word, it is an attitude of trust that we show to someone: 'But the English word "consult", in its popular and ordinary use, is not so precise and narrow in its meaning; it is doubtless a word expressive of trust and deference, but not of submission.'[14]

It is nowhere implied that the authority has to submit itself to the opinions of those who were consulted. Still, Newman insists that it was and is necessary to know the position of the lay faithful on the matter: 'Doubtless their advice, their opinion, their judgment on the question of definition is not asked; but the matter of fact, viz. their belief, *is* sought for, as a testimony to that apostolical tradition, on which alone any doctrine whatsoever can be defined.'[15] Thus, Newman requires knowledge about the attitude of faith on the part of the lay faithful and not their counsel. Moreover, if their attitude of faith is necessary for any new definitions, it is only because the *sensus* and *consensus fidelium* are related to the evidence of the truth of the faith and to the Apostolic Tradition. If the Church is to be faithful to the Apostolic Tradition, then the Magisterium must consult this *sensus fidelium*, not omitting it under any circumstances, since it is a serious source of faith.

Why did Newman argue that? What is this faith of the faithful that must not be omitted? The answer may be indicated by the words of the contemporary theologian Richard Gaillardetz, who, in his reflections on the *sensus fidei,* states what the spiritual experience and faith of the believer are. He views these categories as 'a rich web of narratives, rituals, devotions, artistic productions, exemplary moral witness, and daily

[13] *LD* XIX, 129.

[14] John Henry Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine,' *Rambler* (July 1859): 199. Available at https://www.newmanreader.org/works/rambler/consulting.html.

[15] Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 199. Newman's emphasis.

human interactions'.[16] It is something so natural, so deeply embedded in the ordinary experience of life and something that manifests itself in a particular way in prayer, art, piety, and acts of mercy. But it is not a kind of 'a primitive or inchoate, predoctrinal stage of the Christian faith'.[17] It is the faith of the ordinary day. Gaillardetz stresses that it is precisely such a lived faith that is to have 'existential priority in the Christian life'.[18]

We find a similar emphasis on the lived faith of the laity in Newman. In his article, he offers an interesting and engaging survey of historical instances where lay people have contributed greatly to the preservation of the purity of the faith, concluding as follows: 'In most cases when a definition is contemplated, the laity will have a testimony to give; but if ever there be an instance when they ought to be consulted, it is in the case of doctrines which bear directly upon devotional sentiments.'[19] With these words about piety, Newman resonates words about the reality of life that is close to the laity, the reality of ordinary faith and its inarticulate form that is so rich yet so important. It seems right to conclude that Newman and Gaillardetz would agree today on an understanding of the *sensus fidelium* that is bound up with this existential dimension of faith.

As he goes on to say, '[t]he faithful people have ever a special function in regard to those doctrinal truths which relate to the Objects of worship.'[20] Then, he offers some examples: the worship of the divinity of Jesus, the worship of the Real Presence of God in the Eucharist, the veneration of the saints who enjoy the beatific vision of God in heaven, or the very last dogma of the Immaculate Conception. In these cases, it is not a question of a formal theological dispute but of an attitude of faith that manifests itself in a sensitivity to the existential topics of the Christian life, that is, piety. Newman emphasises that it was not the hierarchy but the laity who insisted on these objects of devotion, and thus it is largely thanks to them that the Catholic faith has been preserved. This was a shocking claim at the time. Newman was not afraid

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16 Richard R. Gaillardetz, *By What Authority? Foundations for Understanding Authority in the Church*, (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2018), 184-185.

17 Gaillardetz, *By What Authority?*, 185.

18 Gaillardetz, *By What Authority?*, 185. See also: Josef Mikulasek. '"Nesaturovanost" Tradice Církve,' *Studia Theologica* 20, 3 (2018): 49-73. doi:10.5507/sth.2018.010.

19 Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 229.

20 Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 229.

to write bluntly that, in the Arian heresy, 'the body of Bishops failed in the confession of the faith' but the laity 'was faithful to its baptism'.[21] It was thus the oft-rejected 'Ecclesia docta' and not the 'Ecclesia docens' that saved the faith of the Church: '…the voice of tradition may in certain cases express itself, not by Councils, nor Fathers, nor Bishops, but the "communis fidelium sensus".'[22]

Of course, Newman's ideal was that the whole body of the Church should function properly, that neither the laity nor the hierarchy should be marginalised, and that health should flow through all parts of the body of Christ. In the last paragraphs of the article, Newman offers the state of the Church in his day, which abounds, in his words, with devout, dedicated bishops, faithful to their ministry, but the laity are in the background. He assesses that, despite the quality of the pastors, there is still a need for both good hierarchy as well as good laity: 'Yet each constituent portion of the Church has its proper functions, and no portion can safely be neglected.'[23] Immediately he adds that there is need for 'pastorum et fidelium *conspiratio*',[24] that is, the common breathing of both pastors and faithful, and not only of the pastors themselves. For when the *sensus fidelium* is spoken of, all are really reckoned with, not only a part of the Church. As Newman writes elsewhere in the article, '*Conspiratio*, the two, the Church teaching and the Church taught, are put together, as one twofold testimony, illustrating each other, and never to be divided.'[25]

In the article, Newman presents not only his own theological ideas but mentions how he relies on the authority of the Roman theologian Giovanni Perrone (1794–1876). It is Perrone's influence that is noted behind the definition of the Immaculate Conception. While discussing Perrone's work, Newman offers the words of Gregory of Valencia (c.1550–1603) on the role of the *consensus fidelium*. Gregory taught that in controversies about the faith, it is the consensus of all the faithful that carries great force, on which 'the Supreme Pontiff *is able and ought* to rest upon… as being the *judgment* or *sentiment* of the *infallible* Church'.[26] It is because of such a bold statement that Newman

[21] Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 213-214.
[22] Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 214.
[23] Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 228.
[24] Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 228. Newman's emphasis.
[25] Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 210. Newman's emphasis.
[26] Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 208. Newman's emphasis.

himself ventures to assert the following: 'These are surely exceedingly strong words; not that I take them to mean strictly that infallibility is *in* the "consensus fidelium," but that that "consensus" is an *indicium* or *instrumentum* to us of the judgment of that Church which *is* infallible.'[27] The Holy Spirit cooperates not only with the Magisterium, the hierarchy, but with all the faithful, and in Newman's words, the gift of infallibility is directly related to obedience to the *consensus fidelium*, even if it is the Magisterium that authoritatively (and possibly infallibly) teaches something.[28]

This is a truly groundbreaking moment. The *consensus fidelium*, which cooperates with the infallible development of the Church's doctrine – instead of simply protecting and witnessing to the truth of faith – is present in the whole body of Christ, not only in its teaching part. Newman relates this *consensus fidelium* with the word *phronema*, which he mentions in the text as an instinct 'deep in the bosom of the mystical body of Christ'.[29] Newman discovered this deep instinct in Johann Adam Möhler's work *Symbolik* (1832), who understood this sense as an agency that brings the contemporary Church's teaching and life into symbiosis with the truth of Scripture.[30]

How should we understand Newman's own understanding of *phronema*? It is obviously related to his later concept of *phronesis* or 'illative sense', which he explains in his *Grammar of Assent* (1870) as the means by which an individual comes to assent to the faith in a real, existential way.[31] In this sense, *phronema* can be understood as the means by which the whole body of Christ arrives at the assent of faith in a real and intuitive way, which can, of course, later develop into a formulated grasp. Newman evidently believed that the whole body of Christ would instinctively (but not in opposition to the rational assent) accept the truth of the faith and abandon that which is detrimental to the faith.

Before moving on to the second section on the challenges of the present synod, let us summarise what we have so far presented as

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[27] Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 208. Newman's emphasis.
[28] One must not forget that when Newman speaks of consensus fidelium, he means the laity, not the pastors. It harmonises with his understanding of *conspiratio* between the pastors and the laity.
[29] Newman, 'On Consulting the Faithful,' 211.
[30] See Burkhard, *The Sense of the Faith in History*, 96.
[31] Burkhard, *The Sense of the Faith in History*, 97.

Newman's understanding of the *sensus fidelium* regarding the lay faithful. These are two things in particular: a moderate understanding of *conspiratio* without radically exaggerating any part of the Church, and the need for a perception of the *sensus fidelium* centred on the devotional realm, on the life of faith. Related to this fact, one can understand the meaning of *phronema* as a way of active participation of the *sensus fidelium* in the truth of the faith in an intuitive rather than doctrinally formulated way.

2. Challenges of Synodality

Pope Francis' vision of a synodal process involving the lay faithful alongside their bishops and theologians unveils its first challenges. As a member of the synodal team, I observe the consultation of the lay faithful; I listen to their opinions, and during these regular meetings, I experience a kind of newmanian moment: does the Magisterium need to consult the laity on so many aspects of the Church's reality (do they care to be consulted)? Who are those *fideles* that are now consulted? Certainly, not all lay faithful were involved in the process. After all, only their representatives are present during the synodal meetings. Also, even these lay faithful do not agree on many topics, and not all of them understand the Catholic faith correctly. So, what consensus? Who will finally decide where it is to be found? And finally: What if the *consensus fidelium* of the lay faithful is wrong?

Questionable is also Newman's own emphasis on the importance of the laity. Could it really be true that, during the Arian crisis, the laity were so uniformly orthodox and the bishops so heterodoxically unorthodox? It does not seem to be true. According to his critics, Newman altered the historical record to fit his thesis. Nor did he consider the inaccuracy of the ahistorical division between laity and hierarchy, which was not the same in the 4th century as it was in his time. Most importantly, in the 4th century, there was no distinction between life and formulated doctrine that Newman presents. The propositional value of some creedal formulas was much less than the life-anchored truth of Revelation.[32]

[32] See Michael Slusser, 'Does Newman's "On Consulting the Faithful in Matters of Doctrine" Rest upon a Mistake?' *Horizons* 20 (1993): 234-240, doi:10.1017/S0360966900027419.

Therefore, is the role of the laity in the context of the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium* a serious part of the life of the Church as Newman presents it? The answer is: yes and no. The *sensus fidei* has become a very important object of the teaching office of the Church since at least the Second Vatican Council, and now its practical possibilities are tested in a more tangible way. Thus, one must admit its importance in the life of the Church. However, the objections to Newman as well as current synodal practice point to some of its serious limits, and the presented questions remain unanswered. At the same time, however, Newman himself demonstrates certain important elements that should be taken into consideration during the process of consultations.

Newman's most important principle is the element of *conspiratio*, where two parts of the Church are taken with due importance: the lay faithful and the pastors. Newman was a moderate thinker who avoided extremes. In a similar manner, the synod cannot place undue emphasis on the *sensus fidelium* of the laity without considering the *sensus fidelium* of the pastors. This concern was voiced at the priests' meetings: whether the synod does not overemphasise the role of the laity as an expression of the *sensus fidelium* of the whole Church while the pastors are being omitted. Newman stresses that *conspiratio* cannot exist without pastors. Moreover, the *sensus fidelium* during the synod must not be an expression of the majority opinion; it must not be a democracy where the shepherds will be 'a minority'. It must be an expression of the Spirit that breathes in the faithful as well as in the pastors.

Newman was also very apt in describing the content of the term 'sensus' to which the object of the *sensus fidelium* refers. He argued that the lay faithful are to be consulted primarily in the realm of worship that touches on the faith expressions. Newman's emphasis on *phronema* as an agent of intuitive, primordial grasp of faith resounds with the existential priority of lived faith within the Church. Of course, saying that the consultation of the lay faithful is to be concentrated on the matters of worship does not mean that the hierarchy is supposed to advance future doctrinal formulations without the laity. Neither is it meant that only the hierarchy is to deal with the most important realities in the Church and not the laity. On the contrary, the life of faith is the most precious to the Church. Therefore, to have a say in worship is in no way a humiliation for the lay faithful, but rather an offer of the space that is closest to them: the life of faith in all its dynamism and complexity, with all the symbols and signs recognised by them as important. Thus,

the expression of faith could be brought to the centre of attention of the hierarchy and academic theology instead of doctrinal formulations. Maybe this will be the way how Pope Francis' vision about decentralisation of the Church can find its realisation: through reconsidering the ways of expressing faith in different places as a result of the *consensus fidelium* in different local churches. Eventually, such a result of the Synod could be much closer to the *sensus fidelium* of the laity than any partial decision about the Church doctrine and/or organisation.

Conclusion

There is no doubt about Newman's historical significance. Nor can his importance for the conception of the modern meaning of the *sensus fidelium* be denied. But this study did not want to remain only in the past. It wanted to show that Newman's careful theological treading on unfamiliar terrain can be a model for today when the current synod also ventures into new territory. The *sensus fidelium* in his presentation was not an attempt to radically change the future teaching of the Church. It was a sober attempt that did not go beyond the possibilities of the form of the Church that had been shaped by Tradition. His moderate attitudes stand on firm ground, and it is for this reason that they, but even more so his caution, can be an example for the present. Even today, Newmanian discernment is needed in rethinking the *sensus fidelium* and the practical possibilities of the *consensus fidelium*. For great expectations often end in great disappointments.

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LITURGICAL MINISTRIES OF MEN AND WOMEN: LECTORATE AND ACOLYTATE THEN AND NOW

RADEK TICHÝ

ABSTRACT

The article reflects on a recent change in the Catholic Church that women have been admitted to the liturgical ministry of lectors and acolytes by Pope Francis' Motu proprio 'Spiritus Domini'. The main research question of the article is: to what extent is this a complete innovation, a return to tradition, or an organic development of the liturgy? The research method rests on two pillars: first, the detailed study of the historical roots of these ministries in Christian antiquity; second, the study of the gradual adaptation of the lectorate and the acolyte in the second half of the 20th century. The conclusion of the article states that this is a logical consequence of the change that occurred in 1972 with Pope Paul VI's Motu proprio 'Ministeria quaedam' and that we cannot speak of a historical breakthrough, given that women exercised these services before. In the appendix, the article offers a brief discussion of the female diaconate in relation to other liturgical ministries.

Keywords

Liturgy; Catholic liturgy; Catholic church; Women's liturgical ministry; Lectorate; Acolytate; History of liturgy

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In his motu proprio from the 11th of January 2021 entitled *Spiritus Domini*, Pope Francis amended Canon 230 of canonical law so as to open the ministry of lectors and acolytes to women.[1] The

[1] Francis, Apostolic Letter issued Motu proprio *Spiritus Domini* Modifying Canon 230 § 1 of the Code of Canon Law Regarding Access of Women to the Ministries of Lector and Acolyte, January 20, 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/motu_proprio/documents/papa-francesco-motu-proprio-20210110_spiritus-domini.html.

purpose of this article is to answer the question as to what this change means. What are the historical origins and developments of these ministries? How have men and women participated in these ministries since antiquity, and what effects is the change going to have on the further development of the liturgical ministry? It should be noted that in Christian antiquity, the ecclesial and liturgical ministries, other than those of the deacon, priest, or bishop, differed from region to region. Such ministries tended to include porters, gravediggers, exorcists, interpreters, lectors, singers/choristers, psalmists, acolytes, and subdeacons. This article will look at the ministries of lectors and acolytes only.

1. The Ministry of Lector in Christian Antiquity

1.1 Ancient Rome

In ancient Rome, the ability to read aloud correctly, with distinct enunciation and phrasing, was considered a laborious task, and as such, it was usually assigned to slaves or freed slaves, except for situations where the authors were reading out from their own works. Women readers or lectors were known to read aloud to wealthy ladies.[2] Readings were held in reading rooms, theatres, spas, or private houses, during public or private recitals and often also at dinners.[3] The reader would sit on a stool holding the scroll to be read out in his hand or having it propped on a stand. The texts were written in the form of *scriptio continua*, i.e. there were no spaces between words, no commas or full stops. Consequently, the reader must have been well educated and had to prepare his reading beforehand.[4]

1.2 Judaism

Apart from several mentions in the Scriptures (Lk 4; Acts 13), we have no information about the way in which gatherings in the Synagogue were held. It seems that in the first century, it was only the reading and interpretation of the Torah that took place in the Synagogue,

[2] See Christian Laes, 'Lectors in the Latin West. The Epigraphical Evidence (c. 300-800),' *Arctos* 53 (2019): 53.

[3] See Raymond J. Starr, 'Reading Aloud: Lectores and Roman Reading,' *The Classical Journal* 86, no. 4 (1991): 340–342.

[4] See Pliny the Younger, *Letter* 9. 6 (Oxford World's Classics 227).

while other texts biblical texts, such as the prophetic books and prayer, were introduced much later.[5]

> Le septième jour est réputé saint. Ce jour-là ils s'absteint des autres ouvrages et se rendent dans les lieux sacrés qu'on appelle synagogues ; ils s'assoient selon l'âge a des places déterminées, les jeunes gens au-dessous de vieillards se tenant prêts a écouter avec la bonne tenue convenable. Puis l'un d'eux prend les livres et lit ; et un autre parmi ceux, qui possèdent les plus d'expérience, s'avance et explique ce qui n'est pas facile à comprendre. (Philo of Alexandria, 1st century)[6]

> And anyone who [speaks weakly or with a faltering sound, without] separating his words to make [his voice] heard [should not read in the book of the Torah], so that he will not lead to error in a capital matter. (Rules of the Dead Sea Scrolls community, the 1st century.)[7]

These two extracts come from two special movements of Judaism, from the Therapeutae community, which lived near Egyptian Alexandria, and from the Qumran community by the Dead Sea. It seems that in the case of the Therapeutae community, there was one person reading out from the Scriptures and another interpreting the text. The Dead Sea Scrolls, on the other hand, illustrate that not everyone was allowed to read out the Torah. One should, however, refrain from using these particular customs to draw general conclusions about Judaism as such.

1.3 The First Centuries of Christianity

Opinions differ as to whether the liturgy of the Word followed by Christians developed from the synagogal gathering and the reading of the Torah, or whether they were built on a general Mediterranean habit of reading aloud during a feast. One can assume that those who read at the Christian gatherings were readers who had converted to Christianity, educated members of a higher class, or slaves belonging

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[5] Valery A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering. Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 152.

[6] Philo, *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit* 81–82 (OPD 28: 203).

[7] *Q Damascus Document 4Q266*, frag. 6, col. 11 (*The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*: 52).

to a member of the community.[8] The following quotations from St Irenaeus may prove that some Christian communities struggled due to a lack of qualified readers:

> Si donc on ne fait pas attention à la manière dont on lit et si l'on néglige d'indiquer par des pauses de quelle personne de quel Paul veut parler, on énoncera non seulement ici une incohérence, mais un blasphème. (Irenaeus of Lyon, 2nd century)[9]

The oldest writings – the New Testament included (see, e.g. Rev 1:3) – refer to the reader using a participle form, i.e. not as lector but 'the one who reads' (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων). This is important proof that readers, rather than being officially appointed in the sense of later church ministry, were persons deemed appropriate *ad hoc*. An example illustrating this can be found in the works of St. Justin of the mid-2nd century:

> On the day which is called Sunday we have a common assembly of all who live in the cities or in the outlying districts, and the memoirs of the Apostles or the writings of the Prophets are read, as long as there is time. Then, when the reader [τοῦ ἀναγινώσκοντος] has finished the president of the assembly verbally admonishes and invites all to imitate such examples of virtue. (Justin, 2nd century)[10]

1.4 The Origin of the Church Ministry of Lector in 2nd and 3rd Centuries

In the beginning of the 2nd century, the situation changed, and instead of 'the one who reads' ancient texts started using a noun: lector (ἀναγνώστης). The ministry of lector becomes a permanent office as documented by Tertullian in his critique of various services among heretics. The ministry gained in reputation and authority, as one can read in the Didascalia:

> Nowhere is the promotion easier than in the camp of rebels, where the mere fact of being there is a foremost service. And so it comes to pass that to-day one man is their bishop, to-morrow another; to-day he is a deacon

[8] Cf. Dan Näsellquist, *Public Reading in Early Christianity: Lectors, Manuscripts, and Sound in the Oral Delivery of John 1–4*, (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 96.
[9] Irenée de Lyon, *Against Heresies* 3. 7. 2 (Rousseau 2011: 294).
[10] Justin Martyr, *The First Apology* 67 (Falls 1965: 106).

> who to-morrow is a reader; to-day he is a presbyter who tomorrow is a layman. (Tertullian, 2nd / 3rd century)[11]

> And if there be also a Reader [ἀναγνώστης], let him also receive along with the Elders (Didascalia apostolorum, 3rd century)[12]

1.5 The Origin of the Minor Order of Lector in 3rd Century

The importance of lectors in church communities grew, and they started to arbitrarily borrow the customs of ordained ministers as canons of Councils in Carthage and Laodicea testify:

> Plaucuit etiam […] ut lectores populum non salutent [by a liturgical greeting]. (3rd Council of Carthage, 4th century)[13]

> Non oportet lectores aut psalmistas orario uti et sic legere aut psallere. (Council of Laodicea, 4th century)[14]

The bishop and martyr Cyprian teaches us that, in his days in North Africa, even those who were not appointed as readers or lectors were allowed to read during worship and that lectors were considered as ordained clergy:

> But know that I have made Saturus a reader […]. We gave the reading to Saturus on Easter once and again or recently when we tested the readers diligently with the priest teachers. (Cyprian, 3rd century)[15]

The oldest records about the liturgical appointment or ordination of lectors resemble what we read in the New Testament: the lector received the book from which he was to read during the celebration. This gesture was later accompanied by the introduction of the lector to the congregation and a brief word of encouragement:

> Lector cum ordinatur, faciat de illo verbum episcopus ad plebem, indicans eius fidem ac vitam atque ingenium. Post haec spectante plebe, tradat ei

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[11] Tertullianus, *The Prescription against Heretics* 41 (Holmes 2010: 45-46).
[12] *The Didascalia apostolorum* 9 (1903: 49).
[13] *Breviarium Hipponense* 1 (CCSL 149: 33).
[14] *Concilium Laodicenum* 29 (La Colleccion Canonica Hispana 3: 163).
[15] Cyprian, *Letter* 29 (FoC 51: 71).

> codicem de quo lecturus est dicens ad eum: Accipe et esto relator verbi dei, habiturus si fideliter et utiliter impleveris officium, partem cum eis qui verbum dei ministraverint. (Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua, 5th century).[16]

> Jesus came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. (Lk 4)

A lot of emphasis is placed on the fact that hands are not laid on the lector[17] and that it means that even if the word 'ordination' is being used with respect to lectors, it is not the same as the ordination of a deacon, priest, or bishop:

> Ethiopian version: As for a reader who is to be ordained, the bishop is to hand the book to him and he is not to place a hand on him.

> Arabic version: When a reader is established, the bishop presents him with the book and does not put a hand on him.

> Sahidic version: When the reader shall be appointed, the bishop shall give the book of the apostle to him and pray over him, but shall not lay hand on him. (Apostolic Tradition, 3rd? century)[18]

> When one chooses a reader, he us to have the virtues of the deacon. One is not to lay the hand on him before, but the bishop is to give him the Gospel. (Canons of Hippolitus, 4th century)[19]

Roman liturgy, which is rather conservative, maintained this ancient custom of simple conferral of a lector over a very long time; in the 7th and 8th centuries, the rite of lector ordination was not yet known.[20]

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16 *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* 8 (CCSL 149: 344).

17 The only exemption to this is in the Apostolic Constitutions: 'Pour instituer le lecteur, impose-lui la main en priant Deiu ainsi […].' *Apostolic Constitutions* 8. 22 (SC 36: 225).

18 Paul F. Bradshaw et al., *The Apostolic Tradition 11* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2002), 74.

19 *Canons of Hippolitus* 7 (Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips 2002: 75).

20 In the *Ordo Romanus* 34 there is only reference to the ordination of the acolyte and subdeacon (Andrieu 3: 603-604).

An isolated reference to the ordination of a woman lector can be found in the Arabic version of the Apostolic Canons dating approximately to the 6th century. Controversy remains as to whether this may have been caused by an error of the scribe:

> Quant aux diaconesses, aux sous-diaconesses et aux lectrices, nous nous sommes déjà exprimés à leur sujet. (Apostolic Canons, 6th century)[21]

1.6 Lector and Cursus Honorum

It was thanks to Emperor Constantine that the church was made free, and consequently, even those who had pursued a secular career became interested in ecclesial offices. This was probably the reason why candidates for ordination as deacons, priests, or bishops were required to gain experience as lectors or by performing other lower-ranking functions in the church:

> Bishop Ossius said: And I think it necessary that you treat this most carefully: if it happens that either a rich man or a jurist from the forum, or an administrator, shall have been asked for as bishop, he shall not be ordained before he has discharged the function of lector and the office of deacon and the ministry of presbyter, that he may ascend [by these] grades one by one (if he is suitable) to the summit of the episcopate. For by these promotions, which in any case have extended time, his faith, his modesty, his dignity, and reverence can be proved. (Council of Serdica, 4th century)[22]

Although this requirement was not met immediately or everywhere, it gave rise to the development promoting lectorate as an integral part of gradual preparation for the priesthood.

At the end of antiquity, there were lectors who had been serving as such for dozens of years and, therefore, could be considered as permanent lectors without further promotion.[23] We also encounter cases in which the office of the lector was conferred to children. Tombstones of

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[21] *Canons of the Apostles* 53 (PO 8: 638).

[22] Text and Translations of the Serdican Canons, can. 13, in Hamilton Hess, *The Early Development of the Canon Law and the Council of Serdica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2002), 221.

[23] Ewa Wipszycka, 'Les ordres mineurs dans l'Église d'Egypt du IVe au VIIIe siecle,' *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 23 (1993), 197–204.

lectors who died at the age of five years (!) were preserved.[24] This very development was a sign of the gradual emptying of the lector's ministry. His task to read from the Scriptures during Eucharist in Roman liturgy was later taken over by the subdeacon, and the position of lector then remained nothing more than a step on the progressive way to the priesthood.

2. The Ministry of Acolyte in Early Christianity

2.1 Deacon as Servant of the Bishop

The Greek word *diaconos* (deacon) means 'servant', 'ambassador', or 'representative'.[25] As deaconship developed into an ordained ministry, its role was to represent and stand in for the bishop as well as assist him:

> In the ordination of a deacon, let the bishop alone lay on hands, because he is not ordained to the priesthood but to the service of the bishop, that he may do those things that are ordered by him. (The Apostolic Tradition, 3rd century)[26]

As aides and representatives of the bishops, deacons were often sent as envoys or legates. As messengers, they were entrusted with the task of bringing the Eucharist – the sacrament of the unity of the church – to absent brothers and sisters or to neighbouring Christian communities.[27]

> And when he who presides has celebrated the Eucharist, they whom we call deacons permit each one present to partake of the Eucharistic bread, and wine and water; and they carry it also to the absentees. […] To those who are absent they are sent through the deacons. (Justin, 2nd century)[28]

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[24] DACL 8.2: 2246-2266

[25] In the New Testament it is most often to refer to a serving a Christian community. International Theological Commission, *The Diaconate: Evolution and Perspectives*, 2,1,2. https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_05072004_diaconate_en.html

[26] *The Apostolic Tradition* 8 (Bradshaw, Johnson, Phillips 2002: 60).

[27] On possible link between the following quotations see: Enrico Cattaneo, *I Ministeri nella Chiesa antica* (Milano: Paoline, 1997), 319.

[28] Justin Martyr, *The First Apology* 65 and 67 (Fathers of the Church 6: 105-107).

> The presbyters before you who did not observe it [the Quatordeciman practice of celebrating Easter] sent the Eucharist to those from other the dioceses who did [observe the Quatordeciman practice]. (Irenaeus of Lyons, 2nd century)[29]

As helpers of the bishop, deacons became soon available during the celebration of the Eucharist in the preparation of the gifts as well as during Holy Communion:

> And then let the oblation be presented by the deacons to the bishop […] And if the presbyters are not sufficient, let the deacons also hold the cup […]. The deacons break the bread. (The Apostolic Tradition, 3rd century).[30]

2.2 Ecclesiastical Promotion of Deacons

The position of deacon gained significant prestige in the second and third centuries. As the closest collaborators of the bishop, they carried out the practical administration of the local church and its assets, managed alms for the poor, and enjoyed higher status than the presbyters did. Various aspects of inappropriate behaviour on the part of the deacons were criticised by church writers and councils in the 4th century:[31]

> The deacons who do not handle the tables of the money of the church honestly but are always stealing from them and do not dispense justly the funds they dispense, so they became rich from the things of the poor. (Origen, 3rd century)[32]

> Someone has been mad enough to put deacons before presbyters […] must not a mere server of tables and of widows Acts 6:1-2 be insane to set himself up arrogantly over men through whose prayers the body and blood of Christ are produced […] I have seen a deacon, in the absence of the bishop, seat himself among the presbyters and at social gatherings give his blessing to them. […] Although he [presbyter] may be less highly paid

[29] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5. 24. 17 (K. Lake 1926: 511).
[30] Paul F. Bradshaw et al., *The Apostolic Tradition 21-22*, 120–136.
[31] See e.g. Jerome or the Council of Nicaea, quoted in the International Theological Commission, *The Diaconate: Evolution and Perspectives*.
[32] Origen, *The commentary on the Gospel of St Matthew*, 16. 22 (R. Heine 2018: 497).

> than a deacon, he is superior to him in virtue of his priesthood. (Jerome, 4th century)[33]

These developments inevitably resulted in the need to confer the service to someone else, and this is where the origin of subdeaconship and acolytate comes into play.

2.3 Acolyte – Servant of the Deacon

The activities performed on behalf of the deacon or for the deacon became known as 'subdeaconate'.

> Sahidic version: Hand shall not be laid on a subdeacon, but he shall be named to follow the deacons.
>
> Arabic version: Hands are not laid on the subdeacon; rather they are given the name of followers of the deacons.
>
> Ethiopian version: Concerning a subdeacon, he is not to place a hand on a subdeacon but they are to employ the name over them so they may serve the deacons. (The Apostolic Tradition, 3rd century)[34]

The job description of the subdeacon was to accompany, serve, or in other words, perform the *acolytate*. In Greek *acolyte* means 'one who guides, one who serves'. The position of subdeacon and acolytate probably used to be synonymous – both referred to the practical service of the auxiliaries taking on various tasks for which the deacons were responsible. In the West, this double terminology gave rise to two distinct ministries, while in the East, the service referred to as the acolyte never existed. It seems that at the time, the church organisation in Rome was divided into seven districts governed by seven deacons, each of them having seven collaborators: 6 acolytes and one subdeacon as 'team leader'.[35] Roman liturgy preserved the similarity of the acolytate and subdeaconate for a long time: in preparation to be ordained

[33] Jerome, *Letter* 146. 1–2 (Select library of Nicene and post-Nicene fathers 6: 288).
[34] Paul F. Bradshaw et al., *The Apostolic Tradition 13*, 78.
[35] Interpretation by Michel Andrieu, *Ordines Romani du Haut Moyen Age*, Vol. III (Louvain: Spicilegium Lovaniense, 2006), 544–545.

a deacon, it was sufficient to go through either of these roles[36] , and there was a liturgical rite conferring just the aforementioned services and not others, such as lectorate and exorcistate.[37]

The subdeacons and acolytes have taken over the service which used to be performed by the deacon: that is, to represent the bishop as his envoy, including by bringing the Eucharist to those who were not present at the Papal mass[38]:

> The presbyters of these [titular] churches– who cannot assemble with us on this day because their people need them – receive from the acolytes the fermentum that we consecrated, so that they do not find themselves separated from our communion on that great day. (Innocent I, 5th century)[39]

There were other tasks of the deacons that were taken over by subdeacons: such as looking after the sacred vessels,[40] bringing water for the washing of hands, preparing the church for the service, kindling the lamps, or guarding women's entrances to the church so that those who were not baptised could not be let in and so that congregants do not leave the church early,[41] caring for the poor and the persecuted,[42] and, if they were not allowed to read from the Gospels, they took over at least the reading of the other non-gospel readings from the Scriptures.

According to the *Ordo romanus I*, seventh-century subdeacons were given the following tasks to fulfill: helping the Pope dress, carrying the incense during the entry procession and the Gospel procession, reading the first reading, holding the Gospel Book during Gospel reading and the kiss, taking the bread intended for the Eucharist from the

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[36] See Andrieu, *Ordines*, Vol. III, 549, footnote. 3. See also Michel Andrieu, 'Les Ordres mineurs dans l'ancient rit romain,' *Revue des sciences religieuses* 5, no. 2 (1925): 232–274.

[37] See *Ordo Romanus* 34 (Andrieu 3: 603–604).

[38] Cf. John Baldovin, 'The Fermentum at Rome in the Fifth Century: A Reconsideration,' *Worship* 79 (2005): 38–53; Cf. Antoine Chavasse, 'A Rome, l'envoi de l'eucharistie rite unificateur de l'Église locale,' *Révue Bénédictione* 97 (1987): 7–12.

[39] Martin Conell, ed. *Church and Worship in Fifth-Century Rome: The Letter of Innocent I to Decentius of Gubbio* (Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 39.

[40] '[Dieu], jette jette maintenant les yeux sur ton seviteur, que voici, proposé comme sous-diacre, et donne-lui l'Esprit Saint, pour qu'il s'occupe dignement de tes objets liturgiques.' (*Les Constitutions apostoliques*, 8, 21, 3 (SC 336: 223).

[41] Cf. Wipszycka, 'Les ordres mineurs,' 191–192.

[42] E. Cattaneo, *I Ministeri*, 179.

Pope and putting it into linen pouches during the preparation of the gifts, ordering them on the altar, bringing water for mixing, holding the paten during the second part of the Canon, instructing the Pope that the Eucharist of the people has finished. The following tasks were conferred to the acolytes: expecting the Pope before his entrance to the church, bringing him the Eucharist from earlier mass to check, bringing the Gospel Book to the altar before the beginning of the Mass, carrying the candles in the procession before the Gospels and taking the Gospel Book to safe-keeping, assisting the deacon during the preparation of the altar and during collection of the gifts from the congregation for the Eucharist, holding the linen pouches for bread and ministerial chalices for the wine, holding the paten during the first part of the Canon, bringing the transubstantiated bread to the bishops and priests for the fraction, guard the grids after the end of the service.[43]

2.4 The Origin of the Minor Order of the Acolyte

The oldest sources put an emphasis on the fact that the subdeacon is appointed through a liturgical rite which makes his role clearly distinct from the ordination of a deacon, priest, or bishop. In the course of history, the perception of subdeacon as well as the acolyte in the West has prevailed that they constitute 'minor order' for those who are part of the clergy.[44]

The following texts refer to the rite performed during the ordination of the acolyte:

> Acolythus cum ordinatur, ab episcopo quidem doceatur qualiter se in officio suo agere debeat, se ab archidiacono accipiat cereoferrarium cum

[43] *Ordo Romanus I* (Andrieu 2: 74–108).

[44] See Cyprian, *Letter* 29 (FoC 51: 71–72): 'Know that I have made Saturus a reader and Optatus, the confessor, a subdeacon, men whom we had long ago in a common council appointed next to the clergy, either when we gave the reading to Saturus on Easter once and again or recently when we tested the readers diligently with the priest teachers we appointed Optatus among the readers of the teachers of the catechumens, examining whether all things were fitting to them which ought to be in those who were preparing for the clergy.'
See the Apostolic Constitutions which require that hands are laid on the subdeacon during his ordination: 'Quand tu ordonnes un sous-diacre, o eveque, tu lui imposeras les mains et tu diras: „Maitre, Dieu, créatuer du ciel et de la terre …ton Christ, par qui a ta gloire, honneur et vénération dans le Saint-Esprit pour des siecles, Amen."' (*Les Constitutions apostoliques*, 8, 21, 3 (SC 336: 223).

> cereis, ut sciat se ad accendenda Ecclesiae luminaria mancipari; accipiat et orciolum vakuum ad suggerendum vinum in eucharistiam sanguinis Christi. (Statuta ecclesiae antiqua, 5th century)[45]

> Dum missa celebrata fuerit, induunt clericum illum planetam et orarium. Dumque venerit episcopus aut ipse domnus apostolicus ad communicandum, faciunt eum venire ad se et porrigit in ulnas eius sacculum super planetam et prosternit se in terram cum ipso sacculo et dat ei orationem sic: Itercedente beata et gloriosa semperque sola virigine Maria et beato Petro apostolo, salvet et custodiat et protegat te dominus. Resp. Amen. (Ordo romanus 34, 9th century)[46]

The object used for the establishment of the acolyte differed from region to region depending on the aspect of his ministry that required emphasising. It is useful to note that in Gaul (Statuta ecclesiae antiqua), the acolyte was appointed by the archdeacon rather than the bishop.

As far as subdeacons are concerned, fourth century Egypt required them to be married prior to ordination, whereas in Spain, there was the requirement for them to be celibate; the commitment of celibacy became connected with the minor order of subdeacon.[47] It is probably this very element that contributed to the transfer of subdeaconate from the minor orders to holy orders in the Middle Ages.[48]

2.5 Women Deaconesses – 'Acolytes'?

In the ancient history of Eastern Christianity, we encounter a liturgical ministry of women, who were called deaconesses. The oldest text describing their service dates from 3rd century Syria, that is, the same period in which subdeacons and acolytes appeared.

> [Bishop] for there are houses where thou canst not send a Deacon to the women on account of the heathen. Send a Deaconess for many things. The office of a woman Deaconess is required, first, when women go down to the water, it is necessary that they be anointed by a Deaconess, and it is not

[45] *Statuta Ecclesia antiqua* 6 (CCSL 149: 344).
[46] *Ordo Romanus* 34. 1–2, (Andrieu 3: 603).
[47] Cf. Wipszycka, 'Les ordres mineurs,' 192.
[48] Cf. Mario Righetti, *Manuale di storia liturgica*, vol. 4 (Ancora: Milano, 1959), 385–986.

> fitting that the anointing oil should be given to a woman to touch; but rather the Deaconess. (Didascalia apostolorum, 3rd century)[49]

In the following centuries, women deaconesses were found only in Syria, Palestine, Jordan, Cappadocia, and Greece, while there were none in Egypt and Ethiopia or in the Christian West.[50] Various documents indicate that the tasks of deaconesses included assistance during the baptism of women but not the baptism itself, bringing the Eucharist to sick and imprisoned women, assisting the bishop during contact with women, caring for the sacred vessels and tidying up the church, lighting the candles and dispensing incense, overseeing women's entry to the basilica and overseeing women during Eucharist as well as conducting the singing of women's choir during liturgy or even reading from the Gospels in a purely female community in the absence of the deacon.[51] It is unclear to what degree the deaconate of women was similar to the same office for men or rather whether it was close to the services performed by a subdeacon (acolyte) or lector.[52] The list of their specific tasks, an emphasis on the fact that deaconesses only substituted for deacons in case the latter were not available, ambiguity in the arrangements of pontificals which grouped the texts concerning the ordination of deaconesses to the ones referring to those of deacons but other times to those of subdeacons and lectors, and, last but not least, the fact that the ministry had only local significance – all of the above confirms that deaconesses were closer to subdeacons than deacons. The fact that, in the course of centuries, the rite of ordination of deaconesses became similar to the rite of ordaining deacons[53] (hands were laid on them, they received a stole and chalice) implies that the

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[49] M. Dunlop Gibson, ed., *The Didascalia Apostolorum* 16 (Clay and Sons: London, 1903), 78.

[50] For detailed list of places and documents see Marie-Josephe Aubert, *Des femmes diacres* (Beauchesne: Paris, 1987), 112–116.

[51] See the following studies: Valerie A. Karras, 'Female Deacons in the Byzantine church,' *Church History* 73, no. 2 (June 2004): 278; Ameer Jajé, *Diaconesse. Les femmes dans l'Église syriaque* (Domuni Press: Toulouse, 2016), 18; Janine Hourcade, *Les diaconesses dans l'Église d'hier et de demain* (Éditions de Saint-Augustin: Saint-Marice, 2001), 119; Aubert, *Des femmes diacres*, 104.

[52] A summary of discussions between A.-G. Martimort and R. Gryson on the sacramentality diaconal ordination of women in the Apostolic Constitutions (particularly Robert Gryson, *Le ministère des femmes dans l'Église ancienne*, Gembloux: Duculot, 1972). In 70's and 80's see Hourcade, *Les diaconesses*, 53–56.

[53] See particularly *L'Euchologio Barberini, Gr. 336*, 163–164 (BELS 80: 338–339).

rite had followed a similar development as the ordination of lectors or subdeacons.

Local synods in the West repeatedly prohibited the service of women deaconesses. The Sacramentary of pontifical liturgy dating from the 8th century preserved the prayer for the ordination of a deaconess. The prayer, however, rather than being placed close to the ordination of a bishop, presbyter, or deacon, is located among blessings:

> Exaudi Domine preces nostras, et super hanc famulam tuam *illam* spiritum tuae benedictionis emitte, ut caelesti munere ditata et tuae gratiam possit maiestatis adquirer, et bene vivendi aliis exemplum prebere. (Gregorian Sacramentary, 8th century)[54]

The ministry of deaconesses gradually disappeared. The reasons for this remain subject to discussion. For our purposes, it is important to summarise that one might consider deaconesses not as a parallel service to deacons but rather as a service corresponding to that of subdeacons and acolytes. The inconsistency in the appellation of the deaconess, acolyte, and subdeacon should not mislead us. Neither acolytes, subdeacons, nor deaconesses were the first rank servers of the Eucharist; that role belonged exclusively to bishops, priests, and deacons. The former were considered helpers in practical tasks during liturgy as well as the non-liturgical life of the church.

3. Renewal of the Ministries in the 20th Century

3.1 Discussions Following the Second Vatican Council

There were various bishops demanding that the Second Vatican Council deal also with the issue of minor orders, which in those days included ostiariate, exorcistate, and acolytate. Subdeaconate was also part of the discussion although it had been ranked among holy orders since the Middle Ages.[55] After the Second Vatican Council, the issue of minor orders was covered in the works of *Consilium ad exequendam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia*. From the very beginning, it was proposed that rather than 'ordination', the term 'appointment' should be used and that other services are to be introduced:

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[54] *Le Sacramentaire Grégorien* 994 (Deshuesses 1979: 341).
[55] Cf. Paul VI, *Ministeria quaedam* (EDIL 2878).

> Il gruppo affronto anche il delicato problema di benedizioni da impartire alle donne per l'esercizio di qualche compito che già è loro affidato, ad. es.: sagrestane, organiste, diretrici del canto. Ma anche questo tema fu solo sfiorato e non sufficientemente approfondito. (…) Non piu ‚ordini' ma ‚ministeri', benedizioni stabili per altri ministeri esercitati dali laici noc posibilita di conferirne alcune anche alle donne.[56]

At the time, women were expected to provide different types of services than those of lectors or acolytes. In addition, various proposals began to take shape in that period, e. g. proposals which aimed to introduce the rites of blessings and conferral of certain liturgical tasks outside of appointment to the instituted liturgical service, or proposals to maintain only the services of lectorate and subdiaconate, considering their ancient history as well as their counterparts in the Byzantine rite.

In further discussions, the role of the lector was expanded to include not only reading from the Scripture during the liturgy but also the catechesis to children, adults, and catechumens. It was also proposed that acolytate and subdeaconate be merged into a new ministry.[57] The key questions raised in the discussion concerned the essence of these ministries, that is, whether or not they are integral parts of the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Another important question concerned the nature of the acolytate, as it was originally conceived as an altar function. Another distinct function was intended for the purpose of administering the Eucharist. During further discussions on established functions, the notion of acolytate as a function linked to the Eucharist prevailed so that the distinction between an acolyte and the extraordinary ministry of Holy Communion was blurred.[58] A decision was made to abolish the status of subdeaconship.

3.2 Lectorate and Acolytate are Based on the Priesthood of Baptism

In 1972 St. Pope Paul VI published his Apostolic Letter issued Motu Proprio *Ministeria quaedam*, through which he abolished all minor orders. Lectorate and acolytate are defined as established ministries.

[56] Annibale Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica* (BELS 30: 706).
[57] Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 713 and nn.
[58] Bugnini, *La riforma liturgica*, 723 and 721.

Besides adapting to the times, their nature also changed: they were no longer to be considered an integral part of the sacrament of Holy Orders belonging to the clergy but, instead, as services emerging from the priesthood of baptism:

> Melius etiam apparebit discrimen inter clericos et laicos; inter ea, quae clericis sunt propria et reservantur, atque ea, quae christifidelibus laicis demandari possunt; ideo apertius apparebit mutua ratio quatenus „sacerdotium … commune fidelium et sacerdotium ministeriale seu hierarchicum." (Ministeria quaedam, 1972)[59]

The task of the appointed lector was thus established as reading from the Scriptures during the liturgy, standing in for the deacon or cantor, preparing temporary readers, and preparing for the first communion.[60] The role of the acolyte became helping the deacon and priest, performing service at the altar, distributing the Eucharist, expositing of the blessed sacrament and guiding the altar servers.[61] To appoint a person to the service of the lector, the bishop or ordinary was to pass the book Scriptures and for the service of the acolyte to pass the paten with hosts or the chalice with the wine.

3.3 Lectorate, Acolytate, and the Service of Women

After the Council, the services of lectorate and acolytate remained reserved for men. This was later reflected in the Code of Canon Law (1983). Women were, however, allowed to distribute the Eucharist during Holy Mass (1969), read non-gospel readings, and carry out other liturgical services, except for altar service (1970):

> Persona idonea, […] designabitur iuxta hunc ordinem: subdaiconus, clericus in ordinibus minoribus constitutus, tonsuratus, religiosus, religiosa, catechista (nisi, prudenti Pastoris iudicio, catechista religiosae praferendus sit) aut simplex fidelis: vir et mulier. (Fidei custos, 1969)[62]

> Iuxta liturgicas normas in Ecclesia traditas, vetantur mulieres […] ad altare sacerdotis inservire. Mulieribus autem licet secundum normas de

[59] Paul VI, *Ministeria quaedam* (EDIL 2880).
[60] Paul VI, *Ministeria quaedam*, 5 (EDIL 2885).
[61] Paul VI, *Ministeria quaedam*, 6 (EDIL 2886).
[62] Sacra Congregatio de Disciplina Sacramentorum, *Fidei custos*, 3 (EV 3: 1059).

> his rebus latas: a) lectiones proferre, Evangelio excepto […]; b) intentiones orationis universalis proferre; c) liturgici coetus cantum moderari et organum aut instrumenta premisa pulsare; d) monitiones (seu didascalia) legere […]; e) munera quaedam obire in servitium congregationis fidelium, quae alicubi etiam mulieres committi solent, ex. gr. fideles ad portas ecclesiae recipere eosque in locis ipsis convenientibus disponere, atque eorum processiones ordinare, aut stipes in Ecclesia collegere. (Liturgicae instaurationes, 1970)[63]

The liturgical rite which confers temporary authorisation to administer Holy Communion contains the following prayer:

> Clementissime Deus, familiae tuae institutor et rector, hunc fratrem nostrum N. benedicere + digneris, ut qui cibum vitae fratribus suis fideliter distribuit, huius sacramenti robore confortatus, caelestis convivii partem accipiat. Per Christum Dominum nostrum (Ritus ad deputandum, 1973)[64]

On publication of this ceremony, the Congregation stressed that, in the case of women, there is no equivalence between authorisation to participate in the distribution of the Eucharist in this extraordinary mode and general service at the altar.[65] It was only in 1992 that altar service was opened to women through a decree of the Pontifical Council for the Interpretation of Legislative Texts. In response to the question of whether this includes liturgical services which are open not only to men but also to women, pursuant to article 230 Section 2, it replied in the affirmative, attaching the following commentary:

> Si autem in aliqua dioecesi, prae oculis can. 230, § 2 habito, Episcopus sinet ut peculiares ob rationes ad altare munus etiam mulieribus permittatur, hoc, ad normam quam supra diximus, plane fidelibus explicari debet, et pariter ostendendum mulieres saepe munus lectoris in liturgia complere easque Sacram Communionem distribuire posse, tamquam extraordinarias Eucharistiae ministras, atque alia officia praestare, quemadmodum can. 230, § 3 prospicit: Perspicuum exinde esse debet haec liturgica munera

[63] Sacra Congregatio de culto divino, *Liturgicae instaurationes,* 7 (EDIL 2180).
[64] Sacra Congregatio pro cultu divino, 'Ritus ad deputandum,' *Notitiae* 83 (maio 1973) 165–167.
[65] 'Le role des femmes dans la liturgie,' *Notitiae* 83 (maio 1973) 164.

> « ex temporanea deputatione » obiri, ad Episcopi iudicium, nullo exsistente iure ut laici, sive viri sive mulieres, ea expleant.[66]

Since the Second Vatican Council, the issue of the deaconate of women has been repeatedly studied.[67] For the first time since 1973, it was discussed under the Pope Paul VI by the Commission on Women in Society and the Church and then, from 1992, the International Theology Commission under the Pope John Paul II, at which point the work of the Commission resulted in a document entitled 'The Diaconate: Evolution and Perspectives'.[68] In 2016, the Pope Francis established a commission devoted to the deaconate of women,[69] which later dissolved due to diverging opinions.[70] In 2020, the Pope appointed a new commission on the same topic.[71]

In 2021, when the Pope Francis modified Canon 230 of the Code of Canon Law and made it possible to welcome women among lectors and acolytes, he added an explanatory letter addressed to the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. The letter reads:

> Una più chiara distinzione fra le attribuzioni di quelli che oggi sono chiamati "ministeri non-ordinati (o laicali)" e "ministeri ordinati" consente di sciogliere la riserva dei primi ai soli uomini. Se rispetto ai ministeri ordinati la Chiesa «non ha in alcun modo la facoltà di conferire alle donne l'ordinazione sacerdotale», per i ministeri non ordinati è possibile, e oggi

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66 Pontificia Commissio Codici Iuris Canonici Authentice Interpretando, 'Interpretatio authentica,' *Acta apostolicae sedis*, 86 (1994), 541–542.

67 A clear overview provided in Susan Rakoczy, 'The ordination of Catholic women as deacons: The state of the question,' *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 76, no. 2 (2020), 5–6, doi:10.4102/hts.v76i2.5965.

68 International Theological Commission, *The Diaconate: Evolution and Perspectives*, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_con_cfaith_pro_05072004_diaconate_en.html.

69 Istituzione della Commissione di Studio sul Diaconato delle donne, *Bollettino della Sala Stampa della Santa Sede*, August 2, 2016, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2016/08/02/0569/01268.html

70 Viz *Conferenza stampa del Santo Padre durante il volo di ritorno da Skpje*, October 7, 2019, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2019/may/documents/papa-francesco_20190507_macedoniadelnord-voloritorno.html; see also *Adress of His Holiness Pope Francis to Participants at the XXI Plenary Assembly of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG)*, May 10, 2019, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2019/may/documents/papa-francesco_20190510_uisg.html

71 Istituzione di una nuova Commissione di studio sul diaconato femminile, *Bollettino della Sala Stampa della Santa Sede*, April 8, 2020, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2020/04/08/0210/00474.html.

> appare opportuno, superare tale riserva. […] La riserva ai soli uomini non appartiene alla natura propria dei ministeri del Lettore e dell'Accolito. Offrire ai laici di entrambi i sessi la possibilità di accedere al ministero dell'Accolitato e del Lettorato, in virtù della loro partecipazione al sacerdozio battesimale, incrementerà il riconoscimento, anche attraverso un atto liturgico (istituzione), del contributo prezioso che da tempo moltissimi laici, anche donne, offrono alla vita e alla missione della Chiesa.[72]

In an official commentary on *Motu proprio Spiritus Domini* sent by the Holy See on the occasion of its publication, Angelo Lameri claims that it would be wrong to understand the change as the promotion of women, but rather:

> Si tratta propriamente di un riconoscimento del laicato e del suo ruolo nella Chiesa, nella direzione della declericalizzazione di una ministerialità che, tra l'altro, non può essere intesa ed esercitata solo nell'ambito della liturgia. Il ministero del lettore infatti non si esercita solo nella proclamazione delle pericopi non evangeliche nella celebrazione, ma anche nell'annuncio della parola di Dio perché germogli e fruttifichi nel cuore degli uomini. L'accolito non è istituito solo per il servizio all'altare, ma anche per testimoniare un sincero amore per il corpo mistico di Cristo e specialmente per i deboli e i malati. Si tratta di svolgere una missione ecclesiale in quelle realtà aperte all'evangelizzazione.[73]

Conclusion

How should we interpret the opening of the ministries of lectorate and acolytate to women? First, this is a logical consequence of the change which occurred back in 1972, when the Motu proprio by Pope Paul VI in *Ministeria quaedam* linked the two services with the priesthood of baptism rather than the priesthood of ministry, rendering the idea of reserving them to men only obsolete. This is in fact also the

[72] Lettera del Santo Padre Francesco al Prefetto della Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede circa l'accesso delle donne ai ministeri del Lettorato e dell'Accolitato, *Bollettino della Sala Stampa della Santa Sede*, January 11, 2021, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2021/01/11/0016/00033.html.

[73] Angelo Lameri, Commento alla Lettera Apostolica in forma di Motu Proprio Spiritus Domini. Il Lettorato e l'Accolitato come ministeri laicali radicati nel Battesimo, *Bollettino della Sala stampa della Santa Sede*, January 11, 2021, https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/info/2021/01/11/motuproprio.html.

official interpretation of the Holy See, as expressed in Pope Francis' letter to the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith as well as by comments by Angelo Lameri.

Secondly, it is not a historical breakthrough, given that women did perform these services before. Lectors during liturgy developed from the function of readers typical in ancient society, which was performed by both men and women. Appointing women readers, therefore, represents a return to this ancient, pre-Christian reality. The office currently entrusted to the acolytes was, back in the first millennium, performed by male acolytes and subdeacons as well as deaconesses.

Thirdly, although the historical services of men and women acolytes, subdeacons, and deaconesses were derived from the ministry of the deacons, they were not understood as ordained functions. The ceremony of appointing them was originally much closer to that of the appointment of a lector based on the lay ministry of a reader rather than the Sacrament of Holy Orders. It was only later that these ceremonies gained overt similarity with ordination and that their title settled as *ordination* or their official inclusion among Holy Orders (the function of subdeacon in the West; the question of female deaconates in the East remains a matter of discussion).

Fourthly, this change might represent the end of the discussion on the deaconate of women. In his speech to the participants at the XXI Plenary Assembly of the International Union of Superiors General, Pope Francis pointed out:

> La forma di ordinazione [of women deacons] non era una formula sacramentale, era per così dire – questo è quello che mi dice l'informazione, perché io non sono perito in questo – come oggi è la benedizione abbaziale di una abbadessa, una benedizione speciale per il diaconato alle diaconesse. (…) Per questo, sul caso del diaconato, dobbiamo cercare cosa c'era all'inizio della Rivelazione, e se c'era qualcosa, farla crescere e che arrivi… Se non c'era qualcosa, se il Signore non ha voluto il ministero, il ministero sacramentale per le donne non va.[74]

While discussion on the nature of the deaconate as performed by women throughout history and its renewal in the Roman rite continues, this historical overview has illustrated that women-deaconesses were,

[74] *Address of His Holiness*, May 10, 2019.

both by their tasks and, initially, even by their conferral rite, comparable to male subdeacons and acolytes. The decision to include women into established – albeit lay – services could be a strategy used by the Holy See to compensate for the fact that women will always remain outside the scope of Holy Orders, not only of priests but also of deacons.

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‘FLEAT PRO TE MATER ECCLESIA’: IMAGES OF THE CHURCH IN AMBROSE’S TREATISE ‘DE PAENITENTIA’*

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ABSTRACT

The study is focused on several aspects present in Ambrose’s treatise *De paenitentia*, namely his ecclesiology with respect to the theology and practice of penance. The primary purpose of *De paenitentia* was the confrontation with the heresy of Ambrose’s time when so-called Novatians denied the possibility of penance and absolution for the Christians who committed a serious crime after baptism. Ambrose’s reaction is not only the targeted polemic with this rigorism, but in his treatise, he further develops the structured theology of penance. After a brief historical summary of the roots of Novatian heresy as a reaction to the problem with the *lapsi* who denied the faith during Decius’ persecution, this paper focuses on Ambrose’s arguments in favour of Church as a welcoming place even for sinners. Ambrose uses several biblical images, such as the Good Samaritan, Peter the Apostle, Lazarus, and female figures from the Gospels, to show the value and importance of penance and the role of the Church, who got from Christ the power to ‘bind and loose’. Despite the different practice of penance in the early church, Ambrose’s exegesis and image of the Church as the inn where everybody can be welcomed and cured, no matter in which condition he or she is coming, can serve as an inspiration also for today’s discussion about the character of the Church.

Keywords

Ambrose of Milan; Church Fathers; 4th century; Novatian; Sin; Penance; Repentance

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When facing recent world events about the horrors that those who call themselves Christians are capable of committing, approving of, or ignoring, we sometimes wonder: can even God forgive such things? Even if the perpetrator of such crimes recognises them and repents for the rest of his life? This kind of questioning is not particular for our era, as the same doubts echoed in the ancient church: Even if the merciful God might eventually forgive the sinner who committed a serious crime,[1] should not the Church rather be more careful and exclude the person from its midst indefinitely? If the Church is holy, who has the right to make part of her? To what extent can the Church remain welcoming even towards those who have gravely sinned? And, if the Church does accept them, will this not somehow change her character?

With these questions in mind, in this paper, I want to take a closer look at how Christians in the early centuries confronted these questions and, more specifically, how one of the Church Fathers of the West, St. Ambrose of Milan (ca. 340–397), answered them using biblical analogies. From a brief description of the aftermath of the third-century persecution in the form of the Novatian heresy, I will move to the historical and theological context where Ambrose's work *De Paenitentia* originated. Next, I will focus on the images of the Church in this writing, convinced that a reflection on the ancient approaches of the Church towards the sinners and penance can throw new inspiring light on a similar attitude of the Church of our times towards those who seek pardon for their sins and errors while being denied the communion of the sacraments.

1. Persecution and the Novatian Heresy

One of the most serious transgressions since the early church has been the denial of the faith. There was the problem of approaching

[1] The classification of the deeds perceived by church as serious or mortal sins and their treatment has developed in the first centuries in East and Western part of the empire. Overall, three main areas were considered as serious sins in the early Church: apostasy, adultery and homicide. All three are in this interpretation affected the body: apostasy is the most serious rupture of the Body of Christ – the Church, adultery corrupts human relationships, and killing destroys human life. See Robert Taft, 'Penance in Contemporary Scholarship', *Studia Liturgica* 18, no. 1 (1988): 15, doi: 10.1177/003932078801800102.

numerous apostasies of Christian believers during persecutions, which helped to elaborate the theme of the Church's character and her qualities.

During the first three centuries, in successive periods of persecution, a certain heroic form of Christianity had crystallised. The only true Christian who could have been certain of his or her salvation was the one who stayed firm to his faith even under the threat of the death penalty for the *nomen Christianorum*. Those who broke under the pressure or torture separated themselves from the communion of the body of Christ, who is the Church, and thus could not attain salvation. Apostasy or denial of the faith was thus, from the beginning, a mortal sin which, according to some authors, could no longer be absolved 'on earth'.[2] However, this rigoristic and, in a sense, elitist perception of a Church of morally robust martyrs and confessors received a major blow in the middle of the third century. Under the massive and well-targeted Decius' persecution, a considerable number of Christians 'have fallen'. Nonetheless, after the worrisome wave of repression had subsided, they desired to rejoin the communion of the Church. This novel reality forced Church leaders to rethink what the qualities of the Church were and whether it was even possible for them to accept back these fallen 'traitors' (*lapsi*, *traditores*) and returnees. The willingness of many bishops, especially in Rome and Africa, to reconcile the sinners under set conditions was opposed by more rigoristic clerics, who categorically rejected the possibility of penance and forgiveness for such grave sins as apostasy.

Among these, a prominent group advocating a closed-door policy in the middle of the third century were the so-called Novatians, who referred to themselves as 'the pure ones'.[3] This claim they strengthened by demanding that those who wished to join them after they had been already baptised in the Catholic Church should be baptised anew. This initiation ritual was intended to purge any stain that the candidate had acquired by belonging to a church consisting of sinners.[4] The fresh and

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[2] See e.g., Tertullian, *Pud.* 19, 25–26 (SC 394, 260) or Origen, *Orat.* 28, 10 (GCS 3, 381). Tertullian was also one of the first authors who was distinguishing between venial sins and grave mortal sins, such as 'homicide, idolatry, fraud, apostasy, blasphemy, adultery, fornication and all other forms of violation of God's temple'. For the above mortal sins he even did not accept the possibility of penance and absolution mediated by the Church.

[3] See Eusebius of Caesarea, *HE* VI 43, 1 (SC 41, 153).

[4] See Allan D. Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance in the Italian Church of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries: New Approaches to the Experience of Conversion from Sin*,

newly baptised believer was included among the other pure and holy ones, who could no longer sin gravely. According to their understanding, the Church was not a place and means of salvation for sinners, but a limited and elect group of the saved.[5] Novatians preferred speaking of the Church as a virgin, not a mother.[6] This image is crucial for tracing the further development of the Church's self-understanding. Groups of Novatians were still surviving in various parts of the Roman empire at the end of the fourth century when their concept of the Church and her attitude towards the sinners was confronted especially by Ambrose of Milan in his treatise *De Paenitentia* (*Concerning Repentance*),[7] which I will examine next.

2. Ambrose and his treatise *De Paenitentia*

Ambrose's main intention while composing the two books of *De Paenitentia* was clearly the actual need to confront the popular Novatian rigorism and to demonstrate its errors and logical contradictions. However, in his writings, Ambrose does not just present a polemic against the Novatians, as it might seem from the many direct allusions, but he also exhorts and guides his ecclesial community in large parenetic sections.[8] Throughout his writings, he consistently takes the fundamental stance that there is no sin that cannot be forgiven.[9] He addresses the Novatians with an accusation that they

> make a distinction between sins, some of which you consider that you can loose, and others which you consider to be without remedy. But God does

Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity, vol. 15 (Lewiston, New York: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988), 63f.

5 Novatian's soteriology and ecclesiology are analysed in detail by Herrmann Vogt, *Coetus Sanctorum. Der Kirchenbegriff des Novatian und die Geschichte seiner Sonderkirche* (Bonn: Peter Hanstein, 1968), 57–138.

6 See Novatian, *Trin.* 29, 9–10. 26 (CCL 4, 70. 72) and more in details Vogt, *Coetus Sanctorum*, 120. Novatian follows here a similar picture at Tertullian, *Pud.* 1, 7–9 (SC 394, 136).

7 The date of the writing of the *De paenitentia* is generally dated to the years 389–390, see e.g. Giuseppe Visonà, ed., *Cronologia ambrosiana. Bibliografia ambrosiana* (Roma: Città nuova, 2004), 129f.

8 See Ambrose, *Paen.* I 14, 68–77; II 1, 1–5; II 5, 36–11, 107 (CSEL 73, 151–155; 163–165; 178–206).

9 See *Paen.* I 2, 5 (CSEL 73, 121).

> not make a distinction, He has promised His mercy to all, and granted to His priests the power of absolve without any exception.[10]

He does distinguish that some sins are graver than others, but he wants to demonstrate that there is no uncrossable line between them. On the contrary, 'greater sins are washed away by greater weeping' and 'more powerful support is needed on the part of the Church for them'.[11] He then accuses the Novatians that they do not exhibit a 'holy fear' but rather an 'insolent presumption' if they despise those who do penance: 'You cannot, forsooth, endure the tears of the weepers; your eyes cannot bear the coarse clothing, the filth of the squalid; with proud eyes and puffed-up hearts, you delicate ones, say with angry tones, "Touch me not, for I am pure".'[12]

Although the usual ancient practice of public repentance from grave sins was laborious and even harsh – even Ambrose would not himself relativise or excuse sin in any way[13] – yet he understood and strongly reflected on the idea of the Church as a welcoming place for all who would desire to encounter Christ. He, therefore, offered a glance at the Church as a community of the weak and the sick, who all need a Healer, and the Church as a safety haven even for the worst of sinners. This contrasts with the Novatian concept of the Church as a community of morally pure saints who abhor the eventuality of being 'soiled' by interacting with severe offenders. Instead, Ambrose emphasises the communitarian dimension of the Church and the mutual responsibility of the believers for each other. To exhibit these concepts, he offers several Gospel figures and pericopes as the base and symbols of the Church. A prominent role is played here by Peter and female figures.

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[10] *Paen.* I 3, 10 (CSEL 73, 124).
[11] Ibid.
[12] *Paen.* I 8, 37 (CSEL 73, 137).
[13] Let's just mention the well-known story of Ambrose requesting penance from emperor Theodosius after the massacre of civilians in Thessaloniki, see e.g. Jean-Rémy Palanque, *Saint Ambroise et l'empire Romain. Contribution à l'histoire des rapports de l'Église et de l'État à la fin du IVe siècle* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1933), 227–250.

3. Biblical Images of the Church in *De Paenitentia*

3.1 Peter the Apostle

From the early third century, and especially in the Italian peninsula, the figure of the Apostle Peter began to play a prominent role as a model of a teacher of the fundaments of the faith. His personage was particularly important in the discussion about the nature of the Church with heretical groups concerning those apostatised during the time of the persecutions. Therefore, biblical images of Peter in various contexts begin to appear more significantly, notably the scene of Peter's denial.[14] The image of Christ, Peter, and the rooster repeatedly appears in many sermons and treatises at this time, as well as in iconography.[15] The reminder that Christ did not only anticipate Peter's denial but also moved him by his sight to the tears of repentance and to conversion made it even clearer to the Church that even the greatest sinners can be encouraged to repentance.[16] Ambrose also often invokes the figure of the apostle Peter as a teacher of faith and as an example of repentance. His exegesis focuses on a particular biblical detail: the voice of the rooster, Jesus' look at Peter, who has just denied him for the third time, and Peter's tears that form the basis for Ambrose's spiritual and theological interpretation of repentance.

Ambrose first contrasts Peter's and Judas' denial: while Peter obtained forgiveness through his tears[17] and chose self-accusation to be justified rather than aggravate the situation by further denial,[18] Judas did not repent and sought pardon not from Christ but from the Jews, and therefore deprived himself of the chance to obtain it.[19] Ambrose explores the image of Peter's denial at the crowing of the rooster especially in the fifth book of his *Hexameron*[20] and in his hymn *Aeterne*

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[14] See Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 92–93.

[15] On the iconography and special significance of sarcophagi with this image, see Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 93–97.

[16] See Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 129.

[17] See *Paen.* II 10, 92 (CSEL 73, 199) and also Ambrose, *Exp. Luc.* X 88–90 (CCL 14, 371).

[18] See *Exp. Luc.* X 87 (CCL 14, 371).

[19] See *Paen.* II 4, 27 (CSEL 73, 175). In a parallel *Exp. Luc.* X 94 (CCL 14, 372f) Ambrose, however, evaluates Judas' betrayal as the ultimate sin against the Holy Spirit, for which one can no more plead.

[20] See Ambrose, *Exam.* V 28, 88 (CSEL 32/1, 201f). The nine-sermon series was preached during Holy Week, when this particular passage fell on Maundy Thursday for the rite of Penitential Reconciliation. See Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 164.

Rerum Conditor.[21] The latter was sung in Ambrose's Milan at the time of the *gallicinium*, the last part of the night when the faithful waited for the dawn at the vigil. The crowing of the rooster announcing the sunrise is a symbol of the coming of Christ into the darkness of sin.[22] The 'mystical rooster' (*gallus mysticus*)[23] here is Christ himself, who, by a single glance, drives Peter to recognise his sin and to tears of repentance. For the assembled believers, the crowing of the rooster was not only an imaginative remembrance of an ancient event. In addition, thanks to the physically audible voice of the roosters in the neighbourhood, everyone present could be drawn into the 'today' of the biblical pericope during his or her prayer, when, together with Peter, every believer is reminded of their guilt, and the voice of the 'rooster' Christ announces his forgiveness. The crowing of the rooster represents thus a moment of mercy that brought new hope to the 'sick' with sin who have betrayed Christ in some way in their lives and who had lost their faith.[24] Jesus' eyes looking at the believer brought up the tears that washed away the believer's guilt and repaired him or her to life.[25] Peter's weeping, then, was not considered just an outward sign of emotions but as his public confession of guilt that would not need any explanation or words.[26] For Ambrose, Peter becomes thus an archetype of penance accessible for all Christians. If an apostle could repent even after having denied Christ, then even the worst of apostates share the

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[21] This hymn, and in particular the rooster motif, explores in detail Carl P.E. Springer, 'Of Roosters and "Repetitio": Ambrose's "Aeterne rerum conditor",' *Vigiliae Christianae* 68, no. 2 (2014): 155–177, doi: 10.1163/15700720-12341158 and Róbert Horka, 'Hymny *Aeterne rerum Conditor* a *Deus Creator* omnium svätého Ambróza,' *Acta facultatis theologicae Universitatis Comenianae Bratislaviensis* 8, no. 1 (2011): notably on pp. 83–86.

[22] See Horka, 'Hymny,' 77f.

[23] *Exam.* V 24, 90 (CSEL 32/1, 203).

[24] Hymnus *Aeternae rerum conditor*, vv. 21–24 (SAEMO 22, 32):
Gallo canente spes redit,
aegris salus refunditur,
mucro latronis conditur,
lapsis fides revertitur.

[25] Hymnus *Aeternae rerum conditor*, vv. 25–29 (SAEMO 22, 32–34):
Iesu, labantes respice,
et nos videndo corrige,
si respicis, lapsus cadunt,
fletuque culpa solvitur.

[26] See Ambrose, *Ex. ps.* 37, 37 (CSEL 64, 165f); *Exp. Luc.* X 87 (CCL 14, 371). Maxim of Turin, S. 76, 2 (CCL 23, 317) presents the same image of tears as a silent plea for pardon.

hope that they also will be pardoned.[27] Ambrose is even convinced that Peter's repentance was more important than his previous faults:[28] Peter is present in every believer who weeps over his sins and he is, in fact, the foundation of the Church that seeks Christ's forgiving sight.[29]

For Ambrose, the image of Peter carries several aspects. Peter himself has achieved the remission of sins by his repentance[30] and, on behalf of the Church, he also calls everybody to repentance.[31] Peter's authority is rooted in the fact that he has been made the foundation of the Church, which would not deny anyone the chance to obtain pardon through repentance, and in the fact that he himself obtained remission of sins for his own betrayal.[32] At the same time, Christ conferred on Peter and other apostles the power to bind and loose, and this authority has never been taken from them and their successors. Even Peter, who himself had sinned gravely, could nevertheless obtain pardon by his repentance and tears. And it is on Peter, who experienced his own weakness, that the whole Church stands. This image of Peter's repentance, for Ambrose, reveals clearly that it is repentance that is the source of new life and that it is through repentance that forgiveness can be achieved.[33] But this *exemplum* does not represent the only analogy of the Church used by Ambrose.

3.2 The Good Samaritan and the Physician

While speaking of mercy towards sinners, Ambrose cannot miss the key parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37).[34] He answers the fundamental question: 'Who is my neighbour?' affirming that a neighbour is a person with whom we are united by mercy and the one who cares for the other. Ambrose insists that everyone is a neighbour without exception, everyone is to be shown mercy, and everyone is to be

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[27] See Geoffrey W.H. Lampe, 'St. Peter's Denial,' *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 55, no. 2 (1973): 358, doi: 10.7227/BJRL.55.2.4. But this case has already been used as an argument for the possibility of penance in the Novatian controversy of the mid-3rd century. See (Ps.-) Cyprian, *Ad Novatianum* 8 (CSEL 3/3, 59).

[28] See *Exp. Luc.* X 52. 89 (CCL 14, 360; 371); *Exc.* II 27 (CSEL 73, 263).

[29] See Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 110f.

[30] See *Paen.* II 10, 92 (CSEL 73, 199).

[31] See *Paen.* II 4, 23. 26 (CSEL 73, 173. 174).

[32] See Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 82.

[33] See *Paen.* II 5, 34 (CSEL 73, 178).

[34] See *Paen.* I 6, 27–29; 11, 51–52 (CSEL 73, 132–133; 143–145). Ambrose also develops this parable from Luke 10:30–37 in *Exp. Luc.* VII 71–81 (CCL 14, 237–240).

cared for. In Christ, no one can be called a stranger,[35] and no one for whom Christ died can be forsaken.[36] Whoever wants to determine who should be cared for and who should no longer be cared for is even worse than that lawyer who at least asked Christ about it. Not even a seemingly hopeless case can be ignored. The Novatians who have already cut off those who succumbed to pressure during the persecution are just like the priest and the Levite who merely passed by the wounded and half-dead man. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, takes the lost sheep on his shoulders and does not extinguish the smouldering wick; therefore, even a man who is severely wounded is not lost to him.[37] In this way, he defends the 'fallen ones' (*lapsi*), and he criticises the Novatians who have solved the question of the sinners too quickly:

> Does it not seem to you that he who has fallen is half alive if faith sustains any breath of life? For he is dead who wholly casts God out of his heart. He, then, who does not wholly cast Him out, but under pressure of torments has denied Him for a time, is half dead. Or if he be dead, why do you bid him repent, seeing he cannot now be healed? If he be half dead, pour in oil and wine, not wine without oil, that may be the comfort and the smart. Place him upon your beast, give him over to the host, lay out two pence for his cure, be to him a neighbour. But you cannot be a neighbour unless you have compassion on him; for no one can be called a neighbour unless he has healed, not killed, another. But if you wish to be called a neighbour, Christ says to you: 'Go and do likewise.'[38]

The treatment and healing of the sinner has other more symbolic meanings. The Samaritan poured oil and wine into the wounds of the injured man, and Ambrose interprets this image as two ways of healing by the Word: the wine stings the wounds, and the oil softens them. The common situation known by his audience, i.e. that it is necessary to use first oil and then wine, is a way to explain that mercy has to precede severity.[39] The inn to which the Samaritan brought the wounded is an

[35] See Eph. 2:19.
[36] See *Paen.* I 6, 28; 11, 52 (CSEL 73, 133; 144f).
[37] See *Paen.* I 11, 48 (CSEL 73, 142f).
[38] *Paen.* I 11, 52 (CSEL 73, 144).
[39] See *Paen.* I 6, 27; 11, 51 (CSEL 73, 132; 143f); *Exp. Luc.* VII 75 (CCL 14, 239) and more details in footnotes of Roger Gryson, in SC 179, 76–78.

image of the Church.[40] But if the Novatians refuse to treat the wounded, declaring: 'We are all healthy and no one will be cured by us,'[41] they are not the Church. The Church not only heals the wounds of sinners with the oil of mercy and the wine of stinging preaching but, like the Samaritan, must also 'bind' (*ligare*) or 'bandage' (*alligare*) them. In the same way, the 'binding' of sin is a ministry of the Church and an act of mercy.[42]

3.3 Female Figures

Furthermore, Ambrose develops a figurative interpretation of several pericopes where the women play the central role. In the early church, biblical female characters were often used in sermons and writings as figures of the Church, and these roles helped to discover and interpret the Church's character.[43] Thus, in the early three centuries, the anonymous woman in the synoptic Gospels suffering from a bleeding (*haemorrhissa*) who approached Jesus secretly from behind to touch his clothes and was healed[44] was (along with the Samarian woman in John 4:1–42) often a symbol of conversion, forgiveness of sins, and healing.[45] Also, Ambrose compares the Church to this woman, who admits that she is wounded and in need of being healed.[46] He often then develops the image of sin as a disease or wound and Christ as the Healer. A person suffering from sin seeks a physician to heal him completely, like the woman in the Gospel who has tried many methods and physicians over twelve years. However, the treatment methods of other religions (i.e. pagans and Jews) do not work and cannot bring recovery.[47] Christ himself is the only true Healer who can cure any disease and absolve any sin.[48] But He can only heal those who acknowledge their wounds and their need for a doctor.[49] Just as this woman who touched

[40] See *Exp. Luc.* VII 78–81 (CCL 14, 240).
[41] *Paen.* I 6, 29 (CSEL 73, 133), see also Cyprian, *Ep.* 55, 16 (CSEL 3/2, 635).
[42] *Paen.* I 2, 7 (CSEL 73, 122), see also similar passage in *Exp. Luc.* VII 75 (CCL 14, 239).
[43] See Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 130.
[44] See also parallel Mt 9:20–21, Mark 5:25–28, Lk 8:43–44.
[45] See Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 130.
[46] See *Paen.* I 7, 31 (CSEL 73, 134) and *Exp. Luc.* VI 56–59 (CCL 14, 193–195).
[47] See Ambrose, *E118* XVI 37 (SAEMO 10, 202).
[48] See *E118* III 23; XVI 36 (SAEMO 9, 146; SAEMO 10, 202), *Paen.* II 3, 19 (CSEL 73, 171) and for more details David Vopřada, *Mystagogie Výkladu 118. žalmu svatého Ambrože* (Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2015), 282f.
[49] See Ambrose, *Ep.* extra coll. 11 (51), 11 (CSEL 82/3, 216).

the garment of Jesus, she is showing the way that even a sinner, desiring forgiveness and recovery, can find Christ and be instantly healed.[50]

Next, Ambrose compares the Church to the woman who has mixed a little yeast into the flour.[51] Here he is interpreting yeast as the hard matter (*materia*) of the Law, which the Church softens with flour, representing the mercy of the Spirit and the redemption of the sinner.[52] The dough of this yeast and flour is then a representation of the whole body of the Church. In his argument against the Novatians, worried about the contamination by sinners, Ambrose reassures his hearers that, just as a particle of bad leaven cannot corrupt the whole lump, so neither will the presence of sinners in the Church destroy its purity and holiness. However, these are not just the great sinners who might be pointed to as 'those who are corrupting us'. There is a little of the bad leaven in every faithful, so everyone must ask for pardon daily and show mercy to others. It is thus necessary to 'purge out the old leaven, namely, the old man present in each one of us'.[53] Against the Novatian practice of excluding sinners from the communion of the Church, Ambrose underlines that by 'purging' the leaven, he does not mean 'casting out' the sinners.[54] The entire Church bears upon herself all the misery and stain of her children's sins, washing and cleansing them with her pleas and tears, and rejoices in their redemption.[55]

The next female figure whom the Gospel and Ambrose present as the penitent *par excellence* is the sinful woman in the Pharisee's house who came to Jesus, anointed his feet with precious oil, washed them with her tears, and wiped them with her hair.[56] The tears and the perfumed oil are again a symbol of repentance and the good deeds that all Christians are called upon to do. The perfumed oil stays for the grace of

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[50] See Ambrose, *Is.* 5, 43 (CSEL 32/1, 667) and Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 133.

[51] Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20.

[52] See *Paen.* I 15, 81–83 (CSEL 73, 157–158), but different exegesis of this parable in *Exp. Luc.* VII 187–194 (CCL 14, 279–282).

[53] *Paen.* I 15, 79 (CSEL 73, 156).

[54] Greek text of 1 Cor 5:7 says ἐκκαθάρατε, i.e. 'clean, purge'.

[55] See *Paen.* I 15, 79–83 (CSEL 73, 156–158); *Exp. Luc.* VII 208 (CCL 14, 286); *Hel.* 22, 82 (CSEL 32/2, 462).

[56] This pericope of Luke 7:36-50 is mentioned by Ambrose in *Paen.* II 8, 66–70 (CSEL 73, 190–192). In *Exp. Luc.* VI 14 (CCL 14, 179), he further interprets the parallel text of Mt 26:6–13 (where it is not clear whether it is the same woman) as a figure of the Church pouring the perfumed oil of good works on Jesus' head.

the remission of sins.[57] In addition, Ambrose compares this woman not ashamed to prostrate herself while kissing Jesus' feet to King David, the ultimate Old Testament model of penance,[58] and he even holds her up as a better example of love than the Apostle Peter.[59] No one can compete with the intensity of this woman's love,[60] and yet, or maybe precisely because of it, her example inspires all who realise their own guilt and desire forgiveness to follow.[61] She, too, is a picture of a Church that loves Christ because she has been forgiven much, unlike Simon the Pharisee, who knows all that is necessary but is lacking in love. The Church is that sinful woman who practices good deeds out of great love and is thus justified.[62]

Needless to say, Ambrose remains a child of his epoch and his views on women, although similar to that of other patristic authors, are not exactly positive: in fact, today's reader might find them offensive. In Antiquity, a woman was generally perceived as the weaker sex (*sexus inferior*), more inclined to passions and more vulnerable to sin.[63] It is, therefore, quite surprising that Ambrose, in the mentioned passages, refers specifically to women as examples to follow. In his reflections on pardon, Ambrose is not only targeting the more 'intellectually sophisticated' male audience but is also trying to involve the present women, i.e. the whole assembly, all the more so since he places these biblical female figures very high on the list and associates them with the entire Church. All, men and women, are equal before God, all need healing and forgiveness, all are a church that calls Christ to come and heal, as in the next scene.

3.4 Lazarus

Right after this episode is another Gospel pericope which Ambrose associates with the concept of forgiveness of sins: the resurrection of Lazarus.[64] The direct connection between the image of the sinful wom-

[57] See *Paen.* II 7, 64–65 (CSEL 73, 189–190).
[58] See *Paen.* II 8, 69 (CSEL 73, 191).
[59] See *Exp. Luc.* VI 22 (CCL 14, 182).
[60] See *Paen.* II 8, 68–70 (CSEL 73, 191–192).
[61] See *Paen.* I 16, 90 (CSEL 73, 160); *Exp. Luc.* VI 16–18 (CCL 14, 180); *Hel.* 10, 37 (CSEL 32/2, 434).
[62] *Exp. Luc.* VI 23 (CCL 14, 182).
[63] See e.g. Aude-Sophie Dulat-Gravier, 'Différenciation sexuelle et anthropologie dans la pensée d'Ambroise de Milan,' *RSR* 91, no. 4 (2017): 551–556, doi: 10.4000/rsr.3558.
[64] Ambrose elaborates it further in his funeral oration over his brother Satyr, see *Exc.* II 77–80 (CSEL 73, 291–293).

an in the Pharisee's house and that of Lazarus is possible because these episodes are also directly related to each other in John's Gospel. However, Ambrose preserves the liturgical structure of these texts, which were read in Milan on the last two Sundays preceding Easter. Lent was both the culminating time of the catechumens' preparation for baptism and the penitents' preparation for reconciliation, so both texts contain a baptismal and a penitential dimension.[65]

> Christ will come to your grave, and if He finds there Martha (…) and Mary (…) weeping for you, He will be moved with compassion, when at your death He shall see the tears of many and will say: *Where have you laid him*? (…) I would see him for whom you weep, that he himself may move Me with his tears. I will see if he is already dead to that sin for which forgiveness is entreated. The people will say to Him, *Come and see*. What is the meaning of *Come*? It means, *Let forgiveness of sins come, let the life of the departed come, the resurrection of the dead, let Your kingdom come to this sinner also.* (…) So the Lord Jesus, seeing the heavy burden of the sinner, weeps, for the Church alone He suffers not to weep. He has compassion with His beloved, and says to him that is dead, *Come forth*, that is, 'You who lies in darkness of conscience, and in the squalor of your sins, as in the prison-house of the guilty, come forth, declare your sins that you may be justified. For with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.'[66]

However, for Christ, there is no hopeless case: like the widow of Naim's son,[67] like Jairus' daughter, even Lazarus, who has been in the grave for days, can be raised from the dead. But this Gospel story also reflects a strong ecclesial dimension. Sin is not just one individual's problem, and remission does not come only through a sinner's efforts. Mary and Martha and other people, as well as the whole Church, mourn the dead and, by their tears, move the Lord Himself.[68]

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[65] See Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 139. In the 4th century, both in Rome and in Milan, a 40-day Lent has already been observed. See *Hel.* 10, 34 (CSEL 32/2, 430); Jerome, *Ep.* 24, 4 (CSEL 54, 216).

[66] *Paen.* II 7, 54–55. 57 (CSEL 73, 185–187).

[67] See *Paen.* I 5, 22; II 10, 92 (CSEL 73, 130; 199) and further *Exp. Luc.* V 89–92 (CCL 14, 163–165).

[68] See *Paen.* II 5, 22; 7, 54–57; 10, 92 (CSEL 73, 130; 185–187; 199) and further *Exp. Luc.* V 92; VII 208 (CCL 14, 164; 286); *Ex. ps.* 37, 10 (CSEL 64, 143f); *Fid.* II 7, 55 (CSEL 78, 75).

Christ 'loves when a multitude prays for one';[69] he alone weeps with the whole Church, has pity on the sinner, and brings him back to life. But in this process, too, the Church has a role to play. Ambrose highlights that while Christ could have done it all himself, he preferred to involve people in the process of forgiveness. And what is more, he handed over to his Church the authority to absolve sins.[70]

> He will come and will command that the stone be taken away which his fall has laid on the shoulders of the sinner. He could have removed the stone by a word of command, for even inanimate nature obeys the bidding of Christ. (…) But He bade men remove the stone, in very truth indeed, that the unbelieving might believe what they saw, and see the dead rising again, but in a type that He might give us the power of lightening the burden of sins, the heavy pressure as it were upon the guilty. Ours it is to remove the burdens, His to raise again, His to bring forth from the tombs those set free from their bands.[71]

Novatians, who did not accept this participation of the Church in the remission of sins, were equated with the Pharisees who, upset that Lazarus had been resurrected publicly by Christ, sought to kill him. Just as the Pharisees may have felt that it was already too much to raise the dead, the Novatians do not want to deal with those who were once dead and rose again. Ambrose even accuses Novatians of being jealous of God's mercy,[72] being like the elder brother of the parable of the Prodigal Son,[73] as they refuse to have anything to do with the repentant coming home, declining to enter his father's house for a feast.[74]

Through these biblical references, Ambrose seeks, above all, to engage the hearer and the reader in a moment of encountering Christ. It is a moment when the Christian believer, along with Peter, recalls his failures under Jesus' sight, along with the diseased woman approaches Him with faith and longing, along with the sinful woman in the Pharisee's house, he is not embarrassed to weep openly, and

[69] *Paen.* II 10, 92 (CSEL 73, 199).
[70] See *Exam.* I 7, 27 (CSEL 32/1, 26).
[71] *Paen.* II 7, 56 (CSEL 73, 186).
[72] See *Paen.* II 7, 59 (CSEL 73, 187f).
[73] Lk 15:11–32. Ambrose exhorts the pericope in *Paen.* II 3, 13–18 (CSEL 73, 169–171) and wider in *Exp. Luc.* VII 212–243 (CCL 14, 288–297).
[74] See *Paen.* I 15, 84–85 (CSEL 73, 158–159).

along with Lazarus, he is called to life by Christ even out of the most hopeless situation. Be they great figures of the history of salvation, be they anonymous figures of the opposite character or hypothetical figures from parables, all point in different ways to Christ's power to purify, heal, and resurrect everyone who is guilt conscious and asks for forgiveness.

3.5 Tears

The theme of tears, which in Ambrose's work inseparably accompanies every confession of sin, runs as a red line through the biblical images. It is not only the tears of the penitent, but they are preceded by the tears and pleas of the entire mother Church, who grieves over her wretched children. For Ambrose, the role of the communion of the Church is very important and, in fact, inseparable from the entire process of confession of sins and forgiveness. This has a strong ecclesial aspect for Ambrose; it is never a solely individual and private process. In ancient society, which was considerably less anonymous and individualistic than ours today, secret sin was perceived as damaging and harmful to the community as a whole. However, Ambrose preserves a great deal of discretion and pastoral sensitivity, and he never mentions that the penitent had to confess his sins in public nor that the Church community needed to be aware of them. But every sin separates from the communion of the Church, and the Church is always involved in some way in the process of reconciliation and forgiveness. Ambrose is certain that healing, repentance, and forgiveness were founded in the Church and that they require human collaboration.[75] Not just the bishop (*sacerdos*) in charge, but the entire assembly of the Church is to pray for the penitent and for the pardon of his sins.[76] The penitent 'is purged as by acts of the whole people, and is washed in the tears of the multitude, and redeemed from sin by the weeping of the multitude'.[77] As in Ambrose's interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan, where the Church is the inn in which the wounded is to be healed, it is absolutely necessary for the penitent to be embraced in the Church and to have hope of God's forgiveness mediated by the Church.

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[75] See *Paen.* I 7, 30–31; 15, 80; II 7, 56 (CSEL 73, 134; 156n; 186).
[76] See e.g. *Paen.* II 10, 92 (CSEL 73, 199) and Fitzgerald, *Conversion through Penance*, 213.
[77] *Paen.* I 15, 80 (CSEL 73, 156f).

> Let the Church, our Mother, weep for you, and wash away your guilt with her tears; let Christ see you mourning and say, *Blessed are you that are sad, for you shall rejoice.* It pleases Him that many should entreat for one. In the Gospel, too, moved by the widow's tears, because many were weeping for her, He raised her son. He heard Peter more quickly when he raised Dorcas, because the poor were mourning over the death of the woman. He also immediately forgave Peter, for he wept most bitterly. And if you weep bitterly Christ will look upon you and your guilt shall leave you.[78]

As shown above, Ambrose uses biblical imagery to present a Church that is, in modern language, open and inclusive, conscious of its weakness and sinfulness. The Church is that inn of the parable of the Good Samaritan, where the wounded are welcomed and where they can be cured. It is the Church that, like the anonymous woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee, demonstrated her love for Christ and offended the other respectable guests, the Church founded on the tears of Peter, who himself denied Christ, the Church which, like Martha and Mary, mourns over her dead brother. But these tears of the Church are also preceded by the tears of Christ, who is not indifferent to the misery and despair of all those who do not see their sins or do not want to see them: 'The Lord Himself wept over Jerusalem, that, inasmuch as it would not weep itself, it might obtain forgiveness through the tears of the Lord.'[79]

Conclusion

As we have seen in his writings, Ambrose is not just fighting against the heresy of his times that denied the chance of gaining forgiveness to the sinners, but he digs deeper while reflecting on the Church's character and its role, namely in relation to serious offenders. Although the practice of penance in the early Church was significantly more austere and would often last for years, Ambrose encourages his congregation to do penance and continually assures that there is no sin that cannot be forgiven. As bishop, he does not place himself higher than those entrusted to him, only dispensing advice or penalties, but he shows

[78] *Paen.* II 10, 92 (CSEL 73, 199).
[79] *Paen.* II 6, 49 (CSEL 73, 184).

empathy for the spiritually diseased members of the body of Christ and puts himself in the same line with sinners who need to ask for forgiveness every day.[80] For Ambrose, this sympathetic love, *compassio*, ties the entire Church together, both saints and sinners.

To both self-conscious and scrupulous Christians, Ambrose stresses that no one is sinless: not even the great characters of salvation history, to which Scripture bears witness. Ambrose's exegesis is strongly topical as he tries (we might say, by an imaginative method) to involve the audience and the readers in the biblical story and thus to bring them inside the encounter with Christ present in both the Old and the New Testaments, who is the only true Teacher and interpreter of divine mercy, and who desires to pardon all people.[81] In the process of repentance and forgiveness, besides the intellect, also emotions are present; for Ambrose, particularly, tears are almost a sacramental substance effecting the forgiveness of sins. Like the recovery from a severe disease, the entire process can be a long and laborious one but, in the end, has a therapeutic effect, not just for the penitent, but for the entire mother Church, which is there with her support, her prayers, and her tears. For Ambrose, really, the Church is a home, or inn, a place of recovery for all who are suffering from sin and who long to be cured, a place of hopeful confidence where no one can be refused, a place in front of Lazarus' tomb where not just the crowd weeps, but Christ himself, who is merciful and calls each and every sinner from death to life.

In some aspects, Ambrose's teaching on the presence of the weak in the Church can remind the reader of our era of Pope Francis' words of the Church as a field hospital, prepared to welcome and take care of anybody who comes in whatever life condition, be it living (mostly) according to the standards set by the Church, or leading a life that could be found imperfect by regular church-goers or by the clergy. Ambrose shows that anyone takes a journey of purification in his life and that everybody is, in a way, in need of the Good Samaritan on his way from Jerusalem to Jericho. In the present situation, when many believers find it difficult to embrace the traditional way of obtaining remission of sins in the Church (as one speaks about the crisis of the sacrament of

[80] See e.g. *Paen.* II 8, 67. 71–74 (CSEL 73, 190f; 192–194).
[81] See *Paen.* II 6, 40 (CSEL 73, 180).

reconciliation),[82] Ambrose's attention to the inner attitude of the receiver of forgiveness, expressed by the tears, can find a new resonance. When Ambrose shows the need to ask for forgiveness every day, even for venial sins, this can also find inspiration in the current situation of the Church, where awareness of our need of the God's mercy shown to any believer seems crucial for a renewal of Christian conscience and consciousness of God's economy of salvation.

What is more, Ambrose does not consider penance to be an individualistic exercise of one's spirituality: on the contrary, he focuses on the Church as a communion that is aware of anyone who is part of the same body. Such an approach to the reconciliation requires the mutual effort of anyone in the Church to show true mercy to those who are sinners as we ourselves are. That is tangible especially in the fact that Ambrose, as a bishop, does not hesitate to call himself one of the sinners: a similar attitude of the bishops and other Church ministers in our times might probably bring much more compassion and empathy for those who live in the Church and, still, do not show the kind of holiness a Novatian would welcome. The assertion of a 'more perfect' life of those who entered some 'spiritual' state of life, in comparison with the 'less perfect' laity, tends to bring to the Church an elitist view again. The awareness of the Church ministers, monks, and nuns, that they are also sinners has the potential to bring to the Church a much-needed healthier, more compassionate, and 'anti-Novatian' ecclesiological model.

The poetic and symbolic way Ambrose uses seems fitting enough to inspire even today's believers and to rediscover the richness and variety of the ways toward the remission of one's sins. Meanwhile, the Church, which is welcoming towards those who, according to their abilities, search for a renewal of their relationship with God, can find an apt

[82] This 'crisis' of understanding and practice of penance is more elaborated in the document of International Theological Commission *Versöhnung und Buße* (*Penance and Reconciliation*) from 1982. The reflection is in one hand pointed towards the practice of sacrament of reconciliation which has 'in many cases, hardly anything to do with the life of man and the dramatic situation of the present day' and in the other hand towards its roots, i.e. especially in Western civilization, the loss of sense of sin as man's personal responsibility but merely as a problem caused by culture, society, history, etc. See Ctirad Václav Pospíšil and Eduard Krumpolc, eds., *Dokumenty Mezinárodní teologické komise 1969–2017 a některé další texty Papežské biblické komise a Kongregace pro nauku víry* (Olomouc: UPOL, 2017), 216.

model for this aperture towards anybody that would allow her to start becoming a true home of anybody who searches for God.

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THE STRANGER IN THE BIBLE: THE NEEDY AND THE BROTHER*

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ABSTRACT

The article explores the Bible's relationship to immigrants and people perceived by society as foreigners. The topic is addressed against the backdrop of ongoing society-wide discussions about helping people who have been forced to leave their homes as a result of the February 2022 Russian aggression in Ukraine: outlining how the Bible addresses the issue of acceptance and coexistence with refugees and immigrants is intended primarily as a contribution to the debate in a Christian forum. It shows that the Old Testament society, as long as they were willing to accept the required way of life, treated these people kindly and forbade any disadvantage to them by the local society. The Israelites, it is recalled, were themselves guests in Egypt, so foreigners in Israel should remind them of their own identity as suffering but also God-delivered people. In the New Testament, this attitude is elaborated in a new theologically anchored universalism: the stranger is spoken of in a figurative sense, but in practice, the barriers between the local and the stranger are overcome. The stranger, here as an unknown person, a traveller, is one of the persons in need, and by helping him, the Christian fulfils the gospel of Jesus and meets with God. Although some circles in the Early Church tended to oppose the values and customs of the outside world, they never resigned themselves to the ideal of practically lived brotherly love, which newly included the stranger and the unknown. The paper proves that love for foreigners, regardless of their origin or circumstances, is organically rooted in the Bible and Christian ideals.

Keywords

Stranger; Foreigner; Alien; Immigrant; Israel; Church; Poor; Needy; Love.

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The military conflict in Ukraine has brought back into the public debate the topic of helping refugees and people seeking asylum in the territory of the Czech Republic. Discussions on this topic have taken place several times during the existence of the new Czech democratic state. Practically every large-scale or geographically close armed conflict in the recent past has also driven many people seeking refuge into our country and almost immediately filled the media and public space with questions about whether we should help these people, what form our help should take, and where the limits should be. These debates have not and do not avoid the internal forums of the various Christian denominations. Attitudes there have not been uniform – although the ethos of helping one's neighbour has dominated, there have also been arguments and objections against taking in refugees and appealing to the protection of national values, identity, and culture.

One of the most striking elements of these discussions was the extent to which the refugees' difference from people in the local society proved significant. This factor seems to have fundamentally determined the tone, the general atmosphere of the debate, and, closely related to this, the degree of willingness to help. The attitude of the society towards refugees from the territory of the former Yugoslavia, from the Middle East, and, in recent months, from Ukraine has varied considerably. Sometimes the stance was completely at odds with the Bible's approach to these issues, which maintains a welcoming attitude towards immigrants and foreigners across textual traditions. This biblical approach will be examined in this paper.

Our brief review cannot aim to provide a detailed analysis of the biblical relationship with foreigners, but it will examine the relationship from a specific perspective. People living in Israel as immigrants will be portrayed within the perspective of the biblical texts as people in need, neighbours to be helped, as well as brothers to be accepted into society. It will focus on the theological basis of the biblical attitude toward strangers and show that the effort to recognise in every person God's beloved creation runs through biblical traditions. In the New Testament, as we will show, the inherent notion of strangeness among people, whether delineated in political, racial, religious, or other perspectives, is completely overcome. The willingness to welcome and help strangers will be presented as an imperative arising from the very

nature of biblical faith. However, we will begin with the Old Testament texts in which the issue of the relationship with foreigners is given the most attention.

1. The Phenomenon of a Stranger

As immigrants and people of other nationalities constituted a firm part of ancient Israel's world, they are quite often mentioned in biblical texts. However, it is not entirely clear who exactly was considered a foreigner in ancient Hebrew society. Often the figure of the stranger is juxtaposed with a local, a native, or a native-born (אֶזְרָח, *ezrach*),[1] or a brother (אָח, *ach*, also 'relative' or 'kinsman'),[2] however, none of these societal roles are explicitly defined. Nationality in the Bible is not linked to race, and it is also an open question to what extent the modern idea of ethnic affinity can be transposed into biblical thought.[3] Literally, it was marked by belonging to the same tribe in a somewhat idealised form derived from descent from a common ancestor, Jacob (Gen. 49:1–28), or more broadly, Abraham (Gen. 12:7; 17:8); however, it can be assumed that far more likely it was determined by the national cult or by a set of identical cultural and religious patterns, lifestyle or values.[4] The foreigner, unlike the slave, represented a separate economic unit within society.[5] Also, the understanding of who is considered a stranger varies across the biblical traditions: the situation becomes different, especially after the return from exile.[6]

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1 See Lev. 16:29; 17:15; 18:26; 19:34; 24:16,22; Num. 9:14; 15:30; Josh. 8:33; Ezek. 47:22.

2 See e.g. Lev. 25:47; Deut. 1:16; 15:3; 17:15; 23:20; 24:14; 25:5.

3 On the problem of ethnicity in the Old Testament period and antiquity in general, see Mark R. Glanville, *Adopting the stranger as kindred in Deuteronomy* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 24–25; Helga Kisler, '*Love the Stranger for You were Strangers*: The Development of a Biblical Literary Theme and Motif' (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2009), 10–11; Mary Douglas, 'The Stranger in the Bible,' *European Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 2 (1994): 283–284.

4 Modern research also comes with other concepts: according to some scholars, the degree of foreignness could also have been determined by a person's dependence on the help received from the environment; alternatively, it might have been constructed politically. See Douglas, 'The Stranger in the Bible,' 284–291.

5 See Glanville, *Adopting the Stranger*, 33–41.

6 Such a shift is especially noticeable in the books of Nehemiah and Ezra where, under the influence of actual historical circumstances, the desire for separation from the surrounding nations is promoted. See Kisler, '*Love the Stranger for You were Strangers*,' 13–14.

With possible exceptions in Edom and Egypt (see Deut. 23:7; Num. 20:14),[7] the Bible does not make much distinction between the place of origin of foreigners. It was apparently not important where they came from, but, on the contrary, it mattered very much the extent to which they were willing to adapt to local customs. The Old Testament thus distinguishes the settled foreigner, who adopts the desired way of life, from the passing foreigner, who has no intention of settling permanently in the community, or who spreads foreign cultural or religious ideas. People from the first group have typically been referred to as guests (גֵּר, *ger* – also 'sojourner', 'alien', 'stranger'), who, although they have no blood or other ties to the place, are granted certain rights and participation in social life, and who are also to be integrated into society. With minimal differences in meaning, they are also sometimes referred to as תּוֹשָׁב, *toshav*. Both terms are probably related to more or less assimilated immigrants, typically poor, tolerated in the place by the local society. The second category consists of individuals whom the Bible refers to as נָכְרִי, *nokri*, or זָר, *zar*. Both words have distinctly negative connotations. Etymologically, they are related to otherness, to something that is different,[8] and this otherness is understood here as systematic, programmatic: they denote persons who do not respect local customs or are openly hostile. Therefore, attitudes towards such people are characterised by considerable reserve or scorn.[9]

The attitude of the society of that time towards immigrants was inherently negative. Generally, people of other nations were perceived as enemies or at least viewed with suspicion. It is not surprising, therefore, that the settled guests, *gerim*, were effectively on the margins of society and other foreigners found themselves outside the protection of the law.[10] However much the biblical texts attempt to rectify this

[7] Egypt, one of the dominant powers in the ancient Near East, was probably important to the Israelites mainly for its economic and political power; however, its cultural influences are also evident in the Bible (see, e.g., Prov 22:17–24:22, the Joseph narrative, love poetry). See also Herbert B. Huffmon, 'Egypt,' in *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, ed. Mark Allan Powell, Revised & Updated (New York: HarperOne, 2011). With the Edomites the Hebrews were linked by the aforementioned idea of common root, kinship – Gen. 25:29–30.

[8] Cf. the similarly used noun נֵכָר, *nekar* – 'that which is foreign', 'foreignness', also with negative connotations, likewise סוּר, *sur* – 'to turn aside', also figuratively.

[9] For a more detailed definition of the terms and their exact meanings, see Petr Štica, *Cizinec v tvých branách: Biblické podněty pro etickou reflexi migrace* (Praha: Karolinum, 2011), 28–34; Kisler, '*Love the Stranger for You were Strangers*,' 6–9.

[10] Cf. Glanville, *Adopting the stranger*, 38–41.

animosity, they show that it was widespread in contemporary practice. *Gerim* are referred to along with Levites, slaves, servants, orphans, and widows (Deut. 16:11) as an endangered group (Ex. 20:10), and sometimes they are even mentioned only after livestock (Deut. 5:14). There are repeated references to foreigners living within the gates of the city (Ex. 20:10; Deut. 5:14; 14:21; 24:14; 31:12), a place where not only important public events took place but also where the poor and the needy were concentrated.[11] It cannot be said for sure whether immigrants were marginalised by society in a systematic way; however, in any case, they were commonly subjected to oppression and injustice (Job 31:31; Ezek. 22:7,29; Prov 14:31). They are sometimes viewed as potential propagators of pagan religious ideas, seducers to idolatry, or apostasy to other gods,[12] so that settled guests are required to respect the principles of ritual purity and the commandments of the law (Ex. 20:10; Lev. 16:29; 17:8–13; 17:15), and to fully embrace Judaism upon their return from exile.

On the other hand, the biblical texts formulate an ethical-legal framework in which any hostility towards foreigners, at least settled ones, is fundamentally rejected. They explicitly forbid their disadvantaging or declassing in public life. The local person is to be in solidarity with those who sojourn in Israel as guests – he is to love the alien as himself (Lev. 19:34). This principle is richly elaborated in the biblical texts. It resonates across them as an ethical imperative (Deut. 1:16; 15:7; 24:14; cf. Lev. 25:47–49), it is implemented in a number of legal regulations and customs (the same laws are to apply to guests as to locals – Ex. 12:49; Lev. 24:22; Num. 15:15–16),[13] it is enforced by the prophets (Isa. 56:3; Jer. 7:6; 22:3; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5; cf. Ezek. 22:7,29), and as we will show later, it also contributes to the formation of New Testament texts. The participation of foreigners in the common cult can be seen not only as a duty but also as a privilege (Num. 9:14), although

[11] Gen. 38:14; Judg. 19:15; 2 Kings 7:3; cf. Deut. 14:29; 15:7; 24:14; 26:12. For more on the city gates, their functions and the presence of the poor in their vicinity, see Daniel A. Frese, *The City Gate in Ancient Israel and Her Neighbors The Form, Function, and Symbolism of the Civic Forum in the Southern Levant* (Leiden: BRILL, 2020), 127–179, 184–190.

[12] Num. 25:1–2; cf. also Prov 2:16; 5:3.

[13] Cf. also Ex. 12:19; Lev. 20:2; 26:12. However, foreigners did not enjoy full equality with local people at the legal level – the awareness of kinship ties aroused the need for 'higher solidarity'. See Deut. 14:21; 15:3; 23:21. See more in The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *What Is Man?: A Journey Through Biblical Anthropology* (London: Darton Longman & Todd Ltd, 2021), 244–245.

its full form is open to the circumcised only (Ex. 12:48). God Himself protects guests and strangers (Deut. 10:18; Ps. 146:9), and since everyone is, in fact, a guest and an alien in the Promised Land (Lev. 25:23), Ezekiel says that all should share in it. The chosen people are to share it with the sojourners (Ezek. 47:22).

The call for the acceptance and integration of settled foreigners is surprising not only in its degree of radicalism but also in its contrast to the actual practice of the time. However, as the following section will show, it was a logical and necessary claim since it was closely tied to the values and principles that constituted the very essence of Jewish national and religious identity.

2. Israel as a Hospitable Guest

A kindly attitude toward aliens seems to be shaped on two basic planes in the Old Testament. The first one is based on the real experience of need and the ubiquity of persons who were dependent on the help of their surroundings. Such people were most often encountered in urban settings characterised by great wealth stratification and social inequality.[14] A particularly poor stratum here consisted of the landless, who earned their living mainly by occasional work of a menial nature[15] – within this group, along with the Levites,[16] strangers are mentioned most frequently in the Old Testament (see Deut. 16:11,14; 26:11–13; see also Judg. 19:1).

However, the state of unequal distribution of wealth, which forced a large part of society to live in very difficult conditions, is repeatedly subjected to harsh criticism in the Bible. The prophets cry out against the entrenched social injustice (Isa. 5:8–10; Amos 8:4–6; Mic. 2:2; see also Eccles. 4:1; 5:7): the poor person is not to be used merely as cheap labour but is to share in the wealth produced. The Deuteronomic ethic strives for the all-round integration of the settled stranger, which, in addition to cult acceptance, should also have an economic and social dimension,[17] seeking to eliminate poverty on a 'systemic'

[14] See Avraham Faust, 'Social Stratification in the Iron Age Levant,' in *Behind the Scenes of the Old Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts*, ed. Jonathan S. Greer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 490–491.
[15] Peter Altmann, 'The Local Economies of Ancient Israel,' in *Behind the Scenes*, 434.
[16] Num. 18:23; Deut. 10:9; 12:12; 14:27,29; Josh. 13:14,33; cf. Deut. 18:1–2.
[17] Glanville, *Adopting the stranger*, 102–104.

level (Deut. 15:4). However, the biblical authors realistically know that 'there will never cease to be some in need on the earth'. Thus, in the Lord's command 'open your hand to the poor and needy neighbour in your land' (Deut 15:11), a broad theme running through the biblical traditions is articulated (see, e.g., Lev. 19:9–10; Deut. 24:19–21; Ps. 82:3; Prov 14:21; 29:7; 31:8–9; Isa. 58:7–10; Ezek. 16:49).[18] This appeal to solidarity is not only a manifestation of the collectivist spirit of ancient Hebrew society and the desire to maintain social peace,[19] but it also expresses a recognition of the value of every human being as an image of God (Gen. 9:6). The Lord, who Himself takes care of the oppressed (Ps. 12:5; 35:10; Prov 22:22–23; Mal. 3:5),[20] does not distinguish whether the oppressed is a local, a foreigner, or anyone else. When people are in need, their dignity is to be protected, regardless of their cultural, religious, or other backgrounds – for 'those who oppress the poor insult their Maker' (Prov 14:31; cf. 17:5).

The second level on which the biblical texts form their appeal for a kindly attitude towards strangers is based on the experience of a life in a similar situation. The appeal 'you shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt' (Deut. 10:19; cf. Ex. 22:20; 23:9; Lev. 19:34; Deut. 23:8) refers to the collective memory of a miserable existence under a foreign power, but, especially after the return from the Babylonian exile, and also to the experience of oppression in general.[21] In Deut. 24:14–22, the experience of one's hardship and the command to be just and merciful to the needy are interconnected in a quite explicit way. We find here not just an application of the Golden Rule[22] but a reference to Israel's self-understanding as God's chosen and protected people. Awareness of the value of the gift of life in the Promised Land and life in general is reflected in a humble relationship with the Creator, as well as in mercy toward people in whose troubles (Job 29:15–16; Prov 31:8–9) the chosen people are able to see their own history. Israel, in this way, returns to the roots of its national-religious

[18] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *What Is Man?: A Journey Through Biblical Anthropology*, 244–247.
[19] See Deut. 28:43–44, also Glanville, *Adopting the stranger*, 18–24.
[20] Cf. also Ps. 10:18; 34:7.
[21] José E. Ramírez Kidd, *Alterity and Identity in Israel* (Berlin; New York: de Gruyter, 1999), 87–98.
[22] See Luke 6:31; Matt. 7:12; Tob. 4:15.

identity[23] and adopts on this basis a coherent spiritual attitude of a pilgrim and stranger (1 Chron. 29:15; Ps. 39:12; 119:19). A positive attitude towards people in a similar situation becomes one of the criteria for a godly life (Deut. 14:29; Isa. 1:16f; Jer. 22:3).

In the narratives of Sodom (Gen. 19) and Gibeah (Judg. 19), the protection of the stranger becomes a matter of real personal honour. Both narratives do not criticise, as some later traditions have interpreted them,[24] primarily homosexual or, more generally, violent sexual behaviour, but precisely the cruel and imperious treatment of guests. They draw attention to 'the conduct of a social and political entity that does not wish to welcome foreigners with respect, and therefore seeks to humiliate them, constraining them by force to suffer a shameful process of submission' – and it is precisely this manifestation of power, the attempt to show the guest and the one under whose roof the guest is staying 'who is the master here', that is, in turn, punished.[25] The perniciousness of the 'sin of Sodom' so understood is also recalled by a number of other Old Testament authors and traditions (see especially Wisd. 19:13–17; also, e.g., Isa. 3:9; 1:10; Jer. 23:14; Ezek. 16:49; Lam. 4:6) and reflected upon by the Early Church. In contrast, the narrative of Abraham's hospitality to the three angelic pilgrims (Gen. 18:1–8) remains for other traditions an example of the ideal treatment of guests and a path to God's blessing.[26] Abraham, recognising that he is not just meeting ordinary pilgrims, shows them hospitality far beyond what is necessary,[27] which creates a distinct tension with the Sodom story and also foreshadows the dramatically different ending of the two narratives. While Sodom will be destroyed, Abraham 'shall become a great and mighty nation'; 'all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him' (Gen 18:18). The biblical appeal to hospitality not only sought to

[23] Among many places, see, e.g., Ex. 13:3; 20:2; Lev. 19:36; 23:43; 26:13; Deut. 5:6,15; 7:8; 13:11; 15:15; 16:12; 26:6–8; Ps. 81:10; Hos. 13:4. Particularly in Deuteronomy we see a coherent tradition within which the narrative of the sojourn in Egypt is taken up and developed in different contexts. Glanville, *Adopting the stranger*, 189–193.

[24] Jth. 1:7; cf. 2 Pet. 2:6–10.

[25] The Pontifical Biblical Commission, *What Is Man?: A Journey Through Biblical Anthropology*, 184.

[26] Cf. Andrew E. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2005), 59–71. The values we saw in the account of Abraham's reception of the angelic pilgrims also appear in many other Old Testament passages. See ibid., 71–86.

[27] See Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Book of Genesis* (San Antonio: Ariel Ministries, 2008), 310–311.

preserve one of the fundamental values on which the life of the ancient world was based, nor did it merely formulate a demand for one of the works of mercy, but it also had a deep religious meaning. Hospitality was 'an expression of openness to the other person and to the Lord, to the gifting of the other person and of God Himself'.[28]

The two presented planes of the Old Testament relationship to foreigners cannot be separated from each other. The experience of the Babylonian exile, which the Israelites project into the narrative of their sojourn in Egypt, is a constant warning against the formation of a society that forces foreigners to live in inhumane conditions unworthy of God's creation; at the same time, the chosen people also always see in the memory of their return to their homeland a concrete experience of God's love and care. They are reminded of the fragility of the privilege of living in relative prosperity in their own land. As spiritual strangers, they show their gratitude to the Creator.

However, it should be emphasised that both of these moments represent a general theological framework that may not always be evident in all texts and that the way it is implemented may vary from text to text and from tradition to tradition. Also, we may see visible exclusivist tendencies in the Old Testament: the surrounding nations are portrayed as dangerous (e.g., in Est.), or sometimes as culturally impure or hostile to God, and Israel is to keep separate from them and subjugate them (Num. 33:55; Judg. 1:21–36). One of the most explicit manifestations of this tendency is the rejection of mixed marriages between Israelites and women from surrounding nations. The books of Nehemiah and Ezra dedicate particular space to this topic (see especially Ezek. 9–10; Neh. 10:29–30), but both texts follow and develop in this respect already existing, similarly focused passages from the historical books (see, e.g., Ex. 34:15–16; Deut. 7:1–4; Josh. 23:12–13; Judg. 3:6–7; 1 Kings 11:1–13; 21:25–26).[29] Only strangers who embrace the Jewish cult are viewed explicitly positively (Isa. 56:6–7, cf. also the fate of Ruth or Jonah). However, these tendencies do not undermine the general, theologically anchored inclination of biblical traditions to see foreigners as needy and brothers. As the broader historical context of the production of the

[28] Štica, *Cizinec v tvých branách*, 34–36.

[29] See also more on the apparent link between these books and the First and Second Books of Chronicles in Pieter M. Venter, 'The dissolving of marriages in Ezra 9–10 and Nehemiah 13 revisited,' *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 74, no. 4 (2018): 7–8, doi: 10.4102/hts.v74i4.4854.

aforementioned books of Nehemiah and Ezra shows, the demarcation from the surrounding nations is much more a side-effect of the process of seeking the identity of one's own nation, which gained in importance and intensity in the post-exilic period.[30] Radical measures of rejecting even the already existing mixed marriages, therefore, do not constitute a programmatic rejection of everything foreign but, unlike the clearly universal positive view of the stranger outlined above, are rather based on the needs of the specific historical and social situation.[31] On a general level, the effort to separate from foreigners is driven by the attempt to preserve one's own cult and identity, and certainly not by any form of xenophobia or diminishing the value of a person solely on the basis of his or her foreign origin.

All of the above-mentioned theological moments mentioned would be important also for the Early Church – but as we will show, within the New Testament, they will also be developed and elaborated in a new theological context.

3. The Stranger in the New Testament

The New Testament speaks of foreigners in different historical and social situations. In the Church, a community called out from all strata, nations, and classes and not primarily bound to one ethnic or geographical area, the figure of the stranger appears in a slightly different meaning. Ξένος, the 'man from elsewhere', the comer or traveller,[32] no longer represents a coherent topic, nor does he stand in tension with the local man who disappears from the New Testament perspective.

In the New Testament, we can find the motif rather in a figurative sense. Every Christian is, in a spiritual sense, a stranger, a person from elsewhere, dwelling in a world without a home. In this sense, however, the texts use the rather synonymous terms πάροικος[33] or παρεπίδημος.[34]

[30] See ibid., 9–11.

[31] Moreover, the presence of multiple layers which have aims differing from each other is evident in the texts. In the rejection of mixed marriages, scholars primarily trace efforts to address various political-legal problems associated with the formation of a new post-exilic community, articulated on a cultic level, on a national and macro-political scale. See Douglas, 'The stranger in the Bible,' 288–295; Venter, 'The dissolving,' 7–13.

[32] In this sense, four times in Matt. 25:31–46; Acts 17:21; Heb. 11:13; 3 John 1:5.

[33] Eph. 2:19; 1 Pet. 2:11.

[34] Heb. 11:13; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11. In Eph. 2:12,19, however, the above-mentioned term ξένος is used in this sense.

They also sometimes refer to the negative connotations that both had in contemporary Greek: believers are strangers to the outer society, outsiders who have to deal with being disregarded, as well as, presumably, with various forms of material disadvantage (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11).[35] The Epistle to the Hebrews then connects the feeling of being a stranger with the expectation of fulfilling future promises, where living in present conditions is seen as somewhat provisional (Heb. 11:13; cf. 11:8–10). In this respect, it evokes the collective memory of the sojourn in Egypt and the exodus to the Promised Land.

However, when it comes to the figure of the stranger in the proper sense of the word, the New Testament sometimes refers to a stranger, an unknown person, not necessarily an immigrant or a displaced person (3 John 1:5),[36] but often just someone on the move who lacked a background. As such, the figure loses his negative traits and becomes primarily one of the prototypes of the needy neighbour who is looked upon with brotherly love. Our examination, which focuses primarily on the relationship of the biblical authors to strangers as such, will begin with these persons.

4. The Stranger as a Needy Neighbour

The early Christians also had to deal with people who were dependent on the help of others.[37] Following the Jewish tradition of almsgiving, the Church encourages Christians to be in solidarity with these people and to help them (Gal. 2:10; Eph. 4:28; Heb. 13:16; 1 John 3:17; especially widows and orphans are mentioned in this context – see Acts 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:3–4; James 1:27). The poor and needy, after all, are one of those to whom Jesus' Gospel is addressed (Luke 4:18; Matt. 11:4–5; see also James 2:5). Jesus blesses them (Luke 6:20), pays considerable attention to them (Luke 14:12–24; 16:19–31; Matt. 14:14), calls for help and alms (Luke 11:41; cf. Mark 14:7–8), and the distribution of wealth for their benefit he presents as the highest ideal of the godly man (Matt. 19:21; cf. Luke 12:33). The Acts of the Apostles embodies this ideal in the history of the Church, which is depicted as a community of people where 'everything they owned was held in common' (Acts 4:32)

[35] See Mireia Ryšková, *Doba Ježíše Nazaretského* (Praha: Karolinum, 2008), 443–444.
[36] Cf. Denis R. Bratcher, Mark Allan Powell. 'Alien,' in *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*.
[37] See Ryšková, *Doba Ježíše Nazaretského*, 116–118.

and there was not a needy person among them (v. 34). However, the references to the already initiated collections in the Pauline epistles (Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 16:1–2; 2 Cor. 8:1–8; cf. also Acts 11:30) and the signs that some of the vulnerable groups had become institutionalised within the Early Church (e.g., the widowhood in 1 Tim. 5:9–16) show that material aid was really provided.

The stranger is perhaps most explicitly linked to people in need in Matthew's parable of the judgment of the Son of Man (Matt. 25:31–46). The man from elsewhere, the wayfarer, is here counted among the 'least of the brothers':[38] the hungry, the thirsty, the naked, the sick, and the imprisoned.[39] Similarly, other New Testament authors, when they encourage hospitality toward strangers (Rom. 12:13; Titus 1:8; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9), do not forget to mention the needy brethren (Rom. 12:13), prisoners, and the suffering (Heb. 13:3). These exhortations, however, are more than a call for the observance of the rules of ancient hospitality as mentioned in Hellenistic literature or Hellenistic Judaism[40] and referred to in some New Testament epistles (Rom. 16:1–2; Gal. 4:14; 3 John 1:5–6).[41] In each needy person, the Church recognises Jesus himself (Matt. 20:40,45) and sees helping them as a fulfilment of His gospel.

This point comes to the fore when Paul encourages the Corinthians to participate in a collection for the poor brethren in Judea. In

[38] οἱ ἀδελφοὶ … οἱ ἐλάχιστοι, 'the least in importance'.

[39] Matthew here was following a contemporary Jewish tradition in which similar lists of good deeds aimed at benefiting many of the characters mentioned are relatively common. See also Isa. 58:7; Ezek. 18:7,16; Job 22:6–7; 31:17,19,21,31–32; Tob. 1:16–17; 4:16; Ecclus. 7:34–35. Cf. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 278–279.

[40] The New Testament refers to hospitality as a value known even outside the Christian environment – e.g., Luke 14:21; Acts 27:3; 28:2,7. See Jaroslav Brož, *List Židům* (Praha: Centrum biblických studií AV ČR a UK v Praze, 2015), 210. For more on the relationship of Christian principles of hospitality to the hospitality ideals of the Greco-Roman and Jewish world, see Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels*, 94–99.

[41] Much of the contemporary practice of receiving guests is mentioned in the Second and Third Epistles of John – see more in Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 215–216, 222. The principles of hospitality formed an important part of the social order of the time – it can be said that they not only concerned the material provision of those who were traveling but also affected the personal honor of both parties involved, i.e., the guest and his host. Violation of these principles could have serious consequences, which seems to have echoes in, e.g., Mark 6:11; Matt. 10:14,40–42; Luke 9:5; Acts 13:51. For further references to contemporary rules of hospitality within the Early Church, see also Acts 10:24; 16:15; 21:4; 1 Cor. 16:5–12; Phil. 2:19–30; Col. 4:10.

doing so, he refers to the Lord's generosity:[42] although Jesus was rich, he made himself poor so that they 'through his poverty might become rich' (2 Cor. 8:9). In his reasoning, theological truth is interwoven with everyday reality; reality is shaped and determined by it.[43] The grace received from God through Christ's sacrifice is here made manifest in fraternal love, φιλαδελφία, oriented towards one's own family, clan, or, more broadly, nation (see, e.g., Gal. 6:2; Eph. 5:2; John 13:34; 1 John 2:7–10), and yet elsewhere it turns continuously to φιλοξενία – hospitality, love for those who came from elsewhere. The transition between the two concepts is remarkably seamless in the Epistle to the Hebrews,[44] where the aforementioned scene of the three angel guests in Gen. 18:1–8 (13:1–2) is recalled in relation to them. Although this pericope, according to some exegetes, was directed to the ranks of the Church and applied primarily to the travelling brethren, presumably wandering preachers,[45] the exhortations to hospitality are of universal scope in the New Testament.[46] The point is not so much who is the subject of the help; what matters is that in helping others, Christians fulfil their mission and, in fact, also their cult – they meet with God.[47] Thus, Christians should love everyone, even their enemies (Matt. 5:43–45; Luke 6:27–29; Rom. 12:14). They are not to neglect hospitality and generosity, for 'with such sacrifices God is pleased' (v. 16);[48] moreover, the love of one for another, according to the First Epistle of Peter, 'covers over a multitude of sins' (1 Pet. 4:8).

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[42] Literally, Paul speaks of χάρις – grace.

[43] Although Paul speaks in the context of the collections of the alleviation of wealth differences among Christians (2 Cor. 8:13), and the reciprocity of aid probably played a significant practical role, as gifts from 'the poor to the poor,' collections were primarily to be expressions of brotherly love (2 Cor. 8:8), following the example of Christ's love. See Georges Massinelli, *For Your Sake He Became Poor: Ideology and Practice of Gift Exchange between Early Christian Groups* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021), 272–277, 219–223. Some scholars also see in the Church's efforts to support the Judeo-Christians in Jerusalem an effort to cooperate with God's plan of history, for it is from Jerusalem that salvation is to spread to all nations. See Ralph Martin, *2 Corinthians* (Carol Streams: Tyndale, 2009), 335.

[44] See Brož, *List Židům*, 210.

[45] Robert P. Gordon, *Hebrews* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2008), 186.

[46] See Štica, *Cizinec v tvých branách*, 67–70. The extent and intensity of Christian aid to travelers and people in need, precisely because of its ideological anchoring in the theology of the Church, probably exceeded the contemporary standards of Roman-Hellenic society. Cf. ibid., 72–73.

[47] Cf. ibid., 63.

[48] See also Heb. 2:17; 4:15; 1 John 4:20–21.

In helping the brothers and sisters in danger, therefore, the Church not only sought to alleviate the impact of social disparities among congregations or their individual members[49] but, as in the Old Testament, took a specific spiritual stance toward the poor and needy. It is based primarily on Jesus' hope for the imminent coming of the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33).[50] Jesus is sent 'to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 15:24, cf. 10:5–6), but to the community expecting the intervention of the all-transforming power of God, the first manifestations of which are already becoming visible, are invited not only Jews but also foreigners-Gentiles. They repeatedly surprise Jesus with the depth of their faith, which surpasses that of those who were of Jewish descent (Matt. 8:5–13; 15:21–28; John 4).[51] Special attention is also paid to the marginalised and needy. No one who helps these people will be left without a proper reward in the new reality of God's kingdom (Matt. 6:1–4; cf. Mark 9:41; 10:42; Luke 14:14; Heb. 6:10). But this help cannot be quantified (cf. Luke 21:1–4 par.)[52] and cannot be speculated upon (Luke 6:30); the story of Jesus' anointing with the precious oil in Mark 14:3–9 par. also shows that it is not necessary to help at any cost. One is not to measure one's help in any way (Luke 3:11). If he does, he should know that God will measure him with the measure (Luke 6:38).

But Jesus' radical stance of openness to God's power penetrates even deeper: it reaches and transforms the basic fabric of social relations. In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), a new framework for thinking about to whom one is a neighbour and to whom one is obligated by fraternal love is presented. A universalism is established here in which the concept of neighbour, πλησίον, goes far beyond the circle of one's own nation ('sons of one's people' – Lev. 19:18) or guests, *gerim* (Lev. 19:33–34).[53] Existing political, religious, or social categories cease to play any role, and the concept of neighbourhood is neither based on the status or needs of persons nor their other qualities or characteristics. Jesus leaves the initial lawyer's question 'who is my neighbour' (v. 25) unanswered and replies with a counter-question that

[49] For more on the spiritual focus of Christian aid, see Donald Guthrie, 'The New Testament Approach to Social Responsibility,' *Vox Evangelica* 8 (1973): 51–53.

[50] Cf. also e.g. Matt. 4:17; Luke 11:20; 17:21; Rom. 14:17; Col. 1:13.

[51] See Štica, *Cizinec v tvých branách*, 54–60.

[52] Thus, in Luke 21:1–4, Jesus gives the example of the widow who shared everything she had with the other poor – her entire livelihood, in fact, 'her whole life'. See Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 317–319.

[53] For a more detailed definition of the concept of neighbour, see ibid., 172–173.

turns the focus to what is really important: who *has been neighbour* to the needy, who has acted as a neighbour and thus fulfilled the core idea of this relationship.[54] Anyone can be a neighbour to anyone – all that matters is in whom I am willing to recognise my neighbour and who can recognise a neighbour in me.

5. Aliens with Citizenship in Heaven

It would seem, then, that the Christian in the New Testament experiences alienation only in relation to the outside world. Here again, we can think of a relation with the spiritual attitude of Jesus himself, who, according to the Gospel of John, is the one who remained unrecognised by the world, who 'came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him' (John 1:11).[55] However, even this relationship does not constitute an obstacle to the love of neighbour that is to permeate all boundaries, including those of the Church. The above-mentioned statements about Christians as strangers in this world are not meant to articulate a negative attitude towards the neighbouring people but, on the contrary, to reflect the attitude taken towards Christians by the outer society[56] or possibly to express the eschatological anchoring of Christian values.[57] Similarly, the various formulations about citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20; see also 2 Cor. 5:1–10) or dwelling in the world as 'aliens and exiles' (1 Pet. 2:11) do not seek to separate Christians from the outside world but focus attention on the heavenly realm and future promises.[58]

The more coherent effort to move away from the world that we find in Johannine theology (John 17:14–16; 1 John 2:15–17; 5:19; see also James 1:27b; 4:4) is based on a view of the world as a place entirely under the power of sin, fundamentally unreformable and hostile to

[54] See Ian A. McFarland, 'Who is My Neighbor?: The Good Samaritan as a Source for Theological Anthropology,' *Modern Theology* 17, no. 1 (2001): 59–60, 62, doi: 10.1111/1468-0025.00151.

[55] Also, in other passages of John's Gospel, several characters refer to Jesus as someone from elsewhere (e.g., 4:9; 8:48; 9:29; 18:35), and sometimes even Jesus refers to himself in this way (8:14; 16:28). Moreover, we find in the Gospels Jesus as a person on a journey, a wanderer (Matt. 2:13–23; Luke 9:58; 24:18). Cf. Štica, *Cizinec v tvých branách*, 73–75.

[56] Jan A. Dus, *První list Petrův* (Praha: Česká biblická společnost, 2017), 13.

[57] Štica, *Cizinec v tvých branách*, 75–77.

[58] See also Col 3:1–2.

its Creator (see, e.g., 1 John 3:13–17; John 7:7; 15:18–27).[59] However, the same Johannine texts also call for unconditional love (John 13:34; 15:17; 1 John 2:9,11; 3:17; 4:7–21).[60] It, or the closely related faith in Jesus, marks the difference between such a negatively viewed world and the Church. What we see here, then, is not a principled rejection of the world – after all, God loves it and all who inhabit it as His creation (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9–10)[61] – but rather an effort not to conform to its values. At the very least, there remains a concern for the ultimate fate of the world.[62] The love of one for another is to be a sign and a witness to the people of the world (John 13:35); they are to come to faith in Jesus (John 17:21).

The logic of living according to God's love, unknown and incomprehensible to the outside world, fundamentally transforms the shape of relationships within the Church. Believers are called into a new identity as the children of God (1 John 3:1; cf. John 1:10–11), where no longer is anyone a stranger (ξένος) or an immigrant (πάροικος), but all belong equally to the family of God (Eph. 2:19). In the context of the Letter to the Ephesians, the formulation is not just to overcome the conflict between groups of Judaism and Gentile origin (Rom. 10:12), nor is it to address only cultural or ethnic differences. The Spirit in which people are baptised and joined into one body (1 Cor. 12:13) also transcends social roles determined by gender (Gal. 3:26–29) or locality (Col. 3:11)[63] and, most importantly, establishes an environment profiling itself as a family.[64] According to the ancient ideal, people are not only to find refuge and protection there but also to gain a new identity and sense of belonging.[65] Here the Old Testament concept of the chosen

[59] Paul A. Rainbow, *Johannine Theology: The Gospel, the Epistles and the Apocalypse* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 121–129.

[60] Cf. also 1 Cor. 15:34. Although the First Epistle of John in the first place speaks of love for a brother or brothers (ἀδελφός), the synonymous statements about mutual love (3:11,23; 4:7,11,12) show that the love is to be set on a religious plane. Also, within the reference to Cain (3:12.15), it is spoken of a brother in a non-communal sense. Cf. also Gal. 6:10.

[61] Moreover, this world and its inhabitants are to be transformed and saved by God's intervention. See Rainbow, *Johannine Theology*, 139–141.

[62] John 3:17, cf. Matt. 5:13.

[63] The local affiliation is probably marked by the dualism of βάρβαρος (Berber, south) and Σκύθης (Scythian, north). See Mireia Ryšková, *List Koloským* (Praha: Česká biblická společnost, 2018), 158.

[64] The addressees are οἰκεῖος – members of the same household or family members.

[65] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 212. See also Petr Štica, *Cizinec v tvých branách*, 66–67.

people of God is picked up, but now with a radical openness to all people – whether those who already belong to this community of love or those who are still only invited to it.

Conclusion

Our study has presented the figure of the stranger in the Bible as a person to be welcomed and helped. Although the answer to the question of who exactly a stranger is and how society should relate to him or her has evolved within the biblical traditions, there is a clear, theologically anchored tendency to take a welcoming attitude toward these people.

Although contemporary practice differed, the Old Testament texts call for respect for the rights and dignity of persons who settled in Israel as immigrants and for their integration into the social system. This attitude is based on the collective experience of sojourning in Egypt. On the one hand, it is interpreted as a period of deprivation and need, which leads to sensitivity towards those who are in need now, and on the other hand, it incorporates the remembrance of the exodus to the Promised Land, in which the identity of a people tended by God is commemorated. A spiritual attitude of gratitude towards a loving Creator is formed, which is reflected in a loving relationship with all people.

The New Testament builds on both of these theological planes but develops them in a new theological context. The stranger, now understood more as a traveller, the poor, or the needy in general, is included among the neighbours to whom one owes a special duty of love. It follows Jesus' teaching on the kingdom of God and calls for effective help for these people, thereby bringing to life the promises of Jesus' gospel. In the Church, a community founded on the new identity of God's children, all strangeness among people passes away. Some circles of this community feel alienated from the outside world and therefore tend to concentrate on those in their own midst, but even these do not despise or ignore the people who live outside the boundaries of the Church but show them hospitality and bear witness to them by living out of God's love.

Our examination of the biblical relationship to strangers also has important implications for debates over the question of taking in refugees and migrants today. It can perhaps never be emphasised strongly enough that a welcoming attitude towards foreigners is not and cannot

be simply a matter of worldview, one of moral obligation, or a lofty ideal. In the Bible, this attitude derives from the very essence of faith in a liberating God, and as such, it is deeply woven into the anatomy of the life of the community that experiences God's saving work upon it. It is presented as an important part of the spiritual identity of a believer, and as such, it plays a crucial role in his or her search for an appropriate attitude towards strangers and refugees today. The texts do not call in the first place for the application of the ideals of interpersonal relationships within the Early Church, which are often not transferable to a society-wide situation; rather, the crucial point here is the adoption of a new way of thinking in which who the others are and where they come from ceases to play any significant role. Each person is the work of the Creator, and in everyone we can recognise ourselves in situations of need. Jesus' appeal to see the neighbour in every person, the stranger, the overlooked, or the alien, shows that beyond helping those in need, we also need to become free of any xenophobia, even toward those people we may tend to see as enemies today. If it is no longer Samaritans, Assyrians or Egyptians, such people may be Muslims, Belarusians, or Russians.

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VARIA

PROV 8:22FF IN EARLY CHRISTIAN STATEMENTS ON THE RELATION OF ORIGIN OF THE SON FROM THE FATHER: THE CASE OF JUSTIN, ATHENAGORAS, AND THEOPHILUS*

PAVEL DUDZIK

ABSTRACT

The article analyses the quotes of *Prov* 8:22–25 and references to this passage in three early Christian theologians of the 2nd century, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras of Athens, and Theophilus of Antioch. It examines the way how the three authors employ the present Biblical passage in their expositions concerning the relation of origin of the Son of God (Word and Wisdom) from God the Father. It argues for *Prov* 8:22 as a witness of the pre-existence of the Word–Wisdom and of the Word as the 'Beginning' of all creation, and it attempts to find hints at *Prov* 8:25 in the statements in which the three Christian authors employ the verb 'to beget' (γεννᾶν) and the noun 'offspring' (γέννημα) as the terms for coming forth of the second divine person.

Keywords

Prov 8:22–25; Patristic Exegesis; Early Christian Apologists; Relation of Origin; Justin Martyr; Athenagoras of Athens; Theophilus of Antioch; Wisdom; Beginning; Pre-existence; to beget; γεννᾶν; Offspring; γέννημα

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The speech of the Wisdom of God in the Old Testament book of *Proverbs* (*Prov* 8:4–36), during which, after introducing and recommending herself to all people, Wisdom relates her origin from God, her dwelling with God, and her presence at the moment when God was

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creating the universe, drew the recurrent attention of Jewish as well as early Christian exegetes of the Scripture. It is not only for its beauty and rareness of form but also for the content. The Jewish human author and the later Septuagint translator of this book depict a metaphorical scene of God's dealings before and during the creation of the universe. It is vivid and full of excitement in the portrayal of the intimate relationship between God and his Wisdom. God delights in her, she is glad to be with God all the time, and He rejoices when completing His creation and being with the sons of men.[1] In this scene, according to the Septuagint version, Wisdom is the first subject of God's dealing and the first witness of His creative activity. God's conduct toward the Wisdom is described in *Prov* 8:22–25 LXX particularly:

> [22] The Lord created me as the beginning of his ways, for the sake of his works.
> [23] Before the age he founded me, in the beginning.
> [24] Before he made the earth and before he made the depths,
> before he brought forth the springs of the waters,
> [25] before the mountains were established
> and before all the hills, he begets me.[2]

These verses, referring to the relation of origin of the Wisdom from God the Father, are the starting point for the analyses in the present

[1] *Prov* 8:30b–31 LXX: 'It is I who was the one in whom he took delight. / And each day I was glad in his presence at every moment, / when he rejoiced after he had completed the world / and rejoiced among the sons of men.' Translations from the Septuagint in this article are taken from *A New English Translation of the Septuagint and the Other Greek Translations Traditionally Included under This Title*, ed. Albert Pietersma – Benjamin G. Wright (New York – Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007), and they are occasionally slightly altered. For a literary analysis of the poem on the creation, which consists of two parts (*Prov* 8:21a–25: pre-existence of the Wisdom, and *Prov* 8:26–36: the joyful presence of Wisdom with God when He created the world), see David-Marc D'Hamonville, *La Bible d'Alexandrie*, vol. 17: *Les Proverbes* (Paris: Cerf, 2000), 89–92; cf. also Johann Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs. Jewish and/or Hellenistic Proverbs* (Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill, 1997), 201–204, doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004275935. For the background of the Hebrew wisdom poem in *Prov* 8, see, e.g., Bernd U. Schipper, *Proverbs 1–15. A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs 1:1–15:33* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2019), 282–294, doi: https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvp2n3q7.

[2] *Prov* 8:22–25 LXX: 22 κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ, / 23 πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με ἐν ἀρχῇ, / 24 πρὸ τοῦ τὴν γῆν ποιῆσαι καὶ πρὸ τοῦ τὰς ἀβύσσους ποιῆσαι, / πρὸ τοῦ προελθεῖν τὰς πηγὰς τῶν ὑδάτων / 25 πρὸ τοῦ ὄρη ἑδρασθῆναι, / πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν γεννᾷ με.

study in which quotes of this Biblical passage and references to expressions and notions included in it are examined in the writings of the three early Christian theologians of the second half of the 2nd century, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras of Athens, and Theophilus of Antioch. All three authors have one thing in common. References to *Prov* 8:22–25 seem to be an important part of their expositions of the relation of origin of the Son of God (identified, often without saying, with the divine Word and Wisdom) from God the Father.

At the time when the early Christian authors started to publish their first treatises, *Prov* 8:22–25 was neither an unknown nor uninterpreted text. The first of these verses, *Prov* 8:22, was referred to in the Hellenistic Jewish deuterocanonical books, especially in the book of *Sirach*. Wisdom was treated as the first creation or as the creation before all creation of the universe.[3] The pre-existence of Wisdom and her coming into being 'before the age' was emphasised.[4] For the Septuagint translator, the creational status of Wisdom should have ensured the exclusive position of God as the only transcendent Creator. God acts as a creator toward Wisdom (*Prov* 8:22: ἔκτισεν) as well as toward the universe (which is expressed with the infinitive ποιῆσαι twice in *Prov* 8:24). The notion of immanence is also present in deuterocanonical statements on the Wisdom of God, though, in this case, the influence of other verses from *Proverbs* should be taken into consideration (e.g., *Prov* 3:19: 'God by Wisdom founded the earth').[5]

In the Hellenistic Jewish theology, the idea of a pre-existent Wisdom, which 'was before the heaven and earth', is preserved in Aristobulus in the first half of the 2nd century BC,[6] that is, possibly, at the same time when the Septuagint translation of the book of *Proverbs* into Greek was

[3] *Sir* 1:4: 'Before all things Wisdom has been created' (προτέρα πάντων ἔκτισται σοφία).

[4] *Sir* 24:8.9: 'Then the creator of all commanded me, and he who created me put down my tent … Before the age, from the beginning, he created me, and until the age I will never fail.' For the Wisdom being with God when he created the world (without evident textual references to *Prov* 8:22ff), see also *Wisdom of Salomon* (*Wis* 9:9): 'With you is wisdom, which knows your works and was present when you made the world' (καὶ μετὰ σοῦ ἡ σοφία ἡ εἰδυῖα τὰ ἔργα σου καὶ παροῦσα, ὅτε ἐποίεις τὸν κόσμον).

[5] *Sir* 1:9: 'The Lord, he created her, and he saw and enumerated her and poured her out upon all his works.' For the influence of *Prov* 8:22ff on the deuterocanonical writings, see Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*, 219–220; Mark Edwards, 'Justin's Logos and the Word of God,' *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, no. 3 (1995): 261–280, especially 264–265, doi: https://doi.org/10.1353/earl.0.0039.

[6] For the fragment from a writing by Aristobulus, see Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praep. evang.* XIII, 12, 9–11 (GCS 43,2: 195–196).

compiled.[7] Later, Philo of Alexandria (approx. 20 BC – 40 AD) used *Prov* 8:22–23 in *De ebrietate* 31 in the wording different from that in the Septuagint: 'God acquired me as the first of all of his works, and before the age he founded me' (ὁ θεὸς ἐκτήσατό με πρωτίστην τῶν ἑαυτοῦ ἔργων, καὶ πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέ με).[8] Philo employed his quote in a protological account in which God the Creator is depicted as the father of the universe, the knowledge of the Creator as the mother and the created world as the son. The idea of the pre-existence of the mother–knowledge (implicitly identified with the Wisdom of God) is clearly stated: 'It was necessary that all that came to the birth of creation should be younger than the mother and nurse of the All.'[9]

A Christian reader, however, understood the text of *Prov* 8:22ff LXX in a rather different way than it was meant by the Jewish Septuagint translator and often interpreted in the subsequent Jewish tradition. Hearing about a figure of the pre-existent Wisdom as a being dwelling with God at the moment of the creation of the universe, his or her conviction could be encouraged that God was not alone when he created the world, but that there was another divine person with him. Though the plurality of divine persons could also be testified to from other passages in the Old Testament,[10] the theologians of the early church did not hesitate to demonstrate it using the Old Testament Wisdom texts as well. On the other hand, the interpretation of *Prov* 8:22ff as a depiction of the relationship between God the Father and the Son before the ages was burdened with difficulty for the Christian reader that occurs in the first verse of that passage and arises only in the Septuagint translation[11]

[7] D'Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 134–139, even considers Aristobulus as the author of the Septuagint translation of *Proverbs*. For the origin of the translation of *Proverbs*, see also, ibid., 21–25; James K. Aitken, *The T&T Clark Companion to the Septuagint* (London – New Delhi – New York – Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2015), 342–344. For Aristobulus, see Martin Hengel, *Judentum und Hellenismus. Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2. Jahrhunderts vor Christus* (Tübingen : J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988), 295–307.

[8] Philo of Alexandria, *De ebr.* 31 (LCL 427, 334).

[9] See Philo of Alexandria, *De ebr.* 31 (LCL 427, 334): ἦν γὰρ ἀναγκαῖον τῆς μητρὸς καὶ τιθήνης τῶν ὅλων πάνθ᾽ ὅσα εἰς γένεσιν ἦλθεν εἶναι νεώτερα; see also Philo of Alexandria, *De virt.* 62 (LCL 341, 200) where the Wisdom is also treated as 'older than the whole world' (σοφίαν δὲ πρεσβυτέραν … τῆς τοῦ κόσμου παντὸς οὖσαν).

[10] E.g., in the plural 'let us make man' in *Gen* 1:26 or 'See, Adam has become like one of us' in *Gen* 3:22. For these witnesses, see below, the examination of the exegesis of *Prov* 8 in Justin, p. 116.

[11] In the Hebrew Masoretic text of Prov 8:22, the verb קנה occurs, which means 'to acquire' or 'to possess' in many instances in the Hebrew Bible; the meaning 'to create' for the same verb is not easy to testify (perhaps Ps 139:13). In the first part of Prov 8:22,

and that was felt as serious obstacle especially at the time of the Trinitarian controversies in the 4th century. As is well known, the formulation in *Prov* 8:22: 'The Lord created me…' (κύριος ἔκτισέν με), which is easily understandable in the context of the Jewish struggle to protect the transcendence of the only God and reject the existence of another uncreated person alongside the Godhead, was barely acceptable in the Christian Trinitarian concept. The relation of origin of the Son–Word–Wisdom from God the Father was expressed with the verb 'to beget' (γεννᾶν) from the earliest Christian texts, whereas the verb 'to create' (ποιεῖν, κτίζειν) was reserved for statements concerning the creation of the universe by God the Creator through the Son of God. After the controversies with the Arians, the preference for γεννᾶν was emphasised in the creed of the Church at the Council of Nicaea (325) with the phrase 'begotten, not made'; the preference for γεννᾶν can nevertheless be seen in the texts of much earlier Christians authors, as will be demonstrated below.

Having in mind also this later development, I provide a survey of the early Christian employment of *Prov* 8:22ff and investigate how the Christian authors of the second half of the 2nd century used this Biblical witness in their statements when referring to the pre-existent Son of God. I examine the way the three above-mentioned authors employed this Scriptural witness, and I attempt to locate the terms and expressions they found crucial. My attention is primarily directed at the question which aspects of the relationship between the Father and Son the early Christian theologians intended to explain with reference to *Prov* 8:22ff.

1. The use of *Prov* 8:22ff by the Greek Christian apologists of the second century BC

In contrast with the Hellenistic Jewish tradition that – as has already been noted – referred to *Prov* 8:22ff and employed the concept of the

we read: יְהוָה קָנָנִי רֵאשִׁית דַּרְכּוֹ ('Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way'). Cf. Cook, *The Septuagint of Proverbs*, 212–214; Pavel Dudzik, *Př 8,22nn v prvních ariánských výkladech: ariánská interpretace ve srovnání s textem Písma podle MT a LXX* [*Prov. 8:22 in the Early Arian Texts: Arian Interpretation and the Wording of Prov. 8:22 in Hebrew Masoretic and Greek Septuagint versions*], in *Patristická a stredoveká recepcia Šalamúna: Kazateľ – Príslovia – Pieseň piesní* [*Patristic and Medieval Exegesis of Salomon: Kohelet – Proverbs – Song of Songs*], ed. Miloš Lichner (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2017), 225–245, especially 232–236.

pre-existent Wisdom, there is no quote or a clear textual reference to *Prov* 8:22ff in the New Testament writings.[12] The early Christian fathers found the name Wisdom as a Christological title in *1 Cor* 1:24 ('Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God'), and they drew the notions of pre-existence from *Col* 1:15 ('the firstborn of all creation'). Both New Testament passages can be regarded, at best, as allusions to the concept of Wisdom in the book of *Proverbs*. Moreover, the apostle Paul, when formulating his notion of a secret and hidden wisdom of God comprising the mystery of our salvation (*1 Cor* 2:6–8), did not employ expressions from the text of *Prov* 8:22–25, as far as I can see; the same seems to be true in reference to the 'manifold wisdom' of God in *Eph* 3:8–12.[13] Later, in the texts of the Apostolic Fathers, statements on the relationship of the Son–Word of God with God the Father are rare, and there are no references to *Prov* 8. The pre-existent Son, being 'older than all his creation', is thematised in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, but without any hint at *Prov* 8.[14]

Quotes from *Prov* 8:22ff and the references to this passage, mainly in the Septuagint translation,[15] occur in the early Christian apologists in Trinitarian accounts, i.e., in statements concerning the relationship between God the Father and the other divine person, the Son–Word or the Spirit.[16] As for the relationship between God the Father and the

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[12] See D'Hamonville, *Les Proverbes*, 148–150.

[13] See Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians. A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 63. Cf. also Pavel Dudzik, 'The Expression "Before the Ages" in Early Christian Statements concerning the Origin of the Son from the Father in the Period before the Council of Nicaea (325),' *Communio Viatorum. A Theological Journal* 64, no. 1 (2022): 8-36.

[14] Cf. *Pastor Hermae*, *Sim.* 9, 12, 2 (LCL 25, 418): 'The Son of God is older that all his creation, so that he became the adviser of the Father in his creation' (ὁ μὲν υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ πάσης τῆς κτίσεως αὐτοῦ προγενέστερός ἐστιν, ὥστε σύμβουλον αὐτὸν γενέσθαι τῷ πατρὶ τῆς κτίσεως αὐτοῦ).

[15] Verses *Prov* 8:22–25 from the Septuagint translation are used in the absolute majority of instances in the pre-Nicene period. I am aware of two exceptions, both in Origen, where the verb κτᾶσθαι ('to acquire') is employed; see Origen, *Comm. in Matth.* XVII, 14 (GCS 40: 623) and *Homiliae in Psalmos, Hom.* I (in Psalmum LXXIII), 4 (GCS NF 19: 230). For the discussion on the Septuagint and non-Septuagint translations of *Prov* 8:22, see Eusebius of Caesarea, *De eccl. theol.* III, 2, 15 (GCS 14: 142); cf. also Dudzik, *Př 8,22nn v prvních ariánských výkladech* [*Prov. 8:22 in the Early Arian Texts*], 239.

[16] Irenaeus of Lyon interprets *Prov* 8 as referring to the Holy Spirit; see Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* IV, 20, 3 (SC 100.2, 632): 'I have also largely demonstrated, that the Word, namely the Son, was always with the Father; and that Wisdom also, which is the Spirit, was present with Him, anterior to all creation, He declares by Solomon…' For Irenaeus' exegesis of *Prov* 8, see Jackson Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity* (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2014), 168–176 (doi: https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004281271).

Son–Word, which is the subject of my investigation, *Prov* 8:22ff is quoted and interpreted in several particular contexts:

- as a witness from the Scripture regarding the numerical distinction of the Word–Wisdom from God the Father;
- as a witness for the Word–Wisdom as a mediator of creation or a beginning of all creation;
- as a witness of the relation of origin of the Son from the Father expressed as the relationship between the begetting and the begotten.

In a broader sense, the quotes of *Prov* 8:22ff and the references to this passage appear in expositions arguing for the existence of the 'second' God alongside God the Father, i.e., the Son of God who mediates the relationship between God and the creation. Striving to conceive the relationship between the transcendent God and the creation, the apologists of the 2nd century used most probably a Middle Platonic model of the relationship between God and the World Soul[17] whose provenance could be traced to Stoic teaching concerning *logos*, which refers to both governing faculty of a human being and a pervasive, divine force creating the world, immanent to it and imposing order on it.[18] According to this philosophical concept, which was popular at the time of the first Christian apologists, God in his transcendence is unable to work in creation, so his Word assumes the role of mediator. A similar concept of the relationship of God to his creation through mediating and pervasive Word of God was present in Hellenistic Jewish tradition, as we have already seen.[19] Thus, the notion of Logos, which has its roots in the Hellenistic Jewish as well as in the Greek philosophical tradition, was employed by the early Christian apologists for an effectual power through which God acts in the world.

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[17] John Dillon, *The Middle Platonists. 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca – New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1996), 45–49. For the Christian reception of this philosophical concept, see, e.g., Leslie W. Barnard, *Justin Martyr. His Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1967), 83–84.

[18] For the Stoic concept of pneuma, which is called *logos* or *nous* when the element of fire prevails, see Anthony A. Long, *Hellenistic Philosophy: Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics* (London: Duckworth, 1986), 152–163; David Furley, 'Cosmology,' in *The Cambridge History of Hellenistic Philosophy*, ed. Keimpe Algra, et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005), 432–451; Filip Karfík, *Duše a svět. Devět studií z antické filosofie* [Soul and World. Nine Studies in Ancient Philosophy] (Praha: Oikoymenh, 2007), 150–184.

[19] For the Jewish background, rather than sources deducible from the Greek philosophy, of the Christian notion of the Word of God argues, e.g., Edwards, 'Justin's Logos,' 261–280.

The Christian apologists also accepted and accommodated the concept of Logos as a 'beginning' (ἀρχή) which was present in the Jewish tradition as well.[20] The Word of God was often regarded as the beginning of all creation in the protological sense, and the passage from *Prov* 8:22ff was employed as an important witness for this concept next to other Scriptural witnesses, especially *Gen* 1:1 and *John* 1:1. While ἀρχή occurs in the prepositional collocation (ἐν ἀρχῇ, 'in the beginning') in these verses, which could indicate a rather 'instrumental' understanding (God creates through his Word), ἀρχή in *Prov* 8:22 is treated as a complement: 'Lord created me as the beginning' (κύριος ἔκτισέν με ἀρχήν), which could more strongly imply that the Word–Wisdom is a pre-existent divine person – the Beginning. Thus, *Prov* 8:22 might indicate the existence of a second divine person alongside God as well as the mediating role of the Wisdom–Beginning; Wisdom is 'the Beginning of His (i.e., God's) ways, for the sake of His works'.

What the early Christian apologists did not comment on are the verbs used in the verses *Prov* 8:22.23.25 as expressions for the relation of origin of the Wisdom from God the Father; I mean the three verbs (κτίζειν, θεμελιοῦν, and γεννᾶν): 'The Lord created me (κύριος ἔκτισέν με) as the beginning of his ways …, before the age he founded me (πρὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐθεμελίωσέν με) …, before all the hills, he begets me (γεννᾷ με).' The pre-Origenian writings do not contain, as far as I am aware, any comments on the use of verbs in *Prov* 8:22–25. The three verbs expressing the relationship between Wisdom and God are ignored or, more precisely, the verb γεννᾶν is preferred without explanation. Moreover, the early Christian authors use two other verbs in their accounts on the relation of origin of the Word, 'to bring forth' (προβάλλειν) and 'to come forth' (προέρχεσθαι), both of which are drawn from the metaphor of a word of a human being that exists as reason or thought in man as well as 'outside' as an uttered word.[21]

Referring to the metaphor of the human word, the first Christian apologists clarified the relationship of the Son–Word of God with God the Father by stressing two aspects: first, the Word is dwelling in God,

[20] See Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd., 1964), 166–168. For the term ἀρχή and the collocation ἐν ἀρχῇ generally, see Jacobus C. M. van Winden, *Frühchristliche Exegese. ‚Der Anfang'*, in *Arche. A Collection of Patristic Studies by J. C. M. van Widen*, ed. Jan den Boeft and David T. Runia (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 3–49.

[21] See below, p. 114 (Justin).

and second, the Word comes forth as a mediator in the creation.[22] The 'bringing forth' or 'begetting' of the Word before the creation of the world is conceived by the apologists as not necessary, but according to the will of God. They do not speak of any time or moment of the bringing forth or begetting of the Word, though they discern the two aspects in the way that implies a kind of subsequence. At this point, we probably come to the limit of their conceiving and formulating the relation of origin of the Word. At stake is both the inalterability of the Father, since the generation of the Son in this respect might imply change on the side of the Father, and the coeternity of the Son with the Father. The early apologists attempt to solve the first difficulty by relating our experience to the material world: it is not a diminishment of our capacity to speak when we utter a word, and the brilliance of the fire is not lessened when it enkindles another fire.[23] They however do not clarify whether God has his own separate word or whether he remains in contact with his Word after the Word became exterior to the Father.[24] The early Christian apologists do not discuss the second question – whether the Word as the 'second' one next to God is eternal in the same way as God the Father.[25] In so far as they speak about pre-temporal begetting of the Word, the apologists seem to have taken for granted that the implied succession of relations is meant as logical, not as temporal.

2. Justin Martyr

One of the first Christian apologists, Justin Martyr, quotes *Prov* 8 in his *Dialogue with Trypho* in the passage where he strives to conceive the Word of God as a divine person alongside God the Father,[26]

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[22] Leslie W. Barnard, 'God, the Logos, the Spirit and the Trinity in the Theology of Athenagoras,' *Studia Theologica*, 24 (1970): 70–92, especially 86, describes this notion of Logos in Athenagoras of Athens: 'The Logos has two relations with the Father, immanent in the Godhead, and expressed in procession when He presides over the ordering of the universe. This is a difference of function rather than nature…'

[23] For these analogies, see below, Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 2; 128, 4.

[24] For this objection, see Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, 110.

[25] For this issue in Justin Martyr, cf. Erwin R. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr. An Investigation into the Conceptions of the Early Christian Literature and Its Hellenistic and Judaistic Influences* (Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1968), 153–155.

[26] He calls the Word of God the second God (ἕτερος θεός); see Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 55, 1 (Bobichon I, 320): ἕτερος θεὸς παρὰ τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων. For Justin's teaching concerning the Word of God, see, e.g., Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, 139–175; Barnard, *Justin Martyr. His Life and Thought*, 85–100; Denis Minns – Paul Parvis, *Justin Philosopher and Martyr, Apologies* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2009), 61–65. For

numerically distinct (ἕτερός ἐστι ἀριθμῷ) from him.[27] In *Dial.* 48–62, after the Jew Trypho asks Justin for proof that Christ existed before the ages as God,[28] Justin comments on witnesses from the Bible[29] which support his conviction that the God who appeared before Abraham, Jacob, and Moses is different from God the Creator in number, but not in mind (ἕτερός ἐστι … ἀριθμῷ λέγω ἀλλὰ οὐ γνώμῃ).[30] He then treats the Biblical account of the apparition of God to Moses in the burning bush (*Ex* 3) and agrees with Trypho that God who talked with Moses and the Angel who was seen 'were two' (δύο ἦσαν) in the apparition and assumes that it was not the Creator and Father of all things who was talking with Moses, but the one who was doing the will of the Creator of the universe.[31] To counter the objection of ditheism, Justin defends the union of the Word of God with God the Father and claims that the Son–Word was brought forth or begotten from the Father before the creation of the world. For the last-mentioned teaching, *Prov* 8 is Justin's most important Biblical witness. Let us examine the exposition in *Dial.* 61–62 in more detail.

In *Dial.* 61, 1, Justin announces the Biblical proof for the existence of a 'certain power endowed with reason'[32] (δύναμίν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικήν), begotten of God Himself before all creation. He adds that this power has many names, including the Glory of the Lord, Son, Wisdom, Angel, God, Lord, and Word, and that it lays claim to these because of the service it performs according to the will of the Father and its begottenness from the will of the Father.[33] In *Dial.* 61, 2, Justin compares the Son–Word to an uttered human word that is not separate from the word/

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the edition, see Philippe Bobichon, *Justin Martyr, Dialogue avec Tryphon*, I–II (Fribourg: Academic Press, 2003).

27 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 56, 11; 62, 2; 128, 4 (Bobichon I, 328, 350, 530). In his *First Apology*, Justin also defines him as being 'in the second place' (ἐν δευτέρᾳ χώρᾳ) regarding God the Father; see Justin, *Apol.* I,13,3–4 (Minns–Parvis 110); '… we have learnt that he is the son of the true God, and we hold him in the second place, with the prophetic Spirit in the third rank' (υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντως θεοῦ μαθόντες καὶ ἐν δευτέρᾳ χώρᾳ ἔχοντες, πνεῦμά τε προφητικὸν ἐν τρίτῃ τάξει).

28 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 48, 1 (Bobichon I, 302).

29 As proofs that they were two, Justin mentions *Psalm* 109:1 LXX ('The Lord said to my Lord…'; Εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου…,) and *Psalm* 44:8 LXX ('Therefore, God, your God, anointed you with oil of rejoicing beyond your partners'; διὰ τοῦτο ἔχρισέν σε ὁ θεὸς ὁ θεός σου ἔλαιον ἀγαλλιάσεως παρὰ τοὺς μετόχους σου).

30 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 56, 11 (Bobichon I, 328).

31 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 60, 2 (Bobichon I, 344).

32 Or better: 'identified with the Word'; see my argumentation below. Justin argues against an unhypostatical understanding of the term Power in *Dial.* 128–129, see p. 117.

33 Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 1; for the text and translation, see below, p. 113 and note 35.

reason in us nor is it diminished and to the fire that does not lessen the brilliance of the fire that enkindles it. Moreover, as Justin claims, this enkindled fire exists on its own (αὐτὸ ὂν φαίνεται). Thus, he introduces the Word of God as a subsisting being of God begotten before the creation of the universe according to the will of the Father and subsequently proves this with a long quote taken from *Prov* 8, verses 21a–36 LXX. But how does Justin employ the terms typical of this Biblical passage in his own exposition?

The expressions originating from *Prov* 8 occur particularly in two accounts: first, in the opening section of Justin's exposition (*Dial.* 61, 1) and second, in the statement that is made just before the quote itself (*Dial.* 61, 3). To be able to follow the whole Justin's argument, I will go through the section *Dial.* 61, 1–3. In *Dial.* 61, 1, we read:

> 'So, my friends,' I said, 'I shall now show from the Scriptures that God has begotten of Himself a certain power endowed with reason as a beginning before all other creatures. The Holy Spirit indicates this power by various titles, sometimes the Glory of the Lord, at other times Son, or Wisdom, or Angel, or God, or Lord, or Word. He even called Himself Commander-in-chief when He appeared in human guise to Josue, the son of Nun. Indeed, He can justly lay claim to all these titles from the fact both that He performs the Father's will and that He was begotten[34] by an act of the Father's will.'[35]

Justin writes about the generation of the power of God, which is identified with the Word ('the λογική power/Power') and with the beginning/Beginning (ἀρχή) before the creation of the universe. Several

[34] Or: 'He was made'. In the modern editions (Bobichon, *Justin Martyr*, I, 346; *Iustini Martyris Dialogus cum Tryphone*, ed. Miroslav Marcovich, *PTS* 38 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2005), 175), the emendation γεγεννῆσθαι (made by Thirlby) is preferred, whereas γεγενῆσθαι (from γίγνεσθαι) occurs in the only preserved manuscript (*A – Parisinus Graecus* 450). If the phrase 'He was begotten/made' is considered in the context of Justin's previous exposition, which deals with the generation of the Power of God according to the will of God, the emendation seems to be justified – the form γεγεννῆσθαι fits to Justin's argument better than γεγενῆσθαι.

[35] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 1 (Bobichon I, 346): Μαρτύριον δὲ καὶ ἄλλο ὑμῖν, ὦ φίλοι, ἔφην, ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν δώσω, ὅτι ἀρχὴν πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ θεὸς γεγέννηκε δύναμίν τινα ἐξ ἑαυτοῦ λογικήν, ἥτις καὶ δόξα κυρίου ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ ἁγίου καλεῖται, ποτὲ δὲ υἱός, ποτὲ δὲ σοφία, ποτὲ δὲ ἄγγελος, ποτὲ δὲ θεός, ποτὲ δὲ κύριος καὶ λόγος, ποτὲ δὲ ἀρχιστράτηγον ἑαυτὸν λέγει, ἐν ἀνθρώπου μορφῇ φανέντα τῷ τοῦ Ναυῆ Ἰησοῦ· ἔχει γὰρ πάντα προσονομάζεσθαι ἔκ τε τοῦ ὑπηρετεῖν τῷ πατρικῷ βουλήματι καὶ ἐκ τοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς θελήσει γεγεννῆσθαι.

expressions and notions can be considered as references to *Prov* 8:22ff. It is obviously the case of the term or the name beginning/Beginning (ἀρχή) and the notion of the existence of the divine person alongside God before the creation of all living beings. The notion of the pre-existence is expressed with the collocation πρὸ πάντων τῶν κτισμάτων which may be regarded as a hint at πρὸ δὲ πάντων βουνῶν in *Prov* 8:25. Similarly, the verb 'to beget' (γεννᾶν) could also refer to *Prov* 8:25, but the reference cannot be conclusively proven from the Justin's just quoted exposition and other instances should be explored. Finally, the name Wisdom is mentioned only in the list of the names of the begotten Power of God, so it cannot be taken as a clear reference to *Prov* 8:22ff. The clearest expression of *Prov* 8:22ff thus seems to be the term ἀρχή, which is used as the complement, i.e., in a similar grammatical structure as in *Prov* 8:22.

In the subsequent exposition (*Dial.* 61, 2), Justin demonstrates by means of the parallels to a human word and to fire what it means for him that the Word was brought forth or begotten:

> But, does not something similar happen also with us humans? When we bring forth a word, it can be said that we beget the word, but not by cutting it off, in the sense that our power of bringing forth words would thereby be diminished. We can observe a similar example in nature when one fire kindles another, without losing anything, but remaining the same; yet the enkindled fire seems to exist of itself and to shine without lessening the brilliancy of the first fire.[36]

For Justin, when people bring forth or utter a word it is as if they have begotten it. He supposes that a word is present in us (as reason or thought) and is brought forth whenever we utter it.[37] When uttered, the word is not diminished, just as a new fire, when enkindled, does not lessen the brilliance of the enkindling fire. Justin employs the verb γεννᾶν both when he describes his notion of bringing forth the human word and when he expresses the relation of origin of the Word from

[36] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 2 (Bobichon I, 346): ἀλλ᾽ οὐ τοιοῦτον ὁποῖον καὶ ἐφ᾽ ἡμῶν γινόμενον ὁρῶμεν; λόγον γάρ τινα προβάλλοντες, λόγον γεννῶμεν, οὐ κατὰ ἀποτομήν, ὡς ἐλαττωθῆναι τὸν ἐν ἡμῖν λόγον, προβαλλόμενοι. καὶ ὁποῖον ἐπὶ πυρὸς ὁρῶμεν ἄλλο γινόμενον, οὐκ ἐλαττουμένου ἐκείνου ἐξ οὗ ἡ ἄναψις γέγονεν, ἀλλὰ τοῦ αὐτοῦ μένοντος, καὶ τὸ ἐξ αὐτοῦ ἀναφθὲν καὶ αὐτὸ ὂν φαίνεται, οὐκ ἐλαττῶσαν ἐκεῖνο ἐξ οὗ ἀνήφθη.

[37] Cf. also Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, 151.

the Father. We have already read in *Dial.* 61, 1 that, according to Justin, God begot (γεγέννηκε) his Power–Word; the generation of the Word is emphasised again when he introduces the quote from *Prov* 8:21a–36 in *Dial.* 61, 3:

> My statements will now be confirmed by none other than the Word of Wisdom, who is this God begotten from the Father of the universe, and who is the Word and Wisdom and Power and Glory of Him who begot Him. Here are His words as spoken by Solomon… (the quote of *Prov* 8:21a–36 follows)[38]

Justin employs the terms originating from or hinting at the wording of *Prov* 8:22ff throughout his exposition in *Dial.* 61,1–3 prevailingly to explain the pre-existence of the divine Power–Word: the Power of God, identified with Word, is the Beginning before all creatures came to be. The notion of begottenness is elaborated on in the same passage, but it is not clear whether Justin draws this notion from *Prov* 8:25. The relationship between the speech of the Wisdom in *Prov* 8 and the notion of begottenness has not been expressed. In the last quoted passage, the phrase 'begotten from the Father of the universe' is not grammatically bound directly with the name of Wisdom (though her generation is witnessed with the statements of Wisdom in the quote from the Scripture) but with the expression 'this God' (οὗτος ὁ θεός) and 'the Word of Wisdom'.[39] Although we may infer that the expression 'the Word of Wisdom' (ὁ λόγος τῆς σοφίας) indicates that the Word and Wisdom are identified – similarly as above, the Power and Word were identified in the expression 'certain Power endowed with Word' (δύναμίς τις λογική) –, the notion of begottenness, the name of Word–Wisdom and the statement of the Wisdom in *Prov* 8:25 are, in my view, interconnected in Justin's so far analysed statements only indirectly or loosely.

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[38] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 61, 3 (Bobichon I, 348): μαρτυρήσει δέ μοι ὁ λόγος τῆς σοφίας, αὐτὸς ὢν οὗτος ὁ θεὸς ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων γεννηθείς, καὶ λόγος καὶ σοφία καὶ δύναμις καὶ δόξα τοῦ γεννήσαντος ὑπάρχων, καὶ διὰ Σολομῶνος φήσαντος ταῦτα.

[39] The term 'word' in the expression ὁ λόγος τῆς σοφίας might be understood as 'word' or 'speech' of the Wisdom since Justin quotes a part of Wisdom's speech (*Prov* 8:21a–36) immediately afterwards. But the extensive parenthesis following the expression 'the Word of Wisdom' demonstrates that Justin takes it as a Christological term: 'the Word of Wisdom who is this God begotten from the Father of the universe.' For the translation of the expression 'the Word of Wisdom', see Edwards, 'Justin's Logos,' 268, 270; Lashier, *Irenaeus on the Trinity*, 100. Bobichon, *Justin Martyr*, I, 349, translates otherwise: 'the Word of wisdom' (le Verbe de la sagesse).

In the exposition which follows immediately after the quote from *Prov* 8:21a–36 (*Dial.* 62, 1–3), Justin produces other Biblical witnesses to demonstrate the distinction between God and his Word in number. First, he refers to the Biblical description of the creation of man in *Gen* 1:26–28, where the exhortative plural 'let us make' is found: 'Let us make man according to Our image and likeness' (*Gen* 1:26). For Justin, this is not an exhortation of God to Himself nor to the elements (πρὸς τὰ στοιχεῖα), that is, to the earth or other similar substances. God spoke with One different in number from Himself (ἀριθμῷ ὄντα ἕτερον) and endowed with the Word (λογικόν).[40] Afterwards, Justin reminds the reader of the Biblical scene of Adam's expulsion from paradise (*Gen* 3:22), in which God says: 'See, Adam has become like one of us, knowing good and evil.' The phrase 'like one of us' clearly shows, as Justin claims, that there was a number of persons together – they were 'at least two' (τὸ ἐλάχιστον δύο).[41] Then, after rejecting the erroneous opinion that angels are God's partners in this dialogue, Justin identifies the person talking with God as God's offspring:

> But this offspring, who was truly begotten of the Father, was with the Father[42] before all creation and the Father talked with Him, as the Scripture through Solomon clearly showed us. It says that this offspring, who is called Wisdom by Solomon, is both a beginning before all His works and an offspring who was begotten by God.[43]

Thus, the plural forms in the book of *Genesis* ('let us make' and 'like one of us') are explained by Justin as references to the talk of the Father with his offspring (τὸ γέννημα) who was with the Father before all creation. This exegesis is supplemented by the witness from the Scripture made through Solomon that includes expressions 'before all (his works)' and 'Beginning' (πρὸ πάντων, ἀρχή). As we have seen above, these are important references to the pre-existence of the Word in Justin's statements, as well as indications of *Prov* 8:22ff. For the

[40] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 62, 2 (Bobichon I, 350).
[41] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 62, 3 (Bobichon I, 350).
[42] Cf. 'I was present with him' (συμπαρήμην αὐτῷ) in *Prov* 8:27 and 'I was besides him' (ἤμην παρ' αὐτῷ) in *Prov* 8:30.
[43] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 62, 4 (Bobichon I, 350): ἀλλὰ τοῦτο τὸ τῷ ὄντι ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς προβληθὲν γέννημα πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων συνῆν τῷ πατρί, καὶ τούτῳ ὁ πατὴρ προσομιλεῖ, ὡς ὁ λόγος διὰ τοῦ Σολομῶνος ἐδήλωσεν, ὅτι καὶ ἀρχὴ πρὸ πάντων τῶν ποιημάτων τοῦτ᾽ αὐτὸ καὶ γέννημα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγεγέννητο, ὃ σοφία διὰ Σολομῶνος καλεῖται…

formulation of the relation of origin of the offspring from the Father, Justin avoids the verbs 'to create' (κτίζειν) and 'to establish' (θεμελιοῦν) from *Prov* 8:22–23 and uses the verb γεννᾶν only. It is employed as a verbal noun (τὸ γέννημα) and as an indicative of the verb in the pleonastic formulation 'the offspring (literally: 'the begotten one') who was begotten by God' (γέννημα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγεγέννητο). Thus, there are several references to the Scripture in Justin's account: there is the offspring who 'was with the Father before all creation' (cf. *Prov* 8:27.30), with whom the Father talked (cf. *Gen* 1:26), and who is 'both a beginning before all His works' (cf. *Prov* 8:22) and 'the offspring who was begotten by God' (cf. *Prov* 8:25?). The reference to *Prov* 8:25 is implied in the syntactical structure of Justin's, partly tautological, sentence: the offspring who is called Wisdom by Somolon is the beginning, as well as the offspring begotten by God. For Justin, the notion of generation implies the name of Wisdom and her speech as it was composed by Solomon.

Before I close this section on Justin's use of *Prov* 8, I will briefly discuss the last passage in which Justin quotes *Prov* 8:22ff. In *Dial.* 128–129, in the summary of his exegeses of the Old Testament theophanies, Justin reminds us of Moses' vision in the burning bush and apparitions of God's Power to Moses, Abraham, and Jacob. He argues against the notion of an (unhypostatical) power of God that goes forth from the Father and returns to him again, whenever the Father wishes. According to Justin, the Power, which the prophetic word also calls God,[44] does not differ from God in the name only (as in the case of light of the sun), but it is distinct in number (ἀριθμῷ ἕτερόν τί ἐστι).[45] In *Dial.* 129, 3–4, Justin refers to other witnesses from *Genesis* (*Gen* 19:24 and 3:22)[46] and cites *Prov* 8:21a–25. He comments on the last quote as follows:

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[44] In *Dial.* 126, 2 (Bobichon I, 524) Justin quotes *Ex* 6:2–3 LXX: 'Then God spoke to Moyses and said to him: I am the Lord and I appeared to Abraam and Isaak and Iakob, being their God' (NETS).

[45] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 128, 3–4 (Bobichon I, 530), especially: καὶ ὅτι δύναμις αὕτη, ἣν καὶ θεὸν καλεῖ ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος, διὰ πολλῶν ὡσαύτως ἀποδέδεικται, καὶ ἄγγελον, οὐχ ὡς τὸ τοῦ ἡλίου φῶς ὀνόματι μόνον ἀριθμεῖται, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἀριθμῷ ἕτερόν τί ἐστι, καὶ ἐν τοῖς προειρημένοις διὰ βραχέων τὸν λόγον ἐξήτασα, εἰπὼν τὴν δύναμιν ταύτην γεγεννῆσθαι ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρός, δυνάμει καὶ βουλῇ αὐτοῦ.

[46] The first verse (*Gen* 19:24) can be read as a statement about two Lords ('And the Lord rained … fire from the Lord out of heaven), the second (*Gen* 3:22) is the already mentioned scene of the expulsion of Adam ('Adam has become like one of us').

> At this point I said, 'Gentlemen, if you have followed me closely, you can see that Scripture declares that the offspring was begotten by the Father before entirely all creatures, and … that the begotten (Son) is numerically distinct from the begetting (Father).'[47]

Once again, Justin employs *Prov* 8:22ff as the Biblical proof of the pre-existence of the offspring before all creation and the numerical distinction between the Son and the Father. The Son's pre-existence is even emphasised in the phrase: '… the offspring was begotten of the Father before entirely all creatures', where 'entirely' (ἁπλῶς) seems to be Justin's deliberate intensification of the collocation 'before all' (πρὸ πάντων). The preference of the verb γεννᾶν for the formulation of the relation of origin of the Son from the Father arises again: Justin uses a pleonastic phrase 'the offspring was begotten by the Father' (γεγεννῆσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦτο τὸ γέννημα) which is remarkably similar to that in *Dial.* 62, 4 (γέννημα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐγεγέννητο). However, the relationship between Wisdom and the generation of the offspring is referred to *Prov* 8:25 less clearly in *Dial.* 129 than in *Dial.* 61–62.

Thus, if we ask whether Justin's expositions of the pre-existence of the Word are based on the authority of *Prov* 8:22, it may be, in my view, concluded that the analyses of *Dial.* 61–62 and *Dial.* 128–129 have proven so. He refers to *Prov* 8:22 in the statements in which Justin most comprehensively treats the pre-existence of the second divine person. As for the relation of origin of the Word from the Father, the verb γεννᾶν is preferred in both passages which were examined. In *Dial.* 61–62, the relationship between the notion of begottenness of the offspring and the name of the Wisdom of God in the prophetical statements of Solomon is clearly referred to by Justin, which might indicate an implicit reference to *Prov* 8:25.[48]

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[47] Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 129, 3–4 (Bobichon I, 532), with Justin's comment: καὶ εἰπὼν ταῦτα ἐπήγαγον· Νοεῖτε, ὦ ἀκροαταί, εἴ γε καὶ τὸν νοῦν προσέχετε· καὶ ὅτι γεγεννῆσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τοῦτο τὸ γέννημα πρὸ πάντων ἁπλῶς τῶν κτισμάτων ὁ λόγος ἐδήλου, καὶ τὸ γεννώμενον τοῦ γεννῶντος ἀριθμῷ ἕτερόν ἐστι…

[48] cf. Goodenough, *The Theology of Justin Martyr*, 147–148, who claims that the Biblical witness for γεννᾶν is *Col* 1:15 in Justin Martyr, but he acknowledges the influence of *Prov* 8 as well.

3. Athenagoras of Athens

So far, I have analysed two passages in Justin Martyr in which the apologist treats, with reference to *Prov* 8, the pre-existence of Son–Word before the creation of the world, the numerical distinction of Son–Word from the Father, and the divinity of the Son (Word or Wisdom) regarding his begottenness from the Father. Athenagoras of Athens, another 2nd–century apologist, uses only one quotation from the passage *Prov* 8:22–25. It occurs in his *Legatio pro Christianis* ('A Plea for Christians') and the only verse cited from the passage is *Prov* 8:22.[49] After he finishes his exposition on the transcendent God who is taught by Christians so that they cannot be regarded as atheists, and who made everything through the Word issuing from him (*Leg.* 10, 1: διὰ <τοῦ παρ᾽> αὐτοῦ λόγου),[50] Athenagoras focuses on the Word of God. He confesses that alongside the uncreated, eternal, invisible, impassible, incomprehensible, and infinite God, Christians apprehend that there is also a Son of God (*Leg.* 10, 1–2, especially: νοοῦμεν γὰρ καὶ υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ). Athenagoras strives to express both the unity of the Word with God the Father and the coming forth of the Word from the Father. On the one hand, he shows from the Scripture (especially from the *Gospel according to John*) that the Word is united with God, on the other, he describes the role of the Word as mediator between the transcendent God and the universe which is formulated with the terms 'form' (ἰδέα) and 'power' or 'activity' (ἐνεργεία). These terms may have been borrowed, as David Rankin has demonstrated, from a Middle-Platonic source, but Athenagoras adapts their meaning.[51] He writes in *Leg.* 10, 2:

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[49] For Athenagoras and his treatises, see, e.g., Athenagoras, *Legatio and De resurrectione*, edited and translated by William R. Schoedel (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1972); there is also a Czech translation of *Legatio pro Christianis*, see *Athénagorás z Athén, Přímluva za křesťany*, úvod, překlad a poznámky [introduction, translation and notes] Monika Recinová (Praha: Pavel Mervart, 2019). For Athenagoras' teaching concerning the Father–Son relationship, see Barnard, *God, the Logos, the Spirit and the Trinity in the Theology of Athenagoras*, 70–92, especially 81–87; Bernard Pouderon, *Athénagore d'Athènes, philosophe chrétien* (Paris: Beauschesne, 1989), 115–142, doi: https://doi.org/10.14375/NP.9782701020303; David Rankin, *Athenagoras. Philosopher and Theologian* (Farnham – Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 107–108 and 129–135.

[50] The collocation 'from him' is the editor's conjecture (SC 379, 100). For similar formulations, see *Leg.* 4, 2 (πάντα δὲ διὰ τοῦ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ λόγου πεποιηκότα), 10, 5; 12, 3; 18, 2; 30, 6 (SC 379, 84.102.108.128.190). The Spirit is also 'from him', see *Leg.* 6, 2 (SC 379, 90).

[51] See Alcinous, *Didasc.* 10 (Les belles lettres 336, 22–24), where this Platonic philosopher speaks of the Primary Mind which is 'everlastingly thinking itself and its own thoughts – and this activity is Form' (ἑαυτὸν ἂν οὖν καὶ τὰ ἑαυτοῦ νοήματα ἀεὶ νοοίη,

> On the contrary, the Son of God is the Word of the Father in form and power; for from him and through him all things came into existence (*John* 1:3), which presupposes that the Father and the Son are one (cf. *John* 10:30). Now since the Son is in the Father and the Father in the Son (cf. *John* 14:10) by a unity and power of spirit, the Son of God is the mind and reason of the Father.[52]

Thus, Athenagoras refers to the Father and the Son as a cause and as a mediator, emphasising their unity and calling the Son of God the mind and reason of the Father. Then he explains the relation of origin of the Son from the Father. He rejects the idea that the Son came to be (οὐχ ὡς γενόμενον); the Son–Word is 'the first offspring' (πρῶτον γέννημα) and came forth to serve as ἰδέα and ἐνεργεία for all creation (*Leg.* 10, 3–4):

> If … you would like to know what 'Son' means, I will tell you in a few brief words: it means that he is the first offspring of the Father. The term is used not because he came into existence (for God, who is eternal mind, had in himself his word/reason from the beginning, since he was eternally endowed with word/reason). … He (*sc.* the Word) came forth (to serve) to the creation as form and power. The prophetic Spirit also agrees with this account, for it says: 'The Lord created me as the beginning of his ways for his works.'[53]

The Son–Word came forth (προελθών) to mediate the creation of the universe as the offspring (γέννημα) of the Father. Athenagoras differentiates between the Son (who is called a 'child' here: παῖς) and the creation by distinguishing the expressions γέννημα and γενόμενον (that are a derivation and a form originating from the different verbs γεννᾶν

καὶ αὕτη ἡ ἐνέργεια αὐτοῦ ἰδέα ὑπάρχει). Athenagoras seems to have deliberately chosen the language of contemporary Platonism, using it for his own purpose and without accepting Alcinoous' concept of the Primary Mind. For Athenagoras' use of the terms ἐνέργεια and ἰδέα and his possible source, see Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 131–132.

[52] Athenagoras of Athens, *Leg.* 10, 2 (SC 379, 100): ἀλλ᾽ ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν ἰδέᾳ καὶ ἐνεργείᾳ· πρὸς αὐτοῦ γὰρ καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ πάντα ἐγένετο, ἑνὸς ὄντος τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ. ὄντος δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐν πατρὶ καὶ πατρὸς ἐν υἱῷ ἑνότητι καὶ δυνάμει πνεύματος, νοῦς καὶ λόγος τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.

[53] Athenagoras of Athens, *Leg.* 10, 3–4 (SC 379, 100–102): εἰ δὲ … σκοπεῖν ὑμῖν ἔπεισιν, ὁ παῖς τί βούλεται, ἐρῶ διὰ βραχέων· πρῶτον γέννημα εἶναι τῷ πατρί, οὐχ ὡς γενόμενον (ἐξ ἀρχῆς γὰρ ὁ θεός, νοῦς ἀίδιος ὤν, εἶχεν αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὸν λόγον, ἀιδίως λογικὸς ὤν), … ἐπ᾽ αὐτοῖς ἰδέα καὶ ἐνέργεια εἶναι, προελθών. συνᾴδει δὲ τῷ λόγῳ καὶ τὸ προφητικὸν πνεῦμα·"κύριος γάρ", φησίν, "ἔκτισέν με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ."

and γί[γ]νομαι). He uses the verb 'to come forth' (προέρχεσθαι): the Son–Word, which is in the Father through the unity and power of spirit (*Leg.* 10, 2),[54] comes forth as γέννημα of the Father to mediate the creation. Nowhere in his exposition does Athenagoras employ the verb 'to create', though he cites *in extenso* only *Prov* 8:22 (which does use it) and prefers 'to come forth'. On the other hand, he does not produce any Biblical witness for the term γέννημα, as far as I can see. Athenagoras seems to quote *Prov* 8:22 as the evidence for the creation of the relationship of the Son–Word to the world that would be created, the relationship that is formulated with collocations 'as the beginning of his ways' and 'for his works' in the Biblical verse. *Prov* 8:22 is the witness to the creation of the relationship between the Son–Word (–Wisdom, though Athenagoras does not mention this divine name in the passage[55]) and the on-coming universe.[56] In my view, it cannot be demonstrated from the wording of Athenagoras' exposition that the verb 'to beget' is used with reference to the text of *Prov* 8:25.

4. Theophilus of Antioch

The last early Christian apologist whose usage of *Prov* 8 I plan to consider, Theophilus of Antioch, shares with Justin and Athenagoras

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[54] Athenagoras of Athens, *Leg.* 10, 2 (SC 379, 100): ὄντος δὲ τοῦ υἱοῦ ἐν πατρὶ καὶ πατρὸς ἐν υἱῷ ἑνότητι καὶ δυνάμει πνεύματος.

[55] For an explicit identification of the Son with Wisdom, see Athenagoras of Athens, *Leg.* 24, 2 (cf. also note 56).

[56] In the quote from *Leg.* 10, 3–4, *Prov* 8:22 is introduced with a reference to the Holy Spirit ('The prophetic Spirit also agrees with this account, for it says…'). Athenagoras treats the Holy Spirit as the divine person inspiring predictions of prophets in other statements as well (cf. *Leg.* 7, 3; 9, 1 / SC 379, 94.98). But does the present reference not indicate that Athenagoras regards *Prov* 8:22 as a statement on the Holy Spirit? Is it possible that the prophetic Spirit speaks of himself saying: 'Lord created me…'? Athenagoras continues: 'Further, this same holy Spirit, which is active in those who speak prophetically, we regard as an effluence of God which flows forth from him and returns like a ray of the sun' (*Leg.* 10, 4 / SC 379, 102). This statement seems to have been added with reference to the previous account of the Son–Word: as the Word comes forth (προελθών), so the Spirit is effluence of God (ἀπόρροια). The metaphor of effulgence is subsequently developed into the figure of a ray of the sun which flows forth and returns. Therefore, I assume that the last statement applies to the Holy Spirit, while the quote of *Prov* 8:22 closes the section concerning the Son. In addition, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinguished in a similar way in *Leg.* 24, 2 (SC 379, 160–162): the Son is the mind, reason, and wisdom of the Father, while the Holy Spirit is an effulgence, like the light from a fire. For Athenagoras' pneumatology, see Barnard, *God, the Logos, the Spirit and the Trinity in the Theology of Athenagoras*, 87–90; Rankin, *Athenagoras*, 135–139.

the concept of the Word everlastingly being in the Godhead and coming forth from the Father before the creation of the world. He employs the terms λόγος ἐνδιάθετος and λόγος προφορικός, which originated from the Stoic teaching on the human soul and were also used by Philo of Alexandria in a similar context.[57] Theophilus distinguishes the Word and the Wisdom as the two hands God used when he created man (*Ad Autol.* II, 18).[58] For him, God, the Word, and the Wisdom are three (τριάς), though he adds that there is also the fourth – man (*Ad Autol.* II, 15).[59] On the other hand, Theophilus identifies the Wisdom of God with the Word and employs the names Wisdom and Beginning for the Word of God, which are of interest in our investigation. Consequently, he does not seem to develop a consistent notion of the Trinity and come to invariable distribution of names to divine persons. As with the other apologists of his time, Theophilus emphasises the instrumentality of the Word and Wisdom in God's creation of the world.[60]

Theophilus does not quote *Prov* 8:22ff *in extenso* in his treatise *Ad Autolycum*, but he refers to this Biblical passage at least in two instances. In his remarks and expositions on the relationship between the Father and the Word, two tendencies stand out that were discussed in the theologians examined earlier. First, Theophilus seems to have tended to indicate coming forth of the Wisdom from the Godhead with the verb 'to beget' (γεννᾶν). In *Ad Autol.* I, 3, he puts it thus: 'If I say Wisdom, I speak about His offspring' (σοφίαν ἐὰν εἴπω, γέννημα αὐτοῦ λέγω). Second, Theophilus describes two notions of the relationship between the Word and the Father: when the Word is in God and when the Word comes forth for the creation of the universe. Regarding the first kind of relationship, the expressions '(the Word is) immanent' (ἐνδιάθετος), 'in

[57] According to Sextus Empiricus, following Chrysippus, man differs from the irrational animals not in the words he utters, for crows and parrots and magpies utter distinct sounds, but in his inner word/reason (see Sextus Empiricus, *Adv. Math.* VIII,275 / Bekker 347). For the two *logoi* in each human being, see also Philo of Alexandria, *De vita Mosis* II,129 (LCL 289, 510). Cf. Robert M. Grant, 'Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus,' *Harvard Theological Review* 40, no. 4 (1947): 227–256, especially 245–246.

[58] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 18 (SC 20, 144).

[59] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 15 (SC 20, 138).

[60] For Theophilus' Trinitarian teaching, see Grant, 'Theophilus of Antioch to Autolycus,' 245–252; id., 'Scripture and Theology in Theophilus,' *Vigiliae Christianae* 13, no. 1 (1959): 33–45, especially 37–43; id., 'Introduction,' in *Theophilus, Ad Autolycum*, ed. Robert M. Grant (Oxford: Oxford univ. Press, 1970), XV–XVII; id., *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadephia – The Westminster Press, 1988), 169–171; Rick Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch. The Life and Thought of a Second-Century Bishop* (Lanham – Boulder – New York – Oxford: Lexington Books, 2000), 73–118.

his own bowels' (ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις σπλάγχνοις), and 'in the heart of God' (ἐν καρδίᾳ θεοῦ) occur.[61] The relation of origin is expressed with the verbs 'to beget' and 'to erupt', whereas the verbs 'to come forth' and 'to bring forth', which we also read in the statements of Justin and Athenagoras, are not used.[62] Theophilus writes in *Ad Autol.* II, 10:

> Therefore God, having his own Logos innate in his own bowels, begot him together with his own Sophia, vomiting him forth (cf. *Psalm* 44:2a LXX) before everything else. He used this Logos as his servant in the things created by him, and through him he made all things. He is called Beginning because he leads and dominates everything fashioned through him (cf. perhaps *John* 1:3).[63] It was he, Spirit of God and Beginning and Sophia and Power of the Most High (cf. *Luke* 1:35),[64] who came down into the prophets and spoke through them about the creation of the world and all the rest. For the prophets did not exist when the world came into existence; there were the Sophia of God which is in him and his holy Logos who is always present with him.[65]

Theophilus writes about the origin of the pre-existent Word. He treats this topic before commenting on what he describes as 'the first teaching which the divine Scripture gives', i.e., the account of the creation of the world that God made for man.[66] As for the relation of origin

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[61] See Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 10.22 (SC 20, 122.154).

[62] Theophilus deals with the same topic (the relation of origin of the Word from the Father) in *Ad Autol.* II, 22 (SC 20, 154). The verb γεννᾶν is used here again. As for witnesses from the Bible, the exposition of the Word ἐνδιάθετος and προφορικός is based on *John* 1:1c–2, the pre-existence of the Word is testified to with reference to *Col* 1:15, and the constant conversation of the God with his Word is referred to with *Gen* 1:26. Theophilus makes no hint at the text of *Prov* 8:22ff, as far as I can see.

[63] If this is a reference to *John* 1:3, Theophilus' wording differs substantially from John's; whereas we read in *John* 1:3: πάντα δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, Theophilus' wording is: πάντων τῶν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ δεδημιουργημένων.

[64] The title 'Son' is missing from the list of names for the second divine person; it occurs in *Ad Autol.* II, 22 (SC 20, 154: ὁ λόγος ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅς ἐστιν καὶ υἱὸς αὐτοῦ).

[65] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 10 (SC 20, 122): Ἔχων οὖν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ λόγον ἐνδιάθετον ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις σπλάγχνοις ἐγέννησεν αὐτὸν μετὰ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ σοφίας ἐξερευξάμενος πρὸ τῶν ὅλων. τοῦτον τὸν λόγον ἔσχεν ὑπουργὸν τῶν ὑπ᾽ αὐτοῦ γεγενημένων, καὶ δι᾽ αὐτοῦ τὰ πάντα πεποίηκεν. οὗτος λέγεται ἀρχή, ὅτι ἄρχει καὶ κυριεύει πάντων τῶν δι᾽ αὐτοῦ δεδημιουργημένων. οὗτος οὖν, ὢν πνεῦμα θεοῦ καὶ ἀρχὴ καὶ σοφία καὶ δύναμις ὑψίστου, κατήρχετο εἰς τοὺς προφήτας καὶ δι᾽ αὐτῶν ἐλάλει τὰ περὶ τῆς ποιήσεως τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τῶν λοιπῶν ἁπάντων. οὐ γὰρ ἦσαν οἱ προφῆται ὅτε ὁ κόσμος ἐγίνετο, ἀλλ᾽ ἡ σοφία ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ἐν αὐτῷ οὖσα καὶ ὁ λόγος ὁ ἅγιος αὐτοῦ ὁ ἀεὶ συμπαρὼν αὐτῷ.

[66] See Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 10 (SC 20, 122): Ταῦτα ἐν πρώτοις διδάσκει ἡ θεία γραφή.

of the Word, Theophilus does not quote any Biblical witnesses for the verbs 'to beget' and 'to erupt' (ἐξερεύγεσθαι). In the just quoted passage, the latter verb might be regarded as an implicit reference to the verse of *Psalm* 44:2 LXX: 'My heart erupted with a goodly word' (Ἐξηρεύξατο ἡ καρδία μου λόγον ἀγαθόν); as for the verb 'to beget', following observation can be made. The Word, which seems to be Theophilus' preferred term for the coming-forth mediator in the quoted passage, is identified with Wisdom in the section where 'to beget' is used: God 'begot him (i.e., the Word) together with his own Sophia'. Theophilus' formulation is awkward enough to suppose that it was his intention to mention the name of Wisdom while thematising 'to beget'. His statement from *Ad Autol.* I, 3: 'If I say Wisdom, I speak about His offspring (γέννημα),' can now be reversed: when Theophilus speaks of the begetting of the pre-existent mediator, the Word, he has in mind God's Wisdom as well. Although *Prov* 8:25 is not quoted, it might be hinted at, particularly when the quote from *Prov* 8 occurs just after the above-cited Theophilus' exposition. It is a reference to *Prov* 8:27 and 8:29–30a as Biblical witnesses of Theophilus' statement that 'the Wisdom of God … is in him and his holy Word … is always present with him'.[67]

Conclusion

The analysis of the usage of quotes and references of *Prov* 8:22–25 in the writings of the three early Christian theologians, Justin, Athenagoras, and Theophilus, has led to several conclusions, some appliable to all of them, some others valid for one or two of them. We have seen three different ways of referring to the present Biblical text: Justin quotes the present passage twice (in the first instance, he includes *Prov* 8:22–25 in the longer passages from *Prov* 8), Athenagoras incorporates just one extract (of the single verse *Prov* 8:22), and Theophilus makes reference to the same verse without quoting it *in extenso*.

[67] Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autol.* II, 10 (SC 20, 122): 'For this reason he speaks thus through Solomon the prophet: When he prepared the heaven, I was with him, and when he made strong the foundations of the earth I was with him binding them fast' διὸ δὴ καὶ διὰ Σολομῶνος προφήτου οὕτως λέγει· Ἡνίκα δ᾽ ἡτοίμασεν τὸν οὐρανόν, συμπαρήμην αὐτῷ, (*Prov* 8:27a) καὶ ὡς ἰσχυρὰ ἐποίει τὰ θεμέλια τῆς γῆς, ἥμην παρ᾽ αὐτῷ ἁρμόζουσα (*Prov* 8:29–30a). For Theophilus' usage of *Proverbs*, see also Rogers, *Theophilus of Antioch*, 81.

Prov 8:22ff is employed by all three authors in expositions in which they formulate the relation of origin of the Son from the Father before and for the creation of the world. The most emphasised characteristic of the coming forth of the second divine person is pre-existence: the Son–Word comes forth before the creation of the world and man. Another characteristic is the designation of the Son–Word as the 'Beginning', which is used as the expression for the distinction 'in number' in Justin and with respect to the creation of the world in Theophilus; it does not occur in Athenagoras. Both these characteristics (pre-existence of the Word and the Word as 'Beginning') are witnessed with reference to the verse *Prov* 8:22.

None of the three apologists attempts to express the coming forth of the Word with the verbs 'to create' (κτίζειν) and 'to establish' (θεμελιοῦν) from *Prov* 8:22–23. Next to the verbs 'to bring forth' (προβάλλειν) and 'to come forth' (προέρχεσθαι), all three authors predominantly employ the verb γεννᾶν ('beget') or the verbal noun γέννημα ('offspring') in their formulations of the relation of origin of the Son from the Father. Justin and Theophilus indicate that the begottenness of the Son is connected with the name of Wisdom in their thought. However, no explicit reference to *Prov* 8:25 can be established in any statements of the three early Christian authors with regard to the usage of γεννᾶν in the given context. It can be argued (*ex silentio*) that none of the authors attempted to base his notion of the generation of the Son of God (the Word or Wisdom) on another Biblical witness. But it is more appropriate to say that they seem to have not considered it necessary to corroborate their usage of the verb 'to beget' with any explicit Scriptural reference. Still, in Justin, and perhaps in Theophilus as well, it can be traced from several hints that they could have had in mind *Prov* 8:25 when they spoke of begetting of the Wisdom.

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QUESTION OF DISPENSATION OF THE *INTRINSICALLY EVIL ACTS* ACCORDING TO ST. THOMAS AQUINAS*

PETER SAMUEL LOVÁS

ABSTRACT

If some action is *intrinsically evil*, it lacks all moral goodness. This act keeps some physical goodness in the sense that it is real, but it suffers from a real deficient moral disorder. It is morally evil in its essence because its moral privation shapes its objective character. Its disorder defines the act at its core. Such an act is not only affected by evil; it is constituted by evil. The evil shapes the formality and the identity of the action itself. St. Thomas Aquinas argues that these actions cannot be rightly performed under any circumstances and for no end. However, could Almighty God in some specific situations give a dispensation from the negative absolute prohibition? Some biblical cases seem to support this explanation. In many morally difficult situations, some kind of mental reservation, or dispensation that would render an otherwise evil act at least morally permissible, might be very convenient. Aquinas explains that God cannot dispense from the precepts of the decalogue because he would deny himself, who is Justice itself. We will see how it was possible to order Abraham to kill his son and other similar morally disputed cases. Later, we will consider cases of lying and fraud, which frequently appear in the Bible.

Keywords

Human action; Intrinsically evil; Dispensation; Lying; Thomas Aquinas; *Veritatis splendor*

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'And do they still exist?' This is the first question often asked regarding *intrinsically evil acts*. Of course, one normally does not think that the state of human spirit today is better than it was before and that, therefore, evil acts of this kind have simply disappeared. Rather, it seems that people often do not believe that there is such a thing as an objective reality of the actions about which real truth can be known. Because of the varieties of different cultures, personal experiences and characteristics, some people are sceptical about objective truth and reality of this kind.[1] That is why the question of intrinsically evil acts is still at the centre of discussions of moral theologians. A discussion restarted with a publication of *Humanae vitae*[2] and continues until the present day.[3] It includes the positions concerning concrete urgent problems discussed in the general public, like contraception, abortion, artificial procreation, various other medical acts, torture, lying, etc. If such actions are intrinsically evil, they can never be committed under any circumstances. *Veritatis splendor* expresses it clearly.[4]

Although St. Thomas did not employ the term 'intrinsically evil acts', which came into use only in the 16th century,[5] he argues that certain actions cannot be rightly performed under any circumstances and for any end.[6] However, could Almighty God in certain specific situ-

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1 This situation is, of course, not new. On December 1, 1924, the Holy Office condemned 12 propositions, among them also a *new definition of truth*: 'Truth is always in a state of becoming, and consists in a progressive alignment of the understanding with life, indeed a certain perpetual process, by which the intellect strives to develop and explain that which experience presents or action requires: by which principle, moreover, as in all progression, nothing is ever determined or fixed.' Cf. Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, 'Where is the New Theology Leading Us?' transl. Suzanne M. Rini, *Catholic Family News Reprint Series* 309 (1998): 3.

2 The encyclical of Paul VI, published on July 25, 1968.

3 For a penetrating presentation of the history of thinking about intrinsically evil acts, from the Church Fathers until the proportionalists of recent days, see Servais T. Pinckaers, *Ce qu'on ne peut jamais faire: La Question des actes intrinsèquement mauvais, Histoire et discussion* (Fribourg; Paris: Editions Universitaires Fribourg; Cerf, 1995), 20–83.

4 Cf. John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor* (August 6, 1993), 80.: 'Reason attests that there are objects of the human act which are by their nature 'incapable of being ordered' to God, because they radically contradict the good of the person made in his image. These are the acts which, in the Church's moral tradition, have been termed "intrinsically evil".'

5 Pinckaers, *Ce qu'on ne peut jamais faire*, 21.

6 Cf. *In II Sent.* d. 40. 1. 2.
More recently James Keenan tried to argue that Thomas Aquinas's moral teaching did not include a prohibition of some human acts as intrinsically evil, cf. James F. Keenan, *A History of Catholic Moral Theology in the Twentieth Century: From Confessing Sins*

ations give a dispensation from this negative precept? Some biblical cases seem to support this explanation.[7] In many difficult situations which life brings, it would be convenient to have some kind of mental reservation that would render an otherwise evil act morally permissible, if not good. Is this possible with intrinsically evil actions? With the substantial assistance of St. Thomas Aquinas, in this article, we will explore a possible dispensation of intrinsically evil actions. We will argue that no dispensation is possible when the negative moral absolutes are understood in the formal sense.

1. General Basis for the Intrinsically Evil Acts

Even after releasing *Veritatis splendor*,[8] there are some contemporary Catholic theologians[9] who question the reality of such acts, which are so morally disordered in themselves that they can never be justified, regardless of the intentions, the agent, or the circumstances. A primary argument they raise against intrinsically evil actions is based on the individual person of the agent with all his history and dispositions and on their different understanding of natural law and its universally binding precepts. Natural law, they claim, does not and cannot include 'specific, concrete, behavioral norms, universally binding, which proscribe specifiable kinds of human acts describable in morally nonevaluative language, such as norms proscribing contraception, direct abortion, adultery, etc'.[10] In various ways, they assert that the intrinsically

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to Liberating Consciences (New York: Continuum, 2010), 45. An interesting response to Keenan's claims is to be found in Matthew R. McWhorter, 'Aquinas and Inherently Privative Moral Acts,' *Angelicum* 89, no. 3/4 (2012): 715–34. Cessario and Kaczor also affirm that St. Thomas describes certain acts as intrinsic evils, cf. Romanus Cessario, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, rev. ed. (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 38; Christopher Kaczor, *Proportionalism and the Natural Law Tradition* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 184.

7 Cf. *Gn* 22:2, 27:19, *Ex* 1:15–19, 12:36, *Jos* 2:4–5, *Jud* 11:5–19, *Hos* 1:2.

8 Cf. John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 80; *Reconciliatio et Paenitentia* (December 2, 1984), 17: 'there exist acts which *per se* and in themselves, independently of circumstances, are always seriously wrong by reason of their object.' Among the latest magisterium on the intrinsically evil acts, there is also Paul VI, 'Address to Members of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer,' *AAS* 59 (September 22, 1967), 962.

9 E.g., Charles E. Curran, *The Moral Theology of Pope John Paul II*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2005); Richard A. McCormick, 'Some Early Reactions to *Veritatis Splendor*,' *Theological Studies* 55, no. 3 (1994): 481–506, doi: 10.1177/004056399405500303.

10 William E. May, '*Humanae Vitae*, Natural Law, and Catholic Moral Thought,' *The Linacre Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (1989): 64, doi: 10.1080/00243639.1989.11878033. May is here

evil acts are in themselves only *prima facie* (pre-moral, non-moral, ontic, or physical) evil, but they cannot be declared morally bad prior to a consideration of their circumstances and end.[11]

These elements seem to them to be neglected by the simple claim that certain physical actions are just despite their object being morally evil. Thus, *Veritatis splendor* summarises this position with: 'Even when grave matter is concerned, these precepts should be considered as operative norms which are always relative and open to exceptions.'[12] By affirming the existence of intrinsically evil acts, however, *Veritatis splendor* did not exclude the personal point-of-view of the acting agent (with his intrinsic intentions, history, personality, and conscience).[13]

How is it possible that there are any acts evil '*always and per se,* in other words, on account of their very object, and quite apart from the ulterior intentions of the one acting and the circumstances'?[14] Human actions are specified by their end, which is 'the origin and the termination of an action in the same time'.[15] The relation between the object and the end of an act is essential for the determination of its moral species because some objects and ends of actions are simply not compatible. If one intends an evil end, his act is evil. When he intends a good end, the act is not necessarily good, since (abstracting, for the moment, from the circumstances of the action, which also affect the morality of the action) it is possible for an act to be evil *per se* and thus permissible in no way.[16]

There are two possible reasons for this claim: 1) These acts cannot be ordered to any due end because they are joined to an evil proximate end.[17] 2) They are generically incompatible with the normative

writing about 'the revisionist theologians' among those he counts Böckle, Curran, Fuchs, Häring, Janssens, McCormick, Scholz, Schüller.

[11] Cf. John F. Dedek, 'Intrinsically Evil Acts: An Historical Study of the Mind of St. Thomas,' *The Thomist* 43, no. 3 (1979): 385–86, doi: 10.1353/tho.1979.0023. Rhonheimer seems to hold a similar above-described position, see Martin Rhonheimer, '"Intrinsically Evil Acts" and the Moral Viewpoint: Clarifying a Central Teaching of *Veritatis Splendor*,' *The Thomist* 58, no. 1 (1994): 1–39, doi: 10.1353/tho.1994.0041.

[12] John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 75.

[13] Cf. ibid., 78: 'In order to be able to grasp the object of an act which specifies that act morally, it is therefore necessary to place oneself in the perspective of the acting person.'

[14] Ibid., 80.

[15] Joseph Bobik, *Aquinas on Matter and Form and the Elements: A Translation and Interpretation of the De Principiis Naturae and the De Mixtione Elementorum of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 39.

[16] Cf. *In II Sent.* d. 40. 1. 2.

[17] Cf. *In II Sent.* d. 40. Expositio textus.

finality of a good life,[18] which is not possible to supersede by any further purposes of the agent because the goodness is from integral causes.[19] The integral nature of the act is always materially included within the object of the moral act.[20] If the acts are not good in themselves, it does not matter what the further intention, previous history, or personality of the agent may be. They are objectively (*ex obiecto*) evil, *mala in se*.

The evaluation of a human act as evil does not mean that there is something which is intrinsically evil in the sense of its essence. That is why, technically speaking, one must understand the phrase 'intrinsically evil' as synonymous with the precise description of acts as 'objectively evil' – since evil has no proper intrinsic content. It is in this precise and nuanced sense that we interpret and employ the phrase 'intrinsically evil acts'.[21] The term 'intrinsically evil' also supposes the necessary existence of 'the extrinsically evil acts' as well, which are the acts not *mala in se* but determined as such 'from outside' – by a decision of a legitimate authority, for example, trespassing certain traffic regulations.

Aquinas never used the formulation 'intrinsically evil actions'.[22] But he claims that certain actions must never be done - under any

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[18] On how bad actions thwart human flourishing see Romanus Cessario, 'On Bad Actions, Good Intentions, and Loving God: Three Much-Misunderstood Issues About the Happy Life that St. Thomas Aquinas Clarifies For Us,' *Logos* 1, no. 2 (1997): 113–18, doi: 10.1353/log.1997.0015.

[19] Cf. *STh* I-II. 18. 4 ad 3.

[20] Cf. Steven A. Long, 'Natural Law, the Moral Object, and *Humanae Vitae*,' in: *Ressourcement Thomism: Sacred Doctrine, the Sacraments, and the Moral Life*, eds. Reinhard Hütter and Matthew Levering (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 290.
For more about teleological structure of a human act read also Steven A. Long, *Teleological Grammar of the Moral Act*, 2nd ed. (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2015); Steven J. Jensen, *Good and Evil Actions: A Journey through Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2010). More general studies regarding the moral act according to Thomas Aquinas worthy of attention are: Ralph M. McInerny, *Aquinas on Human Action: A Theory of Practice* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2012); John Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions: St. Thomas Aquinas on Human Participation in Eternal Law* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2009); Kevin L. Flannery, *Acts Amid Precepts: The Aristotelian Logical Structure of Thomas Aquinas's Moral Theory* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).

[21] Cf. Jan A. Aertsen, *Medieval Philosophy and the Transcendentals: The Case of Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden; New York: Brill, 1996), 334. For example, John Paul II with the tradition of the Church uses the term 'intrinsically evil' in *Veritatis splendor*, 80–81. The term 'intrinsically evil' is questioned, however in a slightly different sense, also in Pinckaers, *Ce qu'on ne peut jamais faire*, 43.

[22] Scholz concluded that Aquinas even prepared a basis for a refusal of the notion of intrinsically evil acts simply by distinguishing between physical and moral evil (for

circumstances or for any end.[23] They are bad because of their nature (which comes from their object).[24] Just to mention at least some actions that are evil *secundum se* according to Aquinas, we cite theft, adultery, or murder.[25] Similarly, somebody who fornicates commits evil and is not excused by having a good intention, the same as with a person who steals to give an alms, because fornication by its nature has an inordinate end.[26] The same thing Aquinas says about lying - it must not be done for any expediency, not even to help someone's neighbour, because a lie has a disorder inseparably joined to it.[27]

2. Possibility of Dispensation

The teaching of St. Thomas on objectively evil acts lines up with the whole tradition of his predecessors like Peter of Poitiers,[28] Hugh of St. Cher,[29] St. Albert the Great,[30] or St. Bonaventure,[31] who claimed that some actions never can be good because a malicious object is

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example, between a fact of killing and a concept of murder that includes a moral evaluation), cf. Franz Scholz, 'Durch ethische Grenzsituation aufgeworfene Normenprobleme,' *Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift* 123 (1975): 341–55.

[23] Cf. *In II Sent.* d. 40. 1. 2.

[24] John Paul II assumes the argumentation of St. Thomas. Cf. John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 78.

[25] Cf. *De malo* 2. 3.
Pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* (December 7, 1965), 27, and *Veritatis splendor*, para. 80, gives a number of examples of such acts: 'any kind of homicide, genocide, abortion, euthanasia and voluntary suicide; whatever violates the integrity of the human person, such as mutilation, physical and mental torture and attempts to coerce the spirit'. Also adding the contraceptive practices from Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 14, and *Veritatis splendor*, 80.

[26] Cf. *De malo* 15. 1 ad 3.

[27] Cf. *In III Sent.* d. 38. 1. 3 ad 6. See also *De malo* 15. 1 ad 5.

[28] Cf. Philip S. Moore, *The Works of Peter of Poitiers: Master in Theology and Chancellor of Paris (1193–1205)* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1936). Peter of Poitiers lectured and became chancellor of the University of Paris in 1167–1193.

[29] Cf. Magdalena Bieniak, 'The Sentences Commentary of Hugh of St.Cher,' in: *Mediaeval Commentaries on the Sentences of Peter Lombard*, vol. 2, ed. Philipp W. Rosemann (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2010), 111–147. Hugh of St. Cher taught at the University of Paris (1230–1235) among the first Dominicans. He became a Cardinal in 1244 and was instrumental in getting Aquinas to Paris.

[30] Cf. Albert the Great, *Commentarium in libros sententiarum* (Paris, 1893). *In III Sent.* d. 37. 13 ad 1, 8; d. 38. 1; and Stanley B. Cunningham, *Reclaiming Moral Agency: The Moral Philosophy of Albert the Great* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 93–158. St. Albert the Great taught at the University of Paris in 1240–1248 when he wrote his *Commentary on the Sentences*.

[31] Cf. St. Bonaventure of Bagnoregio, *Commentaria in Quatuor Libros Sententiarum*, d. 47, q. 4. St. Bonaventure lectured at the University of Paris in 1248–1257. Probably,

inseparable from them. However, there are a few cases in the Bible where it seems that God either allows or even commands someone to perform such an action. For example: the issue of Abraham, who was commanded to kill his innocent son,[32] theft by the Israelites,[33] and Hosea seemed to be ordered to fornicate.[34] Another very particular subject is that of lying and fraud, which also appears in the Bible[35] and has been studied with special care lately in connection with the unjust totalitarian regimes which often want to know and misuse the truth.[36] That is why we deal with this issue in the following independent section.[37] Now we will proceed to investigate the possibility of the dispensation from prohibition to commit intrinsically evil actions.

When God ordered Abraham to slay his son Isaac, the act itself would contain a disorder in that an innocent[38] person was about to be killed. However, God, the source of life and the Supreme Legislator, is the only one who can order such an act without any injustice: 'By the command of God, death can be inflicted on any man, guilty or innocent, without any injustice whatever.'[39] Aquinas teaches that the same applies to evil-doers or foes of the common good, who be slain without

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he completed or at least most of his Commentary wrote before St. Thomas between 1249–1255.

[32] Cf. *Gn* 22:2 (All following English translations of the Bible are from the English Standard Version): 'He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering."'

[33] Cf. *Ex* 12:36: 'Thus they [Israelites] plundered the Egyptians.'

[34] Cf. *Hos* 1:2: 'The Lord said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom."'

[35] Abraham seemed to lie and even forced to lie his wife Sarah that she was his sister while they were in Egypt and in Gerar, cf. *Gn* 12 and 20. Jacob lied to his father Isaac in order to receive the blessing that belonged to his brother Esau in *Gn* 27. The midwives of Egypt lied to Pharaoh and were blessed by families in *Ex* 1. Rahab lied to the king of Jericho to save the spies of Joshua in *Jos* 2, and Judith is even praised in *Jud* 15:10–11, although she lied to Holofernes.

[36] Often discussed is the case of Nazis asking about hidden Jews when there are some in the house. Servais Pinckaers presented the cases of Dr Augoyard captured by Soviets in Kabul v 1982 and proposed to lie publicly for his liberation, and Polish priest asked to make a false accusation in order to save the life of a 19-year-old girl, cf. Pinckaers, *Ce qu'on ne peut jamais faire*, 11–19.

[37] Cf. section 3.

[38] Meaning 'somebody who should not have undergone a death,' cf. *In III Sent.* d. 37. 1. 4 ad 4. This is in contrast, for example, with a death penalty commanded by an entitled judge that is according to Aquinas permissible under certain conditions, cf. *Quodlibet* VIII. 6. 4 ad 1.

[39] *STh* I-II. 94. 5 ad 2. All English translations of *Sth* used here are based on the translation of the Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1981).

contravening the precept of the decalogue. Such a killing would not constitute murder.[40] Moreover, this particulate command to kill Abraham's innocent son served to manifest the faith and the love of Abraham so as to be an example for his descendants (by blood and in faith) and as an image signifying the death of Christ.[41] And it was to this kind of death ordered by the divine authority that the will of Abraham agrees with reason, as St. Thomas states.[42]

The same goes for Aquinas's understanding of the Israelites' stealing from the Egyptians in *Ex* 12.[43] God, who is the Lord of all things, has, in some situations, the right to attribute to someone else something that belongs to another. Similarly, legitimate authorities may for a good reason transfer ownership of property so that taking such an object is not stealing.[44] In addition to the decision of a legitimate authority, a case of extreme need makes another's property legitimately one's own because 'that which he takes for the support of his life becomes his own property by reason of that need'.[45] Thus, taking the property under such circumstances is not a theft.

Now, in the case of *Hos* 1:2, we think that Hosea was ordered to marry a prostitute, which is expressed by the command: 'Take to yourself.' The continuation of the command: 'Have children of whoredom,' according to the notes from *La Bible de Jérusalem*[46] means just that these children will be the children of a prostitute, not that they would be born from fornication. In our opinion, this interpretation matches better with the fact that the prophet Hosea represents here God in his relationship to the people of Israel, who are symbolised by Hosea's 'wife of whoredom'. However, St. Thomas, with the previous tradition of authors,[47] interprets this case as one of God ordering Hosea to unite to a woman who is not his wife. His solution lines up with what was said

[40] *STh* I-II. 100. 8 ad 3.
[41] Cf. *Heb* 11:19.
[42] *In I Sent.* d. 47. 1. 4.
[43] However, we see that Egyptians gave the property at least partially voluntarily to Israelites on their demand: 'The people of Israel […] had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. And […] the Egyptians […] let them have what they asked' (*Ex* 12:35–36).
[44] Cf. *In III Sent.* d. 37. 1. 4 ad 3. See also *STh* I-II. 94. 5 ad 2; and 100. 8 ad 3.
[45] *STh* II-II. 66. 7 ad 2.
[46] Ecole biblique de Jérusalem, transl., *La Bible de Jérusalem* (Paris: Cerf, 1988).
[47] For example, Peter of Poitiers, Philip the Chancellor, Hugh of St. Cher, The *Summa Fratris Alexandri*, St. Albert the Great, or St. Bonaventure, cf. Dedek, 'Intrinsically Evil Acts,' 389–99.

before about Abraham sacrificing Isaac, and so, God, who is the source of marriage, can make 'that sexual union was not fornicacious which otherwise would have been fornicacious'.[48]

In the decalogue, as well as in every legislation, a legislator cannot cover all possible cases by establishing certain law but only those which occur the most often. A rule for interpretation of laws is then the intention of the legislator. Aquinas uses the example of someone who does not return his deposit to somebody who fights against the faith or his homeland. In such a case, one should act with the virtue called *epikeia* by Aristotle, which means that the person follows the intention of the legislator rather than the literal law.[49] The orders which are commanded by the divine law are changeable or can be dispensed with only by divine precept. That is why dispensations would be possible just by a quasi-miraculous operation of God[50] and are not made in a general manner to all but rather only to particular persons.[51]

In his *Commentary on the Sentences,* Aquinas argues that in the order of creatures related to God as their ultimate end, no dispensation is possible (in actions like despair or hatred of God) because if the good from this fundamental ordering disappears, no good can remain. But in the order of things in relation to one another, as, for example, in the case of homicide or disobedience of one's superior, the goodness from the order of the fundamental relation to God may remain. Therefore, Aquinas states that, in these situations, 'God can dispense but not men.'[52] Later, however, St. Thomas develops his opinion and claims that 'the precepts of the decalogue [from both tablets] admit of no dispensation whatever'.[53] He explains that God cannot dispense from the precepts of the decalogue because he would have to deny himself, he who is Justice itself.[54]

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[48] *De malo* 15. 1 ad 8. English translation by Jean Oesterle of St. Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995). See also *De malo* 3. 1 ad 17.

[49] Cf. *In III Sent.* d. 37. 1. 4.

[50] Cf. *In I Sent.* d. 47. 1. 4.

[51] *In IV Sent.* d. 33. 2. 2 qc 1.

[52] *In I Sent.* d. 47. 1. 4: 'Therefore, we say that God cannot dispense against the precepts of the first tablet [of the decalogue] which are immediately directed towards God; but against the precepts of the second tablet, which are immediately oriented towards a neighbor, God can dispense but not men.' My translation.

[53] *STh* I-II. 100. 8.

[54] Ibid. ad 3: 'The precepts of the decalogue, as to the essence of justice which they contain, are unchangeable: but as to any determination by application to individual

Because God creates all things as ordered to a certain end, the eternal law ordains human nature to certain types of actions that are proportioned to man's happiness. Although not every human act is performed in accordance with this end, human nature is *per se* inclined to cause good actions.[55] And since the eternal law moves humans to act in accord with their nature, man's reason is, in this way, at the foundation of moral actions. Human acts are morally specified by their end, which is the origin and the termination of the act. Thus, the nature of human action depends principally on the agent's intention,[56] and the choice of a certain act involves a movement towards the good which is its end. It includes a selection of appropriate means in order to achieve the desired end.[57] Through the intention of an agent, a natural object becomes the moral object of a particular human act.

The most defining and universal moral determination is derived from the end and its relation to the object of the action. If we want to determine the moral species of action, we must know whether the object is, or is not, by itself ordained to the end of this action. This way of evaluation enables us to properly analyze the most crucial current moral challenges. For example, in the case of euthanasia, killing not only ends pain - which is one's desired end - but it also *per se* ends the life of that person. Therefore, to choose it necessarily is to choose non-justifiable homicide.

Thus, no dispensation is possible when the precepts of the decalogue are understood in the formal sense, that is in so far as they contain the order of justice itself. However, the determined ways of observing justice in individual actions differ.[58] Murder, theft, or fornication are evil because they are contrary to right reason. Man's reason is right in so far as it is ruled by the Divine Intellect and Will as the first and supreme rule, as St. Augustine states: 'For as among the powers of human society, the greater authority is obeyed in preference to the lesser, so must God in preference to all.'[59] Therefore, when somebody acts in obedience to

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actions […] they admit of change; sometimes by Divine authority alone, namely, in such matters as are exclusively of Divine institution, as marriage and the like; sometimes also by human authority, namely in such matters as are subject to human jurisdiction: for in this respect men stand in the place of God: and yet not in all respects.'

55 In which manner it is so, see Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions*, 81–112.

56 Cf. *STh* II-II. 64. 7.

57 Cf. *STh* I-II. 12. 1 ad 4.

58 Cf. ibid. ad 1.

59 Citation of *Confessiones* III. 8 in *STh* II-II. 154. 2 ad 2.

a divine command, it is not contrary to right reason, though it may seem to be against the general order of reason. Just as a miracle done by the power of God is not against nature but against the usual course of nature.

3. The Case of Lying

One may assume that the rule of different determinations and applications of justice (as it was said in cases like murder, theft, and adultery)[60] would be valid also for lying. Precisely the important question is this: is it permissible to lie for a good and just reason, for example, to save the life of an innocent? As we have said above, this question is of pressing concern in light of various unjust totalitarian regimes which demand the truth in order to use it against their real or putative enemies. This question has been carefully explored by many scholars. For example, Immanuel Kant considered lying even in order to save one's life as very bad because even though life is spared, the lie undermines the basis of law and contracts.[61] In Christian terminology, every lie for Kant would be mortally sinful. On the contrary, Lawrence Dewan claims that for Aquinas the lie to save one's life is 'only a venial sin'.[62] The famous case of St. Robert Southwell[63] revealed the doctrine of mental reservation, or equivocation, the origin of which is traced back to Martin de Azpilcueta, also known as Doctor Navarrus,[64]

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[60] Cf. *STh* I-II. 100. 8 ad 3.

[61] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of practical reason and other writings in moral philosophy*, ed. and transl. Lewis White Beck (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 346–47: 'Truthfulness in statements which cannot be avoided is the formal duty of an individual to everyone […]. If, by telling an untruth, I do not wrong him who unjustly compels me to make a statement, nevertheless by this falsification […], I commit a wrong against duty generally in a most essential point. That is, so far as in me lies I cause that declarations should in general find no credence, and hence that all rights based on contracts should be void and lose their force, and this is a wrong done to mankind generally. […] For a lie always harms another; if not some other particular man, still it harms mankind generally, for it vitiates the source of law itself.'

[62] Lawrence Dewan, 'St. Thomas, Lying, and Venial Sin,' *The Thomist* 61, no. 2 (1997): 279–99, doi: 10.1353/tho. 1997.0036.

[63] While working as a missionary in England, Southwell was betrayed by his former patron, Anne Bellamy, and arrested. During his trial, which ended with Southwell being condemned to death in 1595, Bellamy testified that Southwell had suggested to her to practice equivocation for saving herself from a lie, and him from imprisonment.

[64] Martin de Azpilcueta or Doctor Navarrus (1491–1586) was a Spanish canon law professor at the University of Salamanca, and later at Coimbra University.

but was developed later mainly by Jesuits in order to avoid telling the truth.[65]

St. Thomas argues that language was invented 'to express what a heart conceives'[66] and 'words were invented to be signs of what was understood'. That is why when someone expresses by words what he does not have in mind - the definition of the word 'lie' - there is a disorder by abuse of words.[67] Thus, every lie not only injures one's neighbour but has an inordination *de se* and so never can become good or allowed, no matter what good one lies for. Therefore, Aquinas, citing St. Augustine, concludes that every lie is a sin.[68] An action is evil either in itself or in its end.[69] And so, just as it is evil to steal in order to give alms - even though the thief may have a good intention, he has a bad will[70] - 'it is not lawful to tell a lie in order to deliver another from any danger whatever.'[71] Evil may not be done so that good may come of it. And in this case, in addition to a bad will, the action is evil *secundum se*. But, as Aquinas, together with St. Augustine, states, it is lawful to hide the truth prudently under some dissimulation.[72]

Now we will look closely at the lies described in the Bible.[73] Abraham seemed to lie and even instructed his wife Sarah to lie about who she was in order to save his life while they were in Egypt and in Gerar.[74] However, from *Gn* 20:12,[75] we know that she was his half-sister; thus, he did not lie but hid the truth. In the case of Jacob, who said to his father that he was his firstborn Esau,[76] St. Thomas explains that it was said in a mystical sense because the birthright was righty his by the election of God, and Jacob was speaking this way in order to express a mystery,

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[65] Cf. Stefania Tutino, 'Nothing But the Truth? Hermeneutics and Morality in the Doctrines of Equivocation and Mental Reservation in Early Modern Europe,' *Renaissance Quarterly* 64, no. 1 (2011): 115–55, doi: 10.1086/ 660370.

[66] *In III Sent.* d. 38. 3.

[67] Cf. *Quodlibet* VIII. 6. 4.

[68] Cf. *STh* II-II. 110. 3, quotation from St. Augustine, *Contra Mendacium* I. 8. 19.

[69] Cf. *De malo* 2. 3.

[70] Cf. *De malo* 2. 2 ad 8.

[71] *STh* II-II. 110. 3 ad 4.

[72] Cf. St. Augustine, *Contra Mendacium* I. 10. 23, and *STh* II-II. 110. 3 ad 4.

[73] We have mentioned them in the section 2.

[74] Cf. *Gn* 12:11–13: 'When he [Abram] was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife, […] "Say you are my sister, that it may go well with me because of you."' *Gn* 20:2: 'And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, "She is my sister."'

[75] 'She is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife.'

[76] *Gn* 27:19: 'Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn […] your soul may bless me."'

that the younger people (i.e., the Gentiles) should supplant the firstborn (i.e., the Jews).[77] And so, Jacob spoke under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and his words were ordered towards the interpretation of the Spirit.[78]

The case of the two midwives of Egypt was different. They lied in the literal sense to Pharaoh.[79] But they were rewarded[80] not for their lie but for their fear of God[81] and for their goodwill.[82] The subsequent lie was not, however, meritorious.[83] The same rule applies in the case of Rahab when she deceived the king of Jericho,[84] and Judith when she lied to Holofernes.[85] We might say, though, that Judith was telling the truth in a mystical sense.[86] Thus, a lie is evil in respect of its genus since it is an action bearing on undue matter. For as words are naturally signs of thought, it is unnatural and undue for anyone to signify by words something that is not in his mind.[87]

One may still ask how a virtuous man should act in the following famous situation: during the Second World War, for example, the virtuous man hides some Jews in his house, and Nazis ask him if he knows about the location of any Jews. First of all, he should not be satisfied with the proposition that a lie under these circumstances would only constitute a venial sin, as some authors have suggested.[88] Every sin is evil no matter how bad it is because it is not ordered to the truth about the good, and the principal rule for a moral life is that good is to be done and pursued while evil is to be avoided.[89] Second, in the case of somebody hiding Jews during the Second World War, the host must be prepared for a Nazi inspection. Therefore, normally, the Jews would not be watching television in the living room. In case of an unexpected

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77 Cf. *STh* II-II. 110. 3 ad 3.
78 Cf. *In III Sent.* d. 38. 1. 3 ad 1.
79 Cf. *Ex* 1:15–19.
80 Cf. *Ex* 1:20: 'So God dealt well with the midwives.'
81 Cf. *Ex* 1:21: 'And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families.'
82 Cf. *In III Sent.* d. 38. 1. 3 ad 2.
83 Cf. *STh* II-II. 110. 3 ad 2.
84 Cf. *Jos* 2:4–5: 'But the woman [Rahab] had taken the two men and hidden them. And she said, "True, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And when the gate was about to be closed at dark, the men went out. I do not know where the men went."'
85 Cf. *Jud* 11:5–19.
86 Cf. *STh* II-II. 110. 3 ad 3.
87 Cf. *STh* II-II. 110. 3.
88 Cf. Dewan, 'St. Thomas, Lying, and Venial Sin,' 280–99.
89 Cf. *STh* I-II. 94. 2.

arrival of unknown people, the Jews would probably be hiding in some secret parts of the house.

Of course, it would be understandable if the proprietor of the house, in this situation of extreme anxiety, did not react perfectly. But a morally impeccable answer to the menacing Nazis would be something like 'Come and look,' which would fit well with Aquinas's permission 'to hide the truth prudently, by keeping it back',[90] or the *Catechism's* proposition that: 'No one is bound to reveal the truth to someone who does not have the right to know it.'[91] This observation from the *Catechism*, of course, presents a type of non-disclosure that is not, in itself, disordered. Silence in the face of an unjust question is not the same as a lie in response to an unjust request.

Conclusion: Objective Truth about Objective Reality

We began this article with some people's questioning the objective reality and truth. This is why they would find it convenient if an exception to or a dispensation from intrinsically evil acts exists. If objective truth and reality do not exist, what is man left with in such a case? The caprices of human appetite replace the eternal law of God's wisdom.[92] Then, man 'creates' and imposes various 'realities' and 'truths', he himself determines what is good and what is evil, and so man becomes 'god' according to his primordial project found in the Garden of Eden.[93] If one makes his own reality and his own truth about this reality, somebody else legitimately follows the same process and, therefore, creates his own different truth and reality. The validity of someone's beliefs is acknowledged only as valid for himself. Relativism enforces the principle that 'truth' is a fluid concept that is determined by one's own subjective preferences, experiences, and perspectives.[94] This relativism, no doubt, has also entered into morals with its fluidity regarding good and evil in human actions. Thus, certain theologians claim that an evil act

[90] Cf. *STh* II-II. 110. 3 ad 4.
[91] *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2489.
[92] For a thoughtful analysis of the metaphysical and theological implications of the eternal law, see Cessario, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, 50–95.
[93] Cf. *Gn* 3:5–6.
[94] Cf. Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, transl. Roy J. Deferrari (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publications, 2013), 512, a. 2058: 'Truth is no more immutable than man himself, inasmuch as it is evolved with him, in him and through him.'

in itself can become good when some additional circumstances are taken under consideration.[95]

In the end, no dispensation from the prohibition of committing an intrinsically evil act is possible. That is why even God cannot command anybody to lie. Such a command would contain an essential contradiction. When God ordered Abraham to kill his innocent son, this act was not objectively evil since God is the Source and Lord of life, and, therefore, he can kill and command such an act, just as someone can kill an assailant in legitimate self-defence without any moral violation. In the case of a lie, it does not only injure one's neighbour but also has a disorder *de se* (because of the abuse of words[96] by which one expresses what he does not have in mind) and thus, never can become good or allowed, no matter how good the reason for which one lies may be. Even with a mental reservation, evil cannot be done so that good may come of it.

Evil acts that violate the order of right reason fail to substantiate divine goodness and wisdom. They oppose the ultimate achievement of human nature.[97] Even in the case of ignorance, good intentions, or inconvenient circumstances, such actions are always harmful not only to their patient but also to their agent because they cause him to deviate from his perfection and they prohibit and frustrate his transformative union with Christ, who is also a real source of freedom and goodness.[98] Only good acts lead their authors to happiness because, by their nature, they are related to the divine Good, in which they participate.

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[95] Cf. Louis Janssens, 'Norms and Priorities in Love Ethics,' *Louvain Studies* 6, no. 3 (1977): 232–33; 'St. Thomas Aquinas and the Question of Proportionality,' *Louvain Studies* 9, no. 1 (1982): 26–46; 'A Moral Understanding of Some Arguments of St. Thomas,' *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 63, no. 4 (1987): 354–60.
See also response of John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*, 84.

[96] Cf. *Quodlibet* VIII. 6. 4.

[97] Cf. *STh* I-II. 3. 1.

[98] Cf. *Mt* 19:17–21.

THE SYNCRETISM OF THE GABONESE BWITI RELIGION AND CATHOLIC CHRISTIANITY FROM A THEOLOGICAL AND THEOLOGICAL--ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

ONDŘEJ HAVELKA

ABSTRACT

The article deals with the theology and theological ethics of syncretism of the traditional Gabonese *Bwiti* religion and Catholic Christianity in equatorial Africa. Traditional *Bwiti* religious rituals are based on the consumption of the root of the *iboga* shrub, which has strong psychedelic effects. In Gabon, some believers profess syncretism, which is enshrined in the *Bwiti* initiation ritual through the Catholic Sacrament of Penance, the Holy Communion, Christian prayers, etc. These Catholic Christians thus undergo a complex and physically demanding initiation process in Gabon. The aim of the paper is to answer the basic question of the whole text, i.e. is the psychedelic initiation ritual in the depths of the Gabonese rainforest consistent with the theological and theological-ethical foundations of the Catholic Christian life? The topic is elaborated by the method of own field research, supported by a comparison of relevant literature. Between 2001 and 2019, the author spent a total of three years on research stays in Africa, of which 12 months were devoted to West and Central Africa and the study of local syncretisms.

Keywords

Bwiti; Syncretism; Theological ethics; African Christianity; Gabon; Africa

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In Gabon, Africa, people – including many Catholic Christians there – practice traditional *Bwiti* rituals based on consuming *iboga* root with strong psychedelic effects. Larger doses of *iboga* lead to significant hallucinations, and the dose used for the *Bwiti* initiation causes temporary unconsciousness. The complex religious system of *Bwiti*, with its long tradition, is unique in relation to the surrounding indigenous African religions and cults: It is not about prayers, it is not

about worshipping deities or spirits, nor is it about bringing good fortune for oneself or, conversely, bad fortune for the enemy (typical of surrounding religious systems such as *Orisha*, *Vodun*, or *Juju*) – it is entirely about self-discovery, spiritual insight into the nature of reality, uncovering the spiritual veil, and encountering oneself in the innermost sense. The spiritual direction of *Bwiti* does not have a sum of doctrine to be passed on or taught (although some of the most general elements, especially in the approach to deceased ancestors and purification, also exist). However, it has initiation and progression rituals during which a change of consciousness and insight into the nature of reality is achieved. One opens oneself to visions and accepts an understanding of reality; one does not learn but observes.[1]

As is the case with many other traditional African religions that have syncretised with Christianity (e.g. *Vodun* and Catholic Christianity in Benin)[2] or Islam (e.g. *Vodun* and Islam in Mali)[3] – or even Nigerian Chrislam (e.g. the syncretism of the Yoruba religion, Islam, and Christianity in Nigeria)[4] – syncretism of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity also arose in Gabon. As mentioned below, some Catholic Christians in Gabon profess syncretism, which is enshrined, for example, in the *Bwiti* initiation ritual through the Catholic Sacrament of Penance, the Holy Communion, Christian prayer, etc. These Catholic Christians thus undergo a complex and physically demanding initiation process in Gabon. *Bwiti* is an indigenous Central African religious tradition, which has its origins among the Pygmies deep in the pre-colonial past.[5]

The article presents the indigenous Central African Pygmy religion later adopted by the new inhabitants of Gabon (especially Bantu) as well as the complex initiation ritual as practised nowadays and the syncretism of this religion and Catholic Christianity. The aim of the paper is to answer the basic question of the whole text, i.e. is the psychedelic

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1 J. W. Fernandez, *Bwiti: An Ethnography of the Religious Imagination in Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 470–489.

2 Ondřej Havelka, 'Synkretismus katolického křesťanství a západoafrického vodunu z teologickoetické perspektivy,' *Studia Theologica* 23, no. 3 (2021): 149–174, doi: 10.5507/sth.2021.033.

3 Ondřej Havelka, 'Západosahelský kult: Synkreze islámu a západoafrického vodunu,' *Dingir* 23, no. 2 (2020): 42–43.

4 Marloes Janson, *Crossing Religious Boundaries: Islam, Christianity and 'Yoruba Religion' in Lagos, Nigeria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 58–61.

5 Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 321.

initiation ritual in the depths of the Gabonese rainforest consistent with the theological and theological-ethical foundations of the Catholic Christian life? The question is centred on the African region of Gabon.

The topic is elaborated by the method of own field research, supported by a comparison of relevant literature. Between 2001 and 2019, the author spent a total of three years on research (and work) stays in Africa, of which 12 months were devoted to West and Central Africa and the study of local syncretisms.[6]

1. The Traditional Central African Religion of *Bwiti*

The purpose of this part is to introduce the indigenous Central African religion of *Bwiti*, which is currently centred in Gabon. The *Bwiti* religion originated among the Pygmies,[7] who discovered the effects of consuming the second layer of the *iboga* root.[8] Pygmies – mainly the Mbenge ethnic group in Gabon (Aka, Gyele, Bongo, Baka, and Kola groups)[9] – have observed the special effect of *iboga* in mountain gorillas that chewed the root. After small doses of crushed *iboga* root, the Pygmy hunters were able to cover a noticeably longer distance, carry a heavier load and not sleep for several days.[10] As mentioned, larger doses of *iboga* lead to significant hallucinations and the dose used for the *Bwiti* initiation causes temporary unconsciousness. Exceeding this dose – in relation to the weight and health of the person – will cause death.[11] The Pygmies began to use larger doses of *iboga* for spiritual purposes, to gain insight into reality, and have developed a unique religious movement over time.[12] This spiritual branch of the tradition-

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[6] Ondřej Havelka, *Náboženský šok: Religiózní otřesy v odlišných náboženstvích a kulturách, mezináboženský dialog a praktická religionistika poutnickou perspektivou* (Prague: Akbar, 2021).

[7] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 321.

[8] Julien Bonhomme and Magali de Ruyter and G. M. Moussavou, 'Blurring the Lines. Ritual and Relationships Between Babongo Pygmies and their Neighbours (Gabon),' *Anthropos* 107, no. 2 (2012): 387–406, doi: 10.5771/0257-9774-2012-2-367.

[9] Douglas A. Yates, *Historical Dictionary of Gabon* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 6–7.

[10] Hans Dieter Neuwinger, *African Ethnobotany: Poisons and Drugs. Chemistry, Pharmacology, Toxicology* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1996), 207.

[11] J. W. Fernandez and R. L. Fernandez, 'Returning to the path: the use of iboga(ine) in an equatorial African ritual context and the binding of time, space, and social relationships. The Alkaloids,' *Chemistry and Biology* 56, no. 1 (2001): 235–247, doi: 10.1016/s0099-9598(01)56017-4.

[12] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 473–475.

al Central African religion is now widespread mainly in Gabon and Cameroon (marginally also in neighbouring countries) among the Bantu ethnic groups Punu, Mitsogo, and Fang. The Pygmies, to whom the origin of *Bwiti* is attributed, are now no longer numerous in the area, with the last few groups surviving in the rainforest, estimated in the lower thousands.[13]

In Gabon, *Bwiti* is practised separately as an independent religion,[14] but often together with Catholic Christianity in a syncretised form.[15] The syncretism of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity is gaining increasing influence.[16] *Bwiti* is one of the official religions of Gabon.[17] The *Bwiti* religion is estimated to be practised by up to 3 million people in Gabon and surrounding countries. It is not clear how many of them also practice Christianity.[18] The number of believers, according to the census in sub-Saharan Africa, should be taken as a very rough guide. In Gabon, it is possible to officially profess Catholic Christianity or *Bwiti*, but statistics do not yet show the possibility of professing both of these religions at the same time in syncretism.[19]

An initiate who prepares a drug from *iboga* and oversees the initiation ritual is called *nganga*. This name is common throughout Central Africa for healers, makers of magical figures, but also for sorcerers.[20] The initiation ritual in Gabon usually takes three to seven days (depending on the area). The ritual is not the same everywhere, yet it has some constant characteristics across regions. On the penultimate night of initiation, the initiated symbolically dies (is, in fact, unconscious or in a very deep sleep), sheds the old self and gains knowledge. The body of the initiated lies unconscious as their consciousness is to travel through the universe. If one pursues impure intentions, does not want to learn about oneself and the general reality, but wants to

[13] David Brizer and Ricardo Castaneda, *Clinical Addiction Psychiatry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 51.
[14] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 347.
[15] Christopher John Gray, *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa: Southern Gabon, C. 1850–1940* (Rochester: University Rochester Press, 2002), 217.
[16] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 360–366.
[17] Stephen Gray, *Returning to Sacred World: A Spiritual Toolkit for the Emerging Reality* (London: John Hunt Publishing, 2010), 297.
[18] Brizer and Castaneda, *Clinical Addiction Psychiatry*, 51.
[19] John S. Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion* (Portsmouth, London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1991), 15.
[20] Peter Geschiere, *Witchcraft, Intimacy, and Trust: Africa in Comparison* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 73–75.

acquire, for example, the art of harming others, the *iboga* ritual will destroy them according to the beliefs of the *ngangas*. *Iboga*, according to the *ngangas*, is supposed to powerfully amplify a person's basic attunement, their approach to the ritual, their approach to themselves and to others. According to initiates, this is also the reason why some people do not survive the ritual and never return from unconsciousness. The *ngangas* claim that *iboga* multiplies the negative attitude and evil in these people so much that it engulfs and kills them.[21] While the psychedelic phase is to be followed by a so-called return or rebirth, the symbolic death turns into actual death in the case of these people.[22]

2. *Tabernanthe Iboga* and the Initiation Ritual of *Bwiti*

Tabernanthe iboga[23] is a tropical shrub of the Apocynaceae family. The root of the shrub contains psychoactive substances that strongly affect the central nervous system, belonging to the group of hallucinogens which cause significant changes in consciousness in humans. *Iboga* is the most widespread Central African hallucinogen and is used for spiritual purposes, and healing but also as a poison, especially in Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, southern Cameroon, western Congo and western Democratic Republic of Congo.[24] Not only the *Bwiti* in Gabon, but also some other religious so-called secret societies – such as the *Ombudi* in Gabon – consider *iboga* to be a divine plant.[25] The root of *iboga* contains more than ten different indole alkaloids, the most effective of which is the alkaloid *ibogaine*.[26] A smaller dose of *ibogaine* helps the human body to overcome fatigue, hunger and thirst and temporarily increases energy. Psychedelic effects are caused by a larger amount of the ingested *ibogaine*.[27] An overdose ends in death.[28] It would

[21] This claim is based on the consistent statement of several *ngangas*.
[22] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 457–462.
[23] R. Goutarel and O. Gollnhofer and R. Sillans, 'Pharmacodynamics and therapeutic applications of iboga and ibogaine,' *Psychedelic Monographs and Essays* 93, no. 6 (1993): 71–111.
[24] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 476–484.
[25] Hans Dieter Neuwinger, *African Ethnobotany: Poisons and Drugs. Chemistry, Pharmacology, Toxicology* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 1996), 207.
[26] Christina Pratt, *An Encyclopedia of Shamanism Volume 1.* (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2007), 219.
[27] Goutarel and Gollnhofer and Sillans, 'Pharmacodynamics,' 71–111.
[28] Michael J. Balick and Paul A. Cox, *Plants, People, and Culture: The Science of Ethnobotany* (New York: Garland Science, 2020), 101–135.

be a shortcoming to label the *iboga* root simply as a narcotic. In small quantities, it significantly helps people in their day-to-day activities, and there is a consensus in the literature that the active substance contained in the root is not addictive.[29] When applied to Central European culture, the effect of a small amount of *iboga* is sometimes compared to coffee, which also helps to overcome fatigue, increase performance and concentration, but is harmful in large doses and can kill a person if overdosed. However, higher dosing is completely incomparable, as *iboga* causes fundamental changes in consciousness.[30] Although a certain amount of *iboga* has undeniable healing effects, the main reason for consuming it in the context of *Bwiti* and the researched syncretism is spiritual opening, seeing the essence of reality, one's spiritual growth. The motivation to consume iboga is primarily spiritual.

The initiation ritual is very important for the Gabonese: it is during this ritual that they are initiated into the *Bwiti* religion and consume *iboga* for the first time in their lives. After successfully completing the initiation ritual, they can consume *iboga* throughout their life, whether during festivities, treatment, or for their personal spiritual development.[31] The initiation ritual most often takes place in early adulthood, around the age of fifteen. A child of the *nganga* lineage who is destined to become a *nganga* undergoes initiation earlier, around the age of seven.[32]

The common characteristics of the initiation ritual in various areas are monotonous music with a repetitive melody, purification, vomiting, fasting, censing, and receiving a drug from the *iboga* root. The initiation ritual is sometimes called simply after the shrub the crushed root of which is consumed – *iboga*.[33]

3. Syncretism of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity in Gabon

As mentioned above, the *Bwiti* religion is one of the official religions in Gabon, but in reality, it is very often professed by believers in syncretised form with Catholic Christianity.[34] The theology of *Bwiti*

[29] Goutarel and Gollnhofer and Sillans, 'Pharmacodynamics,' 71–111.
[30] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 492–493.
[31] Goutarel and Gollnhofer and Sillans, 'Pharmacodynamics,' 71–111.
[32] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 476–484.
[33] Fernandez and Fernandez, 'Returning to the path,' 235–247.
[34] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 366–369.

and Catholic Christianity does not compete too much because *Bwiti* is exclusively about self-knowledge and a deep insight into the essence of reality. *Bwiti* itself does not dwell much on God or deities, yet it is said that the Creator God *Zame ye Mebege* gave *iboga* to the people.[35] The identification of indigenous gods and deities with one of the Christian persons of the Trinity – typically God the Father – is common in African syncretisms.[36]

The *Bwiti* religion does not deny any god or deity professed by the surrounding religions, and although *Bwiti* acknowledges the existence of the Creator God called *Zame ye Mebege*, his worship is not a key element of practice. A key element of the practice is seeing the spiritual nature of reality and finding oneself in the totality of reality. The devotees of the syncretism of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity identify the Creator God *Zame ye Mebege* with the Christian God the Father. While the followers of *Bwiti* itself do not pay much attention to God (this does not mean, however, that they do not acknowledge the Creator God), the devotees of syncretism, in line with the Christian attitude, place much more emphasis on the importance of God in the spiritual life of man. Simply put: the Catholic plane of syncretism is oriented towards God, while the plane of *Bwiti* is oriented towards man, towards oneself. In their spiritual life, devotees of the syncretism of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity, in addition to Catholic services and prayers, also undergo the *Bwiti* initiation and consume *iboga* for their spiritual growth throughout their lives. It is also possible to encounter people who consume small amounts of *iboga* before a Catholic service or on important Catholic holidays.

Bwiti can be considered one of the so-called ethical religions. Believers should strive for ethical and moral development. Working hard for personal development, reaching the peak of one's qualities and serving the community is de facto the basic characteristic of *Bwiti*. Another key characteristic is tolerance. *Bwiti* rejects no religion, no tradition, no cult.[37]

Crucial to the insight into the syncretism of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity is the statement that *Bwiti* itself is an essentially ethical religion that makes considerable ethical and moral demands on the

[35] Pratt, *An Encyclopedia of Shamanism*, 75.
[36] Mbiti, *An Introduction to African Religion*, 15.
[37] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 369–370.

believer and is a tolerant religion. Another key fact is that *Bwiti* is practically not interested in God, gods or deities, nor in spirits as in the surrounding religions (*Vodun*, *Thron*, *Juju*…). During the field research, it took the author quite a long time to find information about the Creator God *Zame ye Mebege*.[38] Research is also significantly hampered by the lack of primary literature of Pygmy or Bantu origin devoted to the *Bwiti* religion and context. The researcher is therefore dependent on field research and secondary literature, especially by European and American authors.[39] However, research in sub-Saharan Africa is a separate topic and concerns many indigenous African religions.[40]

The liturgy of the followers of syncretism in Gabon is identical to the liturgy of the local Catholic Church. Syncretists attend the same services as Catholic Christians, who do not mix their faith with any other religion. There is no difference in the service. The differences are mainly evident in the *Bwiti* initiation ritual, where the Sacrament of Penance plays a key role in the so-called purifying ritual and the Holy Communion after the completion of the whole initiation ritual. The whole process of initiation is also accompanied by Christian prayers for followers of syncretism.[41]

3.1 Theology of Syncretism

Many Central African traditional religions profess that the Supreme God (such as *Olodumar* in the Yoruba religion or *Nana Buluku* in *Vodun*)[42] is inaccessible to man and cannot be communicated with other than through a mediator.[43] From a purely Christian position, such a concept (of a completely inaccessible God the Father, who created the world and then moved away and is not present in any way, thus creating the need for a mediator who does not reach the greatness of God the Father) may reek of one of the many forms of subordinationism,[44] but believers do not reflect this much. Rather, they note Jesus' mediation in

[38] Pratt, *An Encyclopedia of Shamanism*, 75.
[39] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 470–489.
[40] Ondřej Havelka, 'Dogonské náboženství: problematika výzkumu,' *Dingir* 24, no. 4 (2021): 112–115.
[41] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 271–283.
[42] Havelka, 'Synkretismus katolického křesťanství a západoafrického vodunu,' 149–174.
[43] The knowledge follows from the consensus of the respondents.
[44] Ctirad Václav Pospíšil, *Ježíš z Nazareta, Pán a Spasitel* (Prague: Krystal OP; Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2010), 147–153.

the Scripture (1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:15–20; Eph 1:3–14), and such an understanding of mediation is theologically quite legitimate.[45]

In the case of the Gabonese syncretism under study, the situation is much simpler since *Bwiti* practically does not present any God or gods and does not guide to their worship. If the devotee searches deeper into the doctrine, they will probably learn about the existence of the Creator God *Zame ye Mebege*, the giver of life and the giver of *iboga*, from an experienced *nganga*.[46] He is identified in syncretism as God the Father.

Syncretism builds on Catholic theology, in which one can discern certain tendencies towards latent subordinationism,[47] where the God-man Jesus Christ is seen as a mediator between the inaccessible God the Father and people, while being diminished in some – perhaps not entirely intended – way in relation to God the Father. However, Gabonese devotees of the syncretism of Catholic Christianity do not understand Christ in an extreme, even Arian-type way as a created mediator, which would ultimately be in direct contradiction to Catholic doctrine. Not at all; that implicit subordinationism is more of a subtler, Origen type.[48] Jesus Christ is understood by the followers of syncretism as the true God and the true man, who is, however, in a certain unspecified form subordinate to God the Father and does not have exactly the same greatness. It should be added that subtle patristic theological disputes, as known and still popularly reflected in the common Catholic milieu, are not a topic in the Gabonese Catholic environment. The author would certainly not suspect Gabonese Catholic Christianity, with its specific emphases and themes, of any heresy. Rather, Christians in Gabon emphasise that God is love (1 John 4:8)[49] and that this should be reflected in the Christian life.

The part of syncretism based on the *Bwiti* religion follows exclusively the line of personal spiritual and social growth and self-knowledge.[50] At the theological level, no significant collision arises. The question is how to approach the consumption of psychoactive substances from the

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45 Gerhard Ludwig Müller, *Dogmatika pro studium i pastoraci* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2010), 179–180.
46 Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 470–489.
47 Pospíšil, *Ježíš z Nazareta*, 147–153.
48 Ctirad Václav Pospíšil, *Jako v nebi, tak i na zemi: náčrt trinitární teologie* (Prague: Krystal OP; Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2007), 145, 264.
49 Ctirad Václav Pospíšil, *I řekl Bůh. Trinitární teologie stvoření* (Prague: Karolinum, 2019), 133.
50 Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 466–469.

position of Catholic Christianity, or more accurately from the position of Christian ethics. A small amount of *iboga* helping with fatigue seems to be fine. Larger doses that help individuals with anxiety, depression,[51] or other mental disorders without causing intoxication, changes in consciousness, or inability to concentrate also seem justifiable. Psychiatrists are currently investigating the use of *iboga* as a psychiatric drug.[52] The main reason for consuming *iboga* in the context of *Bwiti* and the researched syncretism is spiritual opening, one's spiritual growth.

More difficult to decide is how to deal with large doses during the initiation, which cause unconsciousness and, if the limit is exceeded, the initiated is also at risk of death. It is necessary to point out that the initiation ritual takes place for many days also so that the *nganga* unambiguously identifies the amount of *iboga* that the initiated can withstand and also wants to withstand. If someone is very sick at smaller doses, *nganga* will adjust the dosage. If someone does not want to go through the phase of unconsciousness, they definitely do not have to. Many initiated simply fall asleep after a relatively larger dose of *iboga* and several days of sleep deprivation. If everything goes as intended, the ritual should not directly endanger life or health. However, there are exceptions and deaths at initiation have been observed. This must be emphasised.[53]

The theology of the syncretism of Catholic Christianity and *Bwiti* in Gabon, in the author's opinion – based mainly on own field research – is not in a serious collision with Catholic orthodoxy. A slight theological bias is found in a certain latent subordinationism, which, however, is a problem in much of sub-Saharan Africa and is not a marginal or isolated issue. The potential conflicting point is not in orthodoxy but in orthopraxy, specifically in the consumption of an amount of the psychoactive substance *iboga* that is close to the limit of a life- or health-threatening amount, which brings us to an assessment in terms of theological ethics.

3.2 Theological-Ethical Assessment of Syncretism

This part will examine the syncretism in question from a theological-ethical perspective. Christian ethics has its paradigms, its

[51] Fernandez and Fernandez, 'Returning to the path,' 235–247.
[52] Brizer and Castaneda, *Clinical Addiction Psychiatry*, 52.
[53] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 236–237.

imperatives, and its directions, which speak more intensely into the practical life of the believer than some subtle theological speculations, such as the aforementioned latent subordinationism of the Origen type, of which the believers in Gabon are more or less unaware and unperturbed. Ethical imperatives are 'louder' in this regard, and the syncretism of Catholic Christianity and *Bwiti* in Gabon is formed from two ethical religions. It should be mentioned that there are, of course, more approaches to Christian ethics, so-called legitimate pluralism; this paper advocates the ethics of Aristotelian-Thomism. This is openly acknowledged and left for the reader to consider.

The end of the previous part opened a potentially conflicting point regarding the use of a large amount of the psychoactive substance *iboga* leading to unconsciousness of the initiated. Theological ethics speaks quite consensually that deliberately harming one's health is not in line with Christian principles, nor is deliberately risking one's life excessively.[54] Human life and health are God's gifts and should be regarded as such. In theological ethics, one certainly cannot draw sharp dividing lines and see reality in black and white, but one should at least try to set a direction and find boundaries that have meaning. The author believes that such a limit, in this case, is the consumption of such an amount of *iboga* that can endanger life or health. As already mentioned, experienced *ngangas* oversee the course of initiation at all times and try to prevent excessive ingestion of *iboga* using their experience. Yet it happens at times. Consciously exposing oneself to the direct danger of death seems to run counter to the foundations of Christian ethics.[55] Human behaviour should be responsible, even to oneself.[56] Furthermore, the author believes that smaller doses of *iboga*, which do not endanger life or health and do not lead to addiction, cannot be understood as ethically conflicting.

However, the categories of custom and morality come into play. What if it is a social custom in a given area of Gabon that one puts oneself in immediate danger of death when initiated? And what if it is also in accordance with the conscience of the person and their free choice?

[54] Jiří Skoblík, *Přehled křesťanské etiky* (Prague: Karolinum, 1997), 189–190.
[55] Donna McAuliffe, *Interprofessional Ethics: Collaboration in the Social, Health and Human Services* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 86–104.
[56] Konrad Hilpert, *Základní otázky křesťanské etiky* (Brno: CDK, 2017), 10–12.

3.2.1 Morality and Customs in the Gabonese Context

Ethics evaluates human behaviour;[57] it judges whether it is ethically right or wrong, morally good or bad; it seeks the good life as a whole, the criterion for assessment being the well-being of the person.[58] The well-being of the person[59] as a basic criterion for assessing the ethics and morality of human action is based on Aristotle's[60] virtue ethics (the criterion was a successful life as a whole)[61] and is typical of the contemporary Aristotelian-Thomistic line of ethics. In ethics – from the Greek *ethos*, meaning habit,[62] custom[63] – there is a difference between moral and customary categories. However, the distinction is crucial and essential for our theological-ethical thinking. A person's actions can be moral or immoral, otherwise expressed as morally good or bad, or they can be right or wrong according to the specific customs of a concrete comunity. Moral – from the Latin *mos*, plural *mores*, meaning will[64] – is such an action that is in accordance with the conscience of the acting person, regardless of the objective side of the action.[65] A question from the field of applied ethics at the moral level might therefore be: Is it morally good for the Gabonese devotee of the syncretism in question to participate in the *Bwiti* initiation and to consume a large amount of *iboga* leading to unconsciousness? In other words: Is it in line with the person's conscience?

However, customary behaviour is differentiated as well: right behaviour is one that is in accordance with valid customs, traditions, and norms in the given area and at the given time. A question from the field of applied ethics might therefore also be: Is it right for the Gabonese devotee of the syncretism in question to participate in the *Bwiti* initiation and to consume a large amount of *iboga* leading to

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57 Arno Anzenbacher, *Úvod do filozofie* (Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1990), 193.

58 Helmut Weber, *Všeobecná morální teologie* (Prague: Zvon; Prague: Vyšehrad, 1998), 149–171.

59 Ondřej Havelka, 'Teologicko-etický princip personality a jeho soudobé myšlenkové směry,' *Verba Theologica* 39, no. 2 (2020): 98–109.

60 Skoblík, *Přehled křesťanské etiky*, 26.

61 Aristotelés, *Etika Nikomachova* (Prague: Rezek, 1996), 23–43.

62 Thomas Aquinas emphasised that moral virtue is acquired by habit, by getting accustomed, cf. e.g. Tomáš Akvinský, *Komentář k Etice Nikomachově. Book II.* (Prague: Krystal OP, 2013), 29.

63 Marek Vácha, Radana Königová and Miloš Mauer, *Základy moderní lékařské etiky* (Prague: Portál, 2012), 20.

64 Ibid.

65 Anzenbacher, *Úvod do filozofie,* 223.

unconsciousness? In other words: Is it in accordance with the customs and norm of the community?

Society also speaks of so-called conformity: the set of learned cultural patterns of behaviour and action that each form of human society requires of its members.[66] Social customs – conformity – is similar at its core across cultures and histories; it is often based on the imperative not to kill one's neighbour and to help one's neighbour in need.[67] Resisting conformity is often difficult and, as a result, self-exclusive in traditional African societies. Ethical judgments must therefore be cautious and honest, but on the other hand, it is necessary to remain faithful to the Gospel and the essential pillars of Christian doctrine.[68]

Returning to terminology, the customary category evaluates the objective, exogenously given, substantive side of action,[69] while the moral category evaluates on the basis of internal, endogenous criteria of compliance with the conscience of the acting person; it considers human action in a good-bad dichotomy. The customary category uses the adjectives right or wrong to evaluate, assessing behaviour based on the social *ethos*, i.e. the norm or custom determined by the social context.[70]

Based on what has just been said, it is clear that the external evaluation of the believer of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity is not easy, and caution and honesty are needed in the conclusions.[71]

3.2.2 The Conscience of the Gabonese Believer of Syncretism

Conscience is the ability of the acting person to distinguish between moral good and evil (GS 16). In a moral sense, no superior authority can stand over the conscience of the acting person because if the exercise of conscience is to be autonomous, there cannot be an authority over it that would determine it and thus negate real autonomy. In Kantian terms, this would have to be the heteronomous exercise of conscience. When asking whether it is morally good for a Gabonese devotee of the syncretism in question to participate in the *Bwiti* initiation

[66] Henry Sidgwick, *The Ethics of Conformity and Subscription* (Collingwood: Trieste Publishing Pty Limited, 2017), 20–49.
[67] Andrew West, 'After Virtue and Accounting Ethics,' *Journal of Business Ethics* 14, no. 1 (2018): 21–36, doi: 10.1007/s10551-016-3018-9.
[68] Havelka, 'Synkretismus katolického křesťanství a západoafrického vodunu,' 149–174.
[69] Anzenbacher, *Úvod do filozofie*, 223.
[70] Ibid.
[71] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 335–339.

and consume a large amount of *iboga* leading to unconsciousness, it is necessary to evaluate only the exercise of the person's conscience and not the external social norm. It may happen that a person determined to act in conformity with the local customs will act in opposition to their conscience when participating in the initiation ritual. They will therefore act in a customary right, but morally bad way. The conscience of the average Gabonese believer is very strongly shaped by society.[72] This is still necessary to keep in mind.

An interesting dispute over the authority of conscience flared up in high scholasticism. While the eminent theologian Peter Lombard (1100–1160), famous for his *Sentences*, opted for external loyalty and thus submission to authority in the event of a conflict between conscience and law or superior authority, one of the greatest theological authorities in the history of theological thinking, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), who carried out the so-called re-inculturation of theological thinking to Aristotle's philosophical legacy[73] and added the equally influential Aristotelian-Thomistic theology to the influential Augustinian-Platonic one, upheld the primacy of conscience over any heteronomous authority. Aquinas was well aware that two different people could take opposite views on the same issue, in accordance with their consciences, yet in the moral field, he defended their conscience as the supreme authority that cannot be wrong in a purely moral sense at the level of *synderésis* and *sapientia*. His thought model therefore means the possibility of own decision by exercising an autonomous conscience, even in the event of an extraordinary unfavourable external factors. This is, in the author's judgment, crucially important because, as the situation in Gabon and elsewhere shows, a Christian may be caught up in many intra-religious contradictions, but this does not diminish their responsibility before God.

The acting person should act customarily right and morally well in life – ideally, such actions go hand in hand in both areas. However, if the customary and moral areas come into conflict, one must make a choice: according to Aristotelian-Thomistic principles, one is bound to act in accordance with their conscience; otherwise, one would consciously do moral evil, which is unacceptable, even if one is

[72] Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Hammond: Hippo Books, 2009), 65.
[73] Ctirad Václav Pospíšil, *Hermeneutika mystéria. Struktury myšlení v dogmatické teologii* (Prague: Krystal OP; Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2005), 52.

forced to do so by law or a superior. This is the so-called principle of epikeia,[74] the foundations of which were formulated by Aristotle[75] and the most significant representatives of which were Albertus Magnus (1206–1280) and Thomas Aquinas. The principle of epikeia is certainly a pious thought pattern, but it is necessary to repeat that it is extremely difficult for a Gabonese believer to defy social customs in fidelity to their own conscience.

3.2.3 Evaluation of the Perceived Syncretism

It follows from the above that the final assessment of customary right and moral good rests on the social custom in a given region and at a given time and on the conscience of a particular believing individual. If believers do not ingest a life-threatening amount of *iboga*, such behaviour does not conflict with the basic imperatives of theological ethics.[76] *Bwiti* is one of the so-called ethical religions, and its imperatives to help one's neighbour, tolerance, forgiveness, respect for alterity and efforts for personal spiritual and general human development are in line with the foundations of the Christian life.[77]

However, when a believer ingests a life-threatening amount of *iboga* at the initiation, it depends on the level of morality whether such action is in accordance with their conscience and ethical, and whether it is in accordance with the customs of the place and time. If the believer acted in accordance with custom but contrary to their conscience – they would not act on the basis of an autonomous decision, but under the influence of external custom contrary to their personal conviction – they would act right according to local customs but not morally well. If, on the other hand, they chose to undergo the initiation ritual with only a small amount of *iboga*, despite the custom and what society expects of them, for that would be the result of an autonomous decision of their conscience, they would act wrong as regards customs but morally right. If a believer were to ingest the normal amount of *iboga*, as custom requires them to do, and at the same time such action was also in accordance with their conscience, they would act right concerning the social customs and morally well. A Christian should act customarily

[74] Andrew West, 'After Virtue and Accounting Ethics,' 21–36.
[75] Aristotelés, *Etika Nikomachova*, 131–133.
[76] Hans Haselbarth, *Christian Ethics in the African Context* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 2004), 41–44.
[77] Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 65–74.

right and morally well, but if they find themselves in a conflict between customs and morality, they must choose as detailed above.

However, the imperative to treat one's life and health responsibly also comes into play, so that what has just been said is given yet another level of evaluation. On the other hand, the fact that the tradition of the *Bwiti* initiation in Gabon belongs to the national identity[78] and is extremely important for Gabonese must be accepted. The theological-ethical assessment of the syncretism of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity thus remains a complex issue where black-and-white perspective cannot be used. Nevertheless, the author dares to conclude that the syncretism of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity, in his judgment, does not fundamentally contradict the theological and theological-ethical premises of the Christian life, but the specific ethical and moral harmony must be judged by each individual acting alone.

Conclusion

Although the observed syncretism of the indigenous African religion *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity in Gabon is a combination of two relatively distant religious traditions, the author has come to the conclusion that there is no major contradiction at the level of Catholic theology, and the syncretism is consistent with general Catholic theology. The same applies to the Catholic liturgy. At the level of theological ethics, after taking a closer look at possible conflicting points, it was concluded that consuming smaller doses of *iboga* does not contradict the premises of Christian ethics. On the other hand, in the case of the *Bwiti* initiation, a large amount of *iboga* is ingested, leading to unconsciousness of the initiated. Here, it is necessary to consider three levels of the moment: the customary, the moral (the conscience of the acting person), and the scientific, where human life and health must be respected as God's gift and treated responsibly and accordingly. From these views, which may be contradictory in the practical life of the Gabonese believer, it follows that it is necessary to be careful and honest in the assessment. One cannot make precise (as it were surgical) cuts in theological ethics, and the issue of initiation in the syncretism of *Bwiti* and Catholic Christianity only confirms this.

[78] Fernandez, *Bwiti*, 492–493.

Catholic Christianity has many faces in the world; this paper tried to clarify one of them, i.e. the face of Catholic Christianity syncretised with the traditional African religion in Gabon. The author believes that the key statement of the respondents of his field research, if summarised in a few words, is: extraordinary tolerance, striving for good and openness to interreligious dialogue. The question of whether the psychedelic initiation ritual in the depths of the Gabonese rainforest is in line with the theological and theological-ethical foundations of Catholic Christian life has been answered rather affirmatively, but with some caveats about the potential limits in the amount of *iboga* consumed, and with some key insights into those limits suggested.

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VIRTUE ETHICS IN MEDICAL PRACTICE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

KAREL SLÁDEK

ABSTRACT

The article aims to reflect the medical virtue ethics as applied to situations related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The method of processing uses deduction, by which the article points out the use of the generally defined cardinal and theological virtues in terms of specific attitudes and concrete situations. The practical output of the article is the usability of these reflections in the prevention and therapy of stress, including burnout syndrome and post-traumatic stress disorder. Stress was a reaction commonly experienced often and in various degrees during the new and unforeseen conditions of the pandemic. The article emphasises the importance of virtue ethics as a part of contemporary bioethics.

Keywords

Bioethics; Medical ethics; Virtue ethics; COVID-19

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Virtue ethics dominated ancient and medieval thought. Its descriptions of how to live well and become a good person, the ethics of principles and deontological ethics, rationally obligate actions according to formulated rules. Virtue ethics precedes action in its methodology by emphasising care for the spiritual life and a focus on a good (successful, blissful, happy) life. In order to act well, one needs to develop within oneself the virtues that are targeted in one's ethical conduct. Although we are currently faced with the dilemma of what the good life actually is, in ancient metaphysics, the good is everything that fulfils its possibilities in the best form and, at the same time, everything

transcends, and it is determined by good ideas.[1] In the practical-ethical aspect, a good action is considered to be one that is beneficial to the human good. It is desirable, reasonable, and a man finds happiness and bliss in it.[2] The good is relational because it helps to develop what is desired, what is wanted, and what wants to be perfected.[3] The good life in this methodological approach means living for the good of others. In individual choice, the good is seen as caring for the good of the other, which in turn brings bliss and happiness to the good doer. In the context of medical care, the good is to care for the health that the sick person lacks. From the theoretical basis of virtue ethics, practical ethical attitudes in various professions are derived. Virtues have traditionally been justified by the ultimate focus on bettering and preserving human life, which is addressed in teleological ethics.

The aim of this article is to present the cardinal and theological virtues in their applicability to the medical profession during the COVID-19 pandemic. The physician is part of a community which maintains its social status and which should be characterised by its specific status virtues. The doctor assumes a certain moral standard of life and ethical maturity. Any failures in this area - such as drunkenness in service, sexual indiscretions, and deliberate neglect of care - are typically immediately publicised and not tolerated by society.

The situation of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought increased demands on the decision-making process in patient care. The complexity of the medical profession in this period has underscored the importance of mental health care. The media have reproduced numerous photographs and videos of doctors after a term of service in the COVID-19 departments, their tired and pale faces with circles under their eyes, and the red prints on their faces from respirators. Doctors themselves do not want to get into a situation where they would have to change their profession due to burnout syndrome or post-traumatic stress disorder. It is virtue ethics and the reflection on the virtues in one's personal life th at can be a suitable prevention from the outbreak of a disease of the soul in response to the stress of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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1 Heinrich Schmidinger, *Úvod do metafyziky* (Praha: OIKOYMENH, 2012), 84–86.
2 Frederic Copleston, *Dějiny filosofie I.* (Olomouc: Refugium Velehrad–Roma, 2014), 441–445.
3 Tomáš Akvinský, *O dobru* (Praha: Krystal OP, 2012), 73–85.

In the first section, therefore, we will deal with the cardinal virtues and their application to the specific situations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The second part of the article on the theological virtues will emphasise their applicability to the mentioned care of the physician's soul. The method of processing the topic will be deductive, i.e. generally defined virtues will be applied to specific situations during the COVID-19 pandemic in medical practice.

1. Cardinal Virtues as Status Virtues of a Physician

A virtue is considered to be a good quality of mind that enables one to live properly. Man possesses virtues in himself, which he is meant to develop and bring to perfection. Ancient philosophers described the four basic (cardinal) virtues as prudence (practical wisdom), temperance, courage, and justice. Christian thinkers have further developed these concepts. These virtues strengthen man on the path to the meaning and purpose of life, which is the bliss of a successful and meaningful existence filled with good behaviour. In addition to the cardinal virtues, the Christian tradition has also defined theological virtues that bring man to God.[4]

Prudence or practical wisdom is considered the 'mother' of all virtues. Wise conduct is proportionate to a real, particular situation, which must be reasonably analysed from different angles. Based on the so-called primordial conscience, the virtue of prudence emphasises the need to love the good and strive to bring it into the world. Practical prudence seeks the means to realise this by establishing the right state of affairs. It is then unwise to act indecisively. In acquiring the virtue of prudence, one tries to recognise the state of affairs within a particular situation and to decide to reconcile reality with its goal or with the goal of human life (*intentio finis*). In Thomistic reflection, the memory (*memoria*) of being faithful, the ability to accept advice, say something, learn (*docilitas*) and quickly decide for good (*solertia*) within a specific situation is considered the completion of wisdom. One does not attain practical wisdom if one acts cunningly (*astutia*) and greedily, for example, with an unhealthy 'love' for money. Christian practical prudence seeks to harmonise the interactions of the natural virtue of wisdom

[4] Christopher Kaczor and Thomas Sherman, *Thomas Aquinas on The Cardinal Virtues* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008).

and supernatural love. In this perspective, the gift of counsel (*donum consilii*) is the fruit of the shared love of God.[5]

In ethical decision-making, prudence is vital in accessing various situations based on experience. Practical wisdom forms an imaginary triangle of all decision-making, the vertices of which are: prudence (the situational aspect), conscience (the existential aspect) and law (the normative aspect). Both the enacted rules and the normative attitudes based on a religious worldview (e.g. the norms of the Ten Commandments or Gospel ethics) can be considered normative aspects. Practical wisdom plays an essential role in applying the principles of virtue ethics to specific situations, so through wisdom, we can move to situational ethics. An important theme of situational ethics is the resolution of an ethical dilemma in the event of a conflict of duties in relation to basic institutions: the family, the economy, the state and, in the case of believers, the religious community (church). An important principle in decision-making is always to choose the higher value, such as protection and preservation of life, before solving issues such as economic problems and calculating profitability. In this respect, it is important to seek a compromise in the sense that each party gives up its partial interests in the interest of the greater good. This is not a compromise between two views with different grades of moral reach because the solution should always be ethically acceptable. During decision-making, the likely consequences of actions are to be thought out, which takes into account consequentialist ethics. Based on the confrontation with the principles of normative ethics and its applicability in a specific situation, through wisdom one internalises the known values and thus forms one's conscience.[6] Let us add that the mentioned situational ethics arose from the Protestant environment, where wisdom in a particular situation is here and now related to love as the only highest good. Love is always understood here in unity with justice, with rational reasoning, and is far-sighted.[7]

The novelty of the COVID-19 pandemic situation and the speed of virus spread has meant increased demands on the virtue of prudence in new situations, including the need for rapid information sharing and knowledge concerning all contexts of disease spread, treatment

[5] Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, Temperance* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), 14–38.
[6] Thomas Schirrmacher, *Morální odpovědnost* (Praha: Návrat domů, 2016), 44–112.
[7] Joseph Fletcher, *Situační etika* (Praha: Kalich, 2009), 113–132.

options, and reorganisation of hospital care with regard to risks of disease among hospitalised patients including the importance of surgical interventions and preventive examinations. The capabilities of health care professionals to adapt to the new situation and to make decisions concerning responses in accordance with their own conscience have also been tested. The virtue of wisdom always requires an interdisciplinary approach with respect to health issues as well as a holistic view of human therapy, both of which have proven crucial in the various stages of the treatment of patients with COVID-19.

Among other vices, the virtue of temperance is characterised by a struggle with anger. Manifestations of anger were a sign of ignorance for ancient philosophers, but this feeling was allowed in its mild manifestations and in justified cases. It is unacceptable for Christian philosophers to be so angry as to long for revenge. On the other hand, so-called 'righteous indignation' is not only permitted but mandatory when it comes to speaking or acting out against injustice in the fight for rights. But even in these cases, it is necessary to first consider peaceful resolutions, which is why the virtue of moderation is so important in action. Christian spirituality recommends that one come to terms with one's anger each night before going to bed. Tolerance is also associated with patience in enduring inconveniences. It is important to learn patience with oneself in sickness and in health, especially with one's neighbour, e.g. in our context with a fellow physician or with a patient.[8]

Temperance as a virtue is particularly required of physicians during communication with patients and relatives during the COVID-19 pandemic. If in the Czech Republic, in the first mild wave of the pandemic in the spring of 2020, doctors and health professionals applauded, during the next two crushing waves in the autumn of 2020 and in the winter of 2021, doctors were no longer showered with such strong public support. Physicians also encountered negative reactions from patients and relatives caused by stress from the uncertain prognosis of the disease and epidemiological measures such as a ban on hospital visits. In expressing temperance, the doctor cannot afford to release a spiral of anger or other emotional reactions, which is unprofessional and certainly does not contribute to therapy.

[8] Tomáš Špidlík, *Prameny světla* (Velehrad: Refugium Velehrad-Roma, 2005), 192–200.

We have come to the virtue of courage. To be brave is to be able to overcome the fear of danger for the good of man. Courage alone, however, is not enough, as too much bravery without a rational balance can lead to a rash or other unhelpful behaviour. Courage requires prior rational judgment. Developing the virtue of real courage never leads to evil because bravery is intertwined with other virtues. It needs to be re-learned repeatedly in different situations. One naturally faces various circumstances in which one feels fear, which is a natural response to danger. The complete absence of fear can signal a personality problem. Bravery enables individuals to face fear and deal with problems with mental and moral courage. Mental courage means being able to face physical danger or to moderate one's attitudes which could lead to aggression in any form.[9] During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the physician must not only have the courage to face the fear of infection from sick patients but to speak the complete truth to all actors involved.

The virtue of justice in clinical practice concerns equal treatment for every patient.[10] The principle of justice and equality in administering treatment brings ethical decisions, especially in the case of extreme situations. At the outset of COVID-19, concerns were raised about the lack of medical staff and mechanical lung ventilators and who to choose under what criteria to allow treatment, which in practice often means not giving or giving the patient a chance of survival. Moral dilemmas and moral distress among physicians were reflected in the context of a fair approach to therapy. A moral dilemma arises when none of the choices before a person is optimal, but the doctor is still forced to make a decision. Moral distress is then distress caused by a reality in which the environment, conditions, regulations, legislation, or superiors do not allow one to act as one believes is right. This distress has a major impact on the physical and mental condition of physicians.[11]

In connection with the dilemma of caring for patients with COVID-19, the so-called principles of allocation of scarce resources have been discussed in the Czech Republic. These deliberations were

[9] Edmund D. Pellegrino and David C. Thomasma, *The Virtues in Medical Practise* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 109–116.

[10] Albert R. Jonsen, Mark Siegler and William J. Winslade, *Klinická etika* (Praha – Kroměříž: Triton, 2019), 157–183.

[11] Patricia Pendry, 'Moral Distress. Recognizing it to Retain Nurses,' *Nursing Economics* 4/25 (2007): 217–221.

reflected in decisions regarding under what circumstances it would be acceptable not to allow a patient to be connected to or disconnected from pulmonary ventilation to help other people. The criterion for selection cannot be that whoever came to the hospital earlier is entitled to be connected to the ventilator earlier. This would unfairly discriminate against patients who live further from the hospital and against those who have a better prognosis. Discussions of ethics seek to justify whether, in the absence of ventilators, it is ethically acceptable to prioritise the treatment of healthcare workers (doctors, nurses) or rescue infrastructure (police officers, firefighters, soldiers), as these are necessary to maintain the system. The most debated criterion of the debates was whether it is ethically defensible to allow a lung ventilator to be assigned to a younger patient over an older one with the same chance of survival.[12] It was the criterion of age that provoked a critical reaction from other medical ethicists, arguing that this is only a hypothetical possibility as two identical patients with the same prognosis will never be encountered; thus, the only difference would be in age. Concerns about age discrimination in decision-making have been mentioned, in which context it will always be up to the individual physician to evaluate the expected prognoses and select certain patients for a specific therapy accordingly.[13]

Each of the virtues mentioned has its own risks, especially when they oscillate in extreme manifestations without a deeper rational grasp and complement of other ethical approaches. The virtue of temperance may imply indecision and the absence of acting with some argumentative vigour when the patient's interest is at stake. Justice in individual patient care may clash with justice in the organisation of care in the wider context of the capacity of a hospital or a network of hospitals.

From the cardinal virtues listed above, other virtues can be defined. Their further differentiation is brought about by specific practice and is, therefore, often more understandable and useful. The application of these virtues to medical practice yields the formulation of the

[12] David Černý, Adam Doležal and Tomáš Doležal, *Etická a právní východiska pro tvorbu doporučení k rozhodování při poskytování zdravotních služeb v rámci pandemie covid-19* (Praha: Ústav státu a práva AV ČR, v. v. i. Kabinet zdravotnického práva a bioetiky, 2020), 19.

[13] Radek Dragoun, 'Spor o etiku přidělování ventilátorů. Diskriminovat starší nemůžeme, říká Vácha,' Aktuálně.cz, last modified May 10, 2020, https://zpravy.aktualne.cz/domaci/spor-o-etiku-pridelovani-ventilatoru-vekovou-diskriminace-ne/r~251671a6907611eaa6f6ac1f6b220ee8/.

characteristics of selected medical virtues, such as love for the sick giving new hope and a desire for recovery; responsibility in anticipating the consequences of actions and towards the various forms of life; humility as an expression of respect and healthy self-confidence with acknowledgement of the weaknesses and strengths of one's personality; patience in persevering and understanding the patient's problems; selflessness, kindness, and social feeling in opening up to the others and understanding all the contexts of their suffering; epicure is in balancing the limitations of some of the first standards and finding solutions according to conscience - and many others from which the inspiration for good action is already found in the names, i.e. selflessness, generosity, tact, consideration, discretion, honesty, reliability, helpfulness, optimism, self-control, foresight, creativity, concentration, hardiness, discipline, purpose, joy, collegiality. An equally important virtue is a sense of humour as an expression of acceptance of one's weaknesses and mistakes. Humour enables one to gain distance from oneself and from various crisis situations. The virtues of the medical state are related to the honour of the state and the creation of a collegial environment among physicians.[14]

2. Theological Virtues in the Life of a Physician

In Christian thought, theological virtues refer to virtues which confront human abilities with the supernatural plane of being. From the point of view of theology, thanks to theological virtues, man is able to develop his nature into unforeseen potentialities. The classic division of these virtues is faith, hope and love. But the unity of these virtues has always been emphasised. The greatest of these, however, is considered to be the virtue of love.

The semantic field of the word love includes a number of manifestations. Most often in modernity, love is understood as a manifestation of erotic affection between a man and a woman. This primary archetype of love called *eros* meant in original Greek thought divine seduction and openness to divine power. Today it is perceived as bodily affection for or attraction to the opposite sex. In both approaches, love as eros is a desire to ascend and encounter another, which gives life experiences of a sense of happiness. In the Christian conception, eros, in its

[14] Josef Kořenek, *Lékařská etika* (Praha: Triton, 2004), 152–167.

transcendent output, meets the descending divine love of *agape*, which purifies eros and transforms it into new possibilities of self-giving. This connects the Gospel commandments of love for God and neighbour, especially in love for the sick and needy. The love of neighbour thus manifested is called *caritas*. In Greek thought, love is a relationship of friendship called *filia*, which in a New Testament perspective, refers to the relationship of Jesus to his disciples.[15]

The virtue of hope is the equivalent of faith in the Christian interpretation. Faith is a hope that touches one's life and death. In the New Testament sense, the belief in hope for eternal life is the moment of fulfilment of life at the time of and after physical death. Each generation recognises once again that only loving relationships can save a person. Seemingly small goals – as in youth, the hope of meeting fateful love, finding a good job and career growth in adulthood, having healthy children and secure old age in the family circle (and in our case the hope of the end of a pandemic) – are confronted with great hope, which is offered as a gift of Love with a capital L that saves and transcends earthly life. Through the virtues of faith, hope, and love, one can become a truly loving person and is willing to suffer with the sufferer, i.e. to suffer for the other.[16]

Let us now try to apply these characteristics of theological virtues to medical practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. The agapic ethics derived from theological virtues justifies the goal of medical practice to act for the good of the patient in response to God's transcendent relationship with man through human love, as expressed in caritas. The practical impact of caritas on the doctor's spirituality can be considered the development of an inner attitude of compassion and care for a person suffering from illness and pain. The compassion for a suffering person is enriched by the experience of suffering that each person encounters in their own life. To fall ill or become injured sometimes means leaving the security of home, family and friends to enter the hospital space, where the patient is surrounded by technology with its sounds and other manifestations. At the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, patient isolation was even more severe, with the accompanying loss of privacy often present, as patients with COVID-19 often shared one room without the possibility of outside communication. One suddenly

[15] Benedict XVI., *Deus caritas est* (Slough: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 2–18.
[16] Benedict XVI., *Spe salvi* (Roma: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2007), 2–31.

feels alone, surrounded by strangers, along with being sick and often awaiting an uncertain fate, including the possibility of death. The individual can become sensitive or even hypersensitive to any aspect of the caregivers' eyes, gestures, or words. Everything seems to the patient to relate to himself and his problem. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the doctor soon began to recognise more often the fear of illness, infection, failure and loss of the patient. The physician may then even seek to avoid patients with COVID-19. As far back as the Hellenistic period, the Stoics referred to the sick as a brother or sister who deserved loving care. Suffering is part of human life, and people who suffer help the healthy to be more human. In Christian spirituality, caring for the sick is a spiritual experience in which believers recognise the suffering Christ in the afflicted party. The crucifixion takes place every day in the lives of the sick, who seem alone in the face of death. It is then the reality of the resurrection that gives the ultimate meaning to the physician's compassion and careful care.[17] Belief in an ultimately positive conclusion, backed by the knowledge that a solution will be found and the COVID-19 pandemic will recede, has become an important *salutor* to help manage stressful situations. And so this is a foreshadowing of the great hope beyond earthly life.

Meditation beyond the dimensions of love can also serve as a prevention of burnout syndrome during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. The constant confrontation with pain, suffering and death during the COVID-19 pandemic, the loss of personal and systemic illusions of doctors about always being successful, the constant work strain, conflicts in the workplace and minor personal failures in specific care, the lack of rest and sleep, stress from the need for constant updating and education, as well as the fact that tensions at work can be transferred to family relationships can lead to internal burnout and even collapse. After a year and a half of the COVID-19 pandemic, in times of relative calm, there are cases in which a greater number of employees in various positions have left the medical workplace than ever before. Care in the form of various manifestations of love can be offered as appropriate prevention and therapy. The expression of love as eros calls for the protection of and care within family relationships. If stress and tension in relationships are experienced in the workplace, they should

[17] Edmund D. Pellegrino and David C. Thomasma, *The Christian Virtues in Medical Practise* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 45–48, 72–98.

not penetrate the family. This is probably not completely avoidable, but these pressures should certainly not interfere with childcare; on the contrary, the family should become a refuge, a place where the physician gives and receives protection and love. Restrictions in the emergency during the COVID-19 pandemic have brought new, challenging experiences to the lives of many families whose children could not go to school, which was a problem for health professionals around the world. For doctors, the family has become a major source of strength, although many health care workers initially isolated themselves so that they would not spread the disease to their family if they became infected in their practice.

Another dimension of love already mentioned is friendly love – *filia* – which can take many forms: the doctor's relationship with his mentors, the relationships between doctors as a professional sharing of life experiences, and the doctor's relationships with friends outside the workplace. Time must be invested in each of these friendly relationships. As out-of-office and family-friendly relationships were curtailed during the COVID-19 pandemic, alternative ways of communicating through face-to-face meetings became vital: mutual phone calls, video calls, and social networking. Maintaining extracurricular friendly relationships, even online, has become an important support for mental health, and not only that of doctors.

In professional medical ethics, the physician-patient relationship is important precisely in terms of friendship. On the one hand, a friendly relationship makes it possible to give understanding to the patient that they are not treated in a technicist way, that they are not abandoned with their fears and uncertainties in deciding what therapy will be best for them. Through a friendly relationship, the physician can better understand what the patient expects, and they look at their situation from the patient's point of view. However, a friendly physician-patient relationship should not limit a certain relational (especially emotional) distance between the physician and the patient in order to maintain a professional perspective and a critical assessment of the patient's true health status and realistic therapy options.

3. Limitation of the Study

A limitation of the thesis is certainly the absence of case studies describing examples of specific ethical actions arising from virtue

ethics, with suggestions for solutions to the ambivalent problems raised by professional ethics. On the other hand, virtue ethics is not primarily concerned with the effects and consequences of actions resulting from it because it is assumed that they are and will be good. It has more of a meditative and contemplative role. This may be its weakness for specific practice. It is, therefore, appropriate that virtue ethics is complemented by other ethical principles and approaches. On the other hand, other ethical approaches (e.g. *consequentialism*, *utilitarianism*) are often not sufficient in particular case studies because the questions come back to the dilemma of what the good life is. Therefore, it is appropriate to complement them with value ethics, which includes virtue ethics.

A certain additional limitation may be that the article is not written by a physician; however, it rather looks at medical practice through the patient's perspective, or rather what virtues the patient expects of the physician so that the patient is not alone and abandoned in his or her decision about treatment. It represents what the author of the article as a patient expects and wishes to be provided in care in the patient-physician relationship. The focus is thus on the patient's input into their mutual discussion.

Conclusion

Virtue ethics is going through a well-deserved renaissance, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic in the medical profession. Their use has proved to be a supportive strategy of mental health care for the doctor. The cardinal virtues of prudence, temperance, courage, and justice in the time of the COVID-19 pandemic have helped doctors manage the difficult internal states of the profession. These are related to the need to quickly acquire new knowledge, apply it in practice, deal with patient fear of infection as well as adequately respond to the stress of colleagues, patients, and family members. The ability to make quick, rational, and compassionate decisions when needed in moral dilemmas regarding the possibilities of therapy have become even more imperative. Like never before, the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love directly affect the care of the soul of the doctor. These virtues strengthen the physician's fortitude to carry on and not to burn out or lose hope in moments when he sees people dying under his care in numbers he is not used to. Virtue ethics is thus intrinsically linked

to spirituality, as the *salutor* supports a good quality of life even in the difficult times of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the Czech Republic, ethics teaching has been already established itself in medical and nursing faculties. It includes an introduction to virtue ethics for physicians, but it depends on the approach of the lecturer. The situation of the COVID-19 pandemic has brought new challenges to deal with ethical dilemmas and, at the same time, care for the physician's soul during challenging and crisis situations. The article presented virtues and selected instances of virtues in medical practice during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, which should be further discussed in workshops for physicians and health professionals in retrospective reflection of the lived experience of the pandemic. Teaching and formation in virtue ethics, as well as in other ethical approaches, should not be limited to faculty lectures but should be part of ongoing discussion and continuing education during medical practice. Therefore, the article recalls virtue ethics as an integral part of the education of physicians and health professionals.

Appendix

This article is written with gratitude for the dedicated care of physicians and healthcare workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The virtue ethics presented here is an appropriate means of linking ethics and the care of the soul. It offers itself as a means of reflecting on the challenging experience of the pandemic.

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REVIEWS & NEWS

Martin Maďar, *The Chuch of God and Its Human Face: The Contribution of Joseph A. Komonchak to Ecclesiology*, Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2019, 199 stran, ISBN: 9781532657467.

JOSEF MIKULÁŠEK

V českém prostředí zůstává stále v podstatě neznámým americký odborník na katolickou ekleziologii, Joseph A. Komonchak (nar. 1939). Až na jeden drobný příspěvek[1] tak českému publiku zůstává neznámé dílo tohoto vlivného amerického interpreta ekleziologie II. vatikánského koncilu a badatele v oblasti metody v teologické reflexi církve, který je současně nejen v anglosaském prostředí uznávanou autoritou na dějiny a teologii II. vatikánského koncilu. Právě na tento aspekt se zaměřuje kniha původem slovenského teologa, působícího na Xavier University v americkém Cincinnati, Martina Maďara. Jeho kniha *The Church of God and Its Human Face*, která je důležitým příspěvkem do soukromé knihovny každého, kdo se vážně zabývá katolickou ekleziologií po II. vatikánském koncilu, se snaží předložit několik důležitých linií myšlení J. A. Komonchaka a naznačit další směry rozvoje ekleziologie vycházející ze základní premisy: priorita místní církve. Maďarova kniha je přepracováním dizertační práce tohoto autora, která byla obhájena na Catholic University of America ve Washingtonu a současně je světově první kritickou studií, která o Komonchakově ekleziologickém myšlení pojednává systematickým způsobem.

Kniha je členěna do pěti kapitol, jimž předchází krátký úvod a které jsou doplněny stručným závěrem.

První kapitolu (s. 1–50) pojímá Martin Maďar jako panoramatický přehled dějin křesťanské (a od doby Reformace specificky katolické) ekleziologie. Tato kapitola je sepsána jako didakticky velmi přístupný a čtivý vhled do hlavních dějinných epoch a klíčových změn v teologickém pojednání o církvi s tím, že hlavní linie myšlenek se sbíhají do prezentace ekleziologie vypracované v průběhu II. vatikánského koncilu a soustředěné zejména ve Věroučné konstituci o církvi *Lumen gentium* (s. 31–49). Dovolím si zde kritickou poznámku: Maďarovo umístění ekleziologické práce v celku koncilních jednání zde vychází z dlouho aplikovaného předpokladu, že právě téma církve je možné označit za hermeneutický klíč celé události (a dokumentů) II. vatikánského koncilu. V tomto ohledu by snad bylo možno dodat novější studie k recepci II. Vatikánu (např. Ch. Theobald, G. Routhier), kteří zdůrazňují interpretaci v klíči *stylistické* změny a principu *pastorality*, díky níž se ke slovu dostává

[1] Joseph A. Komonchak, „Koncil uskutečnil vizi Y. Congara“, *Teologické texty* 1 (2003): 26–28.

primát Božího zjevení a jeho přítomnosti v lidských dějinách.[2] Tento fakt nikterak neupozaďuje epistemologický status koncilní ekleziologie, ale spíše zasazuje její důležitost do širší hermeneutiky celku koncilního *corpusu* textů.

Druhá kapitola (s. 51–64) je krátkým biografickým medailonkem, v němž se seznamujeme s životem Josepha Komonchaka a také s mysliteli, kteří měli a stále mají vliv na jeho styl ekleziologické práce (B. Lonergan, J. Gustafson, J. Knox, P. Berger, T. Luckmann). Právě tito autoři nám již mohou předestřít základní souřadnice metody, kterou Komonchak rozvíjí: porozumění lidskému jednání v jeho sociálním rozměru (církev), chápané jako dějinně se rozvíjející společenství Bohem transformované lidské intencionality a intersubjektivity. V krátkosti lze říct, že J. A. Komonchak byl – v prostředí anglosaské katolické ekleziologie – prvním autorem, který si uvědomuje nutnost takové metody, jež bude kreativním způsobem využívat poznatků sociálních věd a tím argumentačně legitimizovat to, co předchozí ekleziologie (snoubící se spíše s kanonickou terminologií než s terminologií sociální filosofie) přejímala jako nezpochybnitelně garantované autoritou samotné církve.[3]

Vlastní jádro práce a největší přínos Maďarovy knihy však spočívá ve třetí kapitole (s. 65–101). Zde jsme seznámeni s prameny Komonchakova díla, skrze které se napříč svými publikacemi snaží o překonání teologického redukcionismu v pojednání o církvi. Tento Komonchakův záměr – a jeho naplnění prostřednictvím desítek publikovaných textů – může čtenáře o to více překvapit ve chvíli, kdy zjistí, že Joseph Komonchak s výjimkou svých *Foundations in Ecclesiology*[4] nepublikoval žádný ucelený traktát o ekleziologii nebo její metodě. Ve třetí kapitole (a snad ještě explicitněji v kap. 4) se přiznaným účastníkem dialogu stává ekleziologické myšlení Josepha Ratzingera, zejména z jeho období prefekta Kongregace pro nauku víry. Právě vůči němu se Komonchak ve svém hledání metody v ekleziologii vymezuje a nepřímo jemu přičítá zamlžení možného systematického uvažování o církvi, které nespočívá pouze v biblických a patristických obrazech o církvi „Bohem dané". Ten, kdo je alespoň trochu seznámen s pozitivním vlivem, který teolog Joseph Ratzinger v průběhu diskuzí nad rodícím se textem Věroučné konstituce II. vatikánského koncilu O Božím zjevení *Dei verbum*, tj. s pojetím historicity a dialogického charakteru Božího zjevení, s takovým pojetím živé Tradice, která není *depositum* ve smyslu uzavřeného pokladu pravd k přenášení, musí zde být překvapen, jak oproti tomu antagonistické a nekoherentní teologické principy církve (tj. nemožnost

[2] Např. Christoph Theobald, *La réception du Concile Vatican II. I. Accéder à la source* (Paris: Cerf, 2009); Gilles Routhier, *Vatican II. Herméneutique et réception* (Montreal: Éditions Fides, 2006).

[3] Současným zřejmě nejvlivnějším představitelem této metody ekleziologické práce je australský teolog Neil Ormerod: např. Neil Ormerod, *Re-Visioning the Church. An Experiment in Systematic-Historical Ecclesiology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

[4] Joseph A. Komonchak and F. Lawrence ed., *Foundations in Ecclesiology* (Boston: Lonergan Workshop, 1995). Jedná se o sbírku již dříve publikovaných textů tohoto autora.

realistické a kognitivně uchopitelné představy ekleziogeneze lokálních církví) J. Ratzinger zastával a prosazoval.[5] Komonchak se naopak snaží pečlivě shromažďovat jednotlivé stavební kameny *systematického* porozumění církve, která je jistě Božím darem, ale také lidským dílem, tj. dynamicky se rozvíjející historickou komunitou věřících (s. 65). V této části Martin Maďar prezentuje Komonchakovu interpretaci transcendentální antropologie kanadského jezuity (a Komonchakova profesora na Papežské gregoriánské univerzitě v Římě v 60. letech 20. století) Bernarda Lonergana, zejména jeho kategorie komunitně sdílené intencionality a lidským společenstvím tvořeného významu sdíleného jednání. Tato cesta důstojně naplňuje úkol současné ekleziologie, která se stává interpretací a prohloubením toho, co stojí v *Lumen gentium* 8: Církev tvoří „jedinou složenou (*complexa realitas*, pozn. aut.) skutečnost, srůstající z lidského a božského prvku". Epistemologicky poctivý přístup k tomuto tvrzení nás pak vede k tázání se nad podobou systematické ekleziologie, vycházející z vědomí, že a) církev je (také) lidskou realitou, ba navíc b) sociální realitou (tvořenou nikoliv navzdory, nýbrž v součinnosti dynamik lidské interakce), a proto c) systematické porozumění reality církve je nutně v mnoha aspektech podobné k systematickému porozumění jiných typů sociální reality lidské interakce. Systematická ekleziologie je proto stále trvající snahou o *fides quaerens intellectum ecclesiae*.

Čtvrtá kapitola knihy (s. 102–151) čtenáři nastiňuje konsekvence naznačeného systematického porozumění církve. V takovém případě je nutno přistoupit k fenoménu církve jako ke stále pokračujícímu procesu realizace církve v místních podmínkách, čemuž odpovídá ne zcela přesvědčivě formulovaná stanoviska o prioritě místní církve v důležitých pasážích *Lumen gentium*. Právě s dialektikou mezi touto „dvojí ekleziologií"[6] v koncilním textu konstituce se Maďar, v návaznosti na dílo J. Komonchaka, snaží vést dialog a tvořivě jej posouvat k jednoznačnějšímu porozumění priority místní církve v koncilní ekleziologii a její recepci v naší současnosti. Výchozím bodem se pro něj stává (k T. Akvinskému datovatelný) pojem *congregatio fidelium*, který odkazuje jak na Boží povolání (*fideles*), tak i na lidské dějinné jednání odehrávající se v konkrétním časoprostoru (*congregatio*). Text kriticky hodnotí zásahy, kterých se katolické ekleziologii dostalo zejména v 80. letech 20. století vlivem Mimořádné synody biskupů v roce 1985 a její preference univerzalistické vize církve. Jak Maďar upozorňuje, lze vidět v této snaze o rozmělnění koncilní preference *Božího lidu* (2. kap. LG) a priority místní církve těsnou souvislost mezi univerzalistickým konceptem církve a podobou výkonu služby papeže, římského biskupa, která v reálné recepci života katolické církve zůstává

[5] Srov. např. Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger, *Offenbarung und Überlieferung* (Freiburg im Br.: Herder, 1965), 35.

[6] Srov. klasické dílo, které kriticky posuzuje nejasnost ekleziologie II. vatikánského koncilu a upozorňuje na přítomnost dvou vzájemně antagonistických pojetí církve: Antonio Acerbi, *Due ecclesiologie. Ecclesiologia giuridica ed ecclesiologia di comunione nella „Lumen gentium"* (Bologna: EDB, 1975).

bližší I. a nikoliv II. Vatikánu (s. 137). Zde se tedy odkrývá jeden z citlivých bodů katolické ekleziologie, který kompromisní pojetí textu *Lumen gentium*, ani pokoncilní ekleziologie, nebyly schopny dosud uspokojivým způsobem objasnit.

Krátká pátá kapitola (s. 152–163) je pak dedikována otázce *formy* výkonu autority v katolické církvi. Autor rozvíjí svoji argumentaci na základě nikoliv „substancialistické" nýbrž „intersubjektivní" vize *congregatio fidelium* církve. Toto pojetí nám připomíná, že výkon autority musí být vnímáno jako jedno z institucionalizovaných charismat *ve službě* společenství církví (biskup ve své diecézi) a církve (kolegium biskupů v čele s římským biskupem). Právě relacionální pojetí výkonu autority v církvi je tak schopné a) na jedné straně zabránit tendencím k „reifikaci" (tj. „zvěcnění") předchozích forem jejího výkonu a b) na druhé straně vnímat limity jejího výkonu. Tedy takovou formu výkonu autority v církvi, která je opsána skrze *tria munera* biskupské služby a která není, jako uchované residuum monarchického a svátostně nepodloženého pojetí biskupské služby aplikována v rámci absolutistické „epistemologie osvícení", proti níž není možno vystupovat s jakýmkoliv kritickým hlasem a která se rozprostírá na veškerý život církve.

Z pojednávaných témat bych se nyní dovolil pozastavit u klíčového bodu metody v ekleziologii, načrtnuté J. A. Komonchakem, které vnáší světlo i na další pojednávaná témata knihy Martina Maďara. Tímto tématem je proces „ekleziologeneze", kterou je nutno číst na podkladu 2. kapitoly *Lumen gentium*, tj. skrze základní ekleziologickou kategorii koncilu: Boží lid. Komonchak v tomto směru rozvíjí Rahnerovu tezi o církvi jako *Selbstvollzug*, uskutečnění církve, tam, kde se Boží dar milosti setkává s lidskou odpovědí v podobě tvorby kolektivního významu. Realita církve je zakoušením proměny lidské intersubjektivity, a tedy církev *je* intersubjektivitou vedenou Boží milostí. Tato intersubjektivita (intersubjektivní ontologie) se projevuje prostřednictvím konkrétních slov, gest, skutků, lásky a lidské odpovědi (srov. Lk 24, 32). Každé univerzalistické pojetí církve se stává abstrakcí, která ztrácí *tělo* (Boží lid) a zaměřuje svůj pohled pouze na hierarchologii, tj. na rozvrhování struktur církve, univerzálně přítomných ve světě (tj. univerzalistické pojetí katolicity). Lokální vymezení církve (*portio Populi Dei*) klade jako podstatné prvky pro realizaci církve také aktuální výzvy, problémy a zdroje, které jsou v dané *portio Populi Dei* na pořadu dne, a „z nichž a v nichž" (srov. LG 23) se církev aktualizuje a žije. Důraz na toto lokální vymezení je právě tím, co prožíváme v rámci synodálního procesu, který je první fází Synody biskupů o synodalitě (2021-2024), ve které dochází ke konzultaci věřících ve všech třech oblastech života církve (víra, slavení, správa).[7] Probíhající synodální proces (a tedy obnova církve jako *congregatio*

[7] S odkazem na text Yvese Congara („Quod omnes tangit, ab omnibus tractari debet", *Revue historique de droit français et étranger* 36 (1958): 210–259) uvedeno v Mezinárodní teologická komise, *Sensus fidei v životě církve*, Praha: Krystal OP, 2015, čl. 122.

fidelium v konkrétních místních podmínkách vlastních životů) tak je konkrétní cestou, jak uvést do praxe vizi církve jako *církev církví* (J. M. Tillard), kterou lze epistemologicky uchopit a analyzovat jako organizaci „komplexního systému“,[8] v němž je garantována originalita jednotlivých částí, místních církví, v realitě katolicity univerzální církve.

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[8] Srov. Josef Mikulášek, „Hope through a Renewed Church: Epistemology of Complexity and its Challanges for Restructuralization of the Catholic Church“, *Acta Missiologica*, 14 (2020): 46–56.

A Conference Report: 'Symposium on Language and Style in Bible Versions: A West Slavic View' (1 July 2022, Catholic Theological Faculty, Charles University, Prague)

JIŘÍ HEDÁNEK

The annual international symposium on Bible Language and Style at the Charles University Catholic Theological Faculty drew together, for the fifth time,[1] scholars interested in past and present Bible versions throughout the West Slavic world. The participants speaking Polish, Czech, Slovak, Upper and Lower Sorbian soon found a common language over issues of their shared interest and quite a few possibly got inspired in their further research.

The four blocks interleaved with discussions dealt with linguistic, philological, dialectal, stylistic and exegetical topics. One of the intermissions provided the opportunity to introduce a new section at the Faculty Library devoted to Czech Bible versions. About 150 volumes exhibit the abundance of the Czech Bible tradition. The ceremony participants got the rare opportunity to almost touch the treasured *Prague Bible* incunabule of 1488, which the owner, the Catholic Theological Faculty, keeps in safe deposit otherwise.

I
'Polish Bible Versions and the Development of the High Style'

Prof. dr hab. Stanislaw Koziara[2] identified the high style as the common background of Polish versions. The high style is crucial for languages.[3] Literal Polish was exposed to it in 16th cent. It was formative for the language. The style is marked by literalness. The verbatim approach was taken by *Wujek's Bible* (1599), held on by *Millenium Bible* (1965) up to the present, and on a Protestant line, upheld by *Gdańsk Bible* (1635) through to *Warsaw Bible* (1975), again up to now. In this, the Polish Bible style is ecumenical. The word-for-word method is generally deprecated. Still, Polish acquired many idioms, structures and figures of speech from it. In 1572 *(Nesvizh Bible)*, Polish could have developed a more creative, syncretic Bible style but chose not to.

As Czech experienced a similar formative exposition, we are reminded we should not despise verbatim translations too quickly. At least in Bible translating, there are two norms Bible translations are evaluated by. Translators and

[1] The 4th symposium was reviewed in *AUC Theologica* 2021/2:206–211, the 3rd in *AUC Theologica* 2020/1:197–202.

[2] Katedra Lingwistyki Kulturowej i Komunikacji Społecznej, *Instytut Filologii Polskiej UP,* Kraków.

[3] See more in Roland Meynet (2001) *Wprowadzenie do hebrajskiej retoryky biblijnej,* WAM, Kraków; and Meynet (2005) *Język przypowieści biblijnych,* WAM, Kraków.

committees have to find their own way between the literal Scilla and the literary Charybdis.

'Simple Past Tense in Old Czech Psalters'

Mgr. Hana Kreisingerová, Ph.D., and Mgr. Kateřina Voleková, Ph.D.,[4] map the development of the Czech system of aspect and tense. The decay of simple past tenses being replaced by the then emergent compound perfect is documented in the earliest Czech Bible versions. The late 13th cent. until 1487 is covered by Psalm versions. As Czech Bible redactions are four, also Psalters distinguish four versions: (1) *Wittenberg Psalter* (late 13th cent.) revised in *Poděbrady Ps.* (1396), (2) *Clementine Ps.* (early 14th cent.) rev. in *Ps. of the Canons* (1380s), (3) *Boskovice Bible* (14/15th cent.) rev. in *Padeřov Bible* (ca. 1410), and (4) the 1st *printed Psalter* (1487). They were translated mostly from the Latin *Psalterium Gallicanum*. The simple tenses available in the Czech of the day were (a) aorist simple past, (b) imperfect imperfectives for past progress, state or quality, possibly also iterative or collateral action, and (c) imperfect perfectives for past iterative action. The aorist tenses died out from the text till the 3rd version, the imperfects faded away before the 4th version. Though the compound past outnumbered the simple tenses and grew slightly toward the end of the 14th cent., it was possible, as late as then, to select between tenses independently from the Latin structures.

'Iotation Loss as Evidenced in Matthew of the Bible of Dresden'

Mgr. Anastasija Rožkova[5] followed the progressive loss of iotation (Slavic palatalization) of the short [ɛ] /⟨ě⟩/ in the Matthew text of the earliest known Czech version of the complete Bible (1365–1375). The evidence for palatalization is well observable. When the frequent ⟨ie⟩/⟨ye⟩ occurred after /j/ (less often /ř/, /č/, rarely /c/ [ʦ], /š/), it was simplified to ⟨e⟩, but in the majority of instances, the iotation was preserved. Sparingly, ⟨ie⟩/⟨ye⟩ appears not to represent /⟨ě⟩/. Specifically, ⟨nie⟩/⟨nye⟩ can be seen for /ňe/[ɲɛ], where ⟨i⟩/⟨y⟩ made a diacritic to n→/ň/. It was found 50 times (and twice for ⟨dy⟩ and ⟨di⟩ for d→/ď/ [ɟ]) in Matth. The apparent irregularities were abstracted from as the spelling was unsettled.

These last two contributions (and quite a few presented at earlier symposia) remind the translators and expositors of the Bible that language development is ongoing, gradual, and uneven in its many layers of grammar, vocabulary, style, and genre. We should be aware of the liquidity of phenomena when working with ancient and mediaeval texts and critically evaluate the simplicity of grammars and dictionaries.

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[4] Dept. of Language Development, *Czech Language Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences*, Praha.

[5] Institute of Czech Language and Theory of Communication, *Faculty of Arts, Charles University*, Praha.

'Matth. 3:21 in Old Czech Translations: An Exegetical Scrutiny'

ThLic. Cyril Tomáš Matějec, Ph.D. et Ph.D.,[6] aimed his attention at an exegetically intricate verse, Matth. 3:21. A frequently used version (ČEP) represents the common understanding: *'When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."'* (NIV is quoted.) Hard to interpret are (1) unequivocal *'these nearby'* (lit.), in Gk. texts usually relatives, but not always, (2) the condition of mind ὁτι ἐξέστη (ao.), lit. *'went out / out of'*, idiomatically often + φρένον, *'out of his mind'*, Cz. *'pominul se'*, needless to add *'rozumem'*), (3) who claimed that: ἔλεγον (*they* = who? Also a general subject in Mk, hence people generally).

Maldonatus, a prominent post-Tridentian exegete (Juan Maldonado, 1533–1583), criticised pious explanations for disregarding the meanings and sense of the text. There were two alternative expositions. (I) Victor of Antiochia, a sixth cent. Greek commentator: *they* = Pharisees. (II) Jacobus Faber Stapulensis, a French Bible translator (J. Lefèvre d'Étaples, ca. 1455–ca. 1536; similarly also Erasmus in 16th cent.): His relatives intended to rescue Jesus from those who ἔλεγον that he went crazy (i.e. *'people said'*).[7] A third exposition can be added: by Euthymios Zigabénos / Zygadénos, † after 1118: His relatives wanted him not to leave; or: his relatives tried to help him out seeing him on the verge of fainting by strain (ἐξέστη = παρελύθη τὸν τόνον τοῦ σῶματος).

Domestic versions: Lat. *sui* (οἱ παρ᾽ αὐτοῦ): 'his disciples' (*'učedlníci jeho'* 1365, 1414, 1415, 1417, 1435 and NT 1485), 'his' (*'jeho'* 1435, a 3rd red., 1489) and 'иже бѣахѫ оу него' (early 11th cent.), which the 1488 Bible (and the slightly earlier NT) misinterpreted to 'him' (*'jej'*). 'Relatives' (*'příbuzní'*) were introduced as late as in 1593/1594 from Greek (then also Rom. Cath. 1677). They all agree in keeping Lat. dicebant (ἔλεγον) in 3pl, either ipf., or pret. while Lat. *quoniam in furorem versus est* in turn render 'he had turned angry' (*'že sě jest v hněv obrátil'* 1365, 1417) and then from 1414 till NT 1485 *furor* → 'insanity' (*'bláznovstvie'*, 1415: 'irascibility', *'prchlivost'*) and only since 1488 (which has 'him', *'jej'*) it is kept 'that he went out of his mind' (*'že by se s smyslem pominul'*, early 11th cent.: 'яко неистовъ ѥстъ').

II

'Vain efforts of Jaroslav Konopásek to Launch a *Kralice Bible* Critical Edition Project'

PhDr. Robert Dittmann, Ph.D.,[8] has documented the efforts of Jaroslav Konopásek (1883–1934), a classical philologist, to launch an undertaking

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[7] *Bible21*, another frequently used version in contemporary Czech, shares the view with e.g. NRS: *'…for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind."'*

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aimed at compiling and publishing a comparative edition of the text of the *Kralice Bible* (KB). He first (in 1929–1932) tried to initiate a *KB 1613 facsimile edition* effort, then (1931–1932) an 8-volume *critical edition of the 6vol KB* (vol. 7–8: text history). Later he intended to issue *a facsimile of the 6vol KB*. But even if he restricted his plan to *KB NT* only, no funds were available due to the economic crisis at those times. Still, he planned further - to issue the *KB 1582 Psalter,* to establish a *Bible Publishing House,* to publish the *6vol KB notes* as well as a *difference Bible by Karafiát*. Disappointed he died at 51.

'The 1593 vs 1599 NTs: Two Lexical Approaches of the Jakub Wujek Version'

Prof. dr hab. Tomasz Lisowski[9] presented the first complete Roman Catholic Bible in Polish, translated by Jakub Wujek (1599, NT 1593). Wujek stated explicitly, in his foreword, he preferred the Latin version as the one more reliable than Greek texts with their additions, alterations and aberrances. These he noted down on the margin. He tried to translate the Latin word for word, also to make his version differ from the Protestant 1563 *Brest Bible*, which admittedly used more elegant language but was, in his opinion, full of errors and heresies. However, he draws equivalents from it as well as four other versions including the Czech *Kralice Bible*. The Jesuit commission made it sound even closer to Latin as a superior source. Prof. Lisowski showed examples of contrasts and correspondences with earlier as well as later versions including Latin and Greek.

'Headlines, Acronyms and Layout: Formal Framework as a Messenger of Meaning'

Prof. UW, dr hab. Izabela Winiarska-Górska[10] illustrated the role of paratext as a means of helping the *Vulgate* shape and educate the people. Paratext makes a part of the message rather than a mere addition to the text of the Bible.[11] The 16th cent. in Poland were times of stabilising and coining new terms. As early as in the 1563 *Brest Bible*, the acronyms were Polonised, and the Apocrypha set aside in their division. The Szymon Budny 1574 & 1589 NT's arrangement …John, Luke, Acts… made the Luke-Acts unit more visible to the populace.

The importance of paratext is a point relevant for translators and editorial committees of today, too. Whatever joins the text, headlines, emphases, marking or otherwise of direct speech, the selection, format and readability of margin notes, extra articles, the ease of searching as well as the layout and the physical

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[11] See more in Lesley Smith, *The Glossa Ordinaria: The Making of a Medieval Bible Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).

quality, also how much the text of the version can speak of itself even if issued without some such additions, and last but not least, how well are the editors available later for reader suggestions, all that adds up to a single simple message that reverberates long after the first edition was out. If the translating and publishing team speaks with one steady voice, it affects how the product is received and understood.

III

'A Translation of Religious Texts in Moravian Slovak: A Near-Forgotten Print of 1851'

Doc. PhDr. Josef Bartoň, Th.D.,[12] continues in his research of non-mainline versions of Bible texts of the 18th & 19th cent. (The main line is understood the 1715 *St Wenceslas Bible* → the 1804 *Procházka Bible* → the 1851 *Consistorial Bible*.) The 1792 *Pollášek NT*[13] and the 1790 & 1796 Psalters[14] were preceded by a prayer book translated and compiled by Jozef Hrdina, a retired vicar, who authored quite a few books on various topics and was also a keen promoter of the Czech language. Owing to his local contacts in the grammar school where he taught Czech, he distrusted the established grammars of the day and adopted the regional variety he heard around. He translated selected Psalms (mostly from Latin), the canonical hours and related Scripture portions into the local vernacular in 1851. The composition is nothing special. What catches attention, however, is the language and orthography carefully adapted to be acceptable throughout a large region where many local dialects were spoken (Moravia). It also seems Hrdina did not hesitate to coin equivalents for words he did not consider eligible for some reason.

'Four Silesian Gospels of Mark: A Comparative Study of Style'

Dr Artur Czesak[15] focused on four recent Bible text translations into four regions of Silesia, Poland, and put them side by side. The Upper Silesian is spoken by about a million people. A grammar of that language is expected soon. Putting vernaculars into literary use is fairly common nowadays, said he. The authors were Zbigniew Kadłubek, who translated Mark 1 from Greek and explained less known terms; Mark Szołtysek, who translated the whole Mark from the Polish 1599 *Wujek Bible* and 1965 *Millenium Bible*, taking also Greek into consideration; Gabriel Tobor, who used the same sources for the whole of Mark and recorded special phonology of the dialect; and Andrzej Cichoń who translated pericopes from the Polish lectionary in 2015.

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[13] See the review in *AUC Theologica* 10/1, p. 200.
[14] See the review in *AUC Theologica* 11/2, p. 209–210.
[15] Katedra Teorii Komunikacji, *Wydział Polonistyki* / Katedra Przekładoznawstwa, *Wydział Filologiczny UJ*, Kraków.

IV

'Bible Glosses in Šwjel's Diaries: Bible in the Thoughts of a Protestant Preacher'

Priw. doc. dr. habil. Timo Meškank[16] researched the diaries of Bogumił Šwjel (1873–1948), a Lutheran pastor who ministered in two regions of Lusatia in Germany prior to World War I, both in spiritual and secular offices. His notes testify about the Sorbian people and how they related to their own tongue as well as to the German and Slavic peoples. The texts he used in ministering the population were drawn from the 1868 Sorbian Bible.

'Ancient Emotions in a Modern Language: A Few Examples from the Bible'

Mgr. Helena Panczová, PhD.,[17] an expert on the Septuagint and its modern reception, focused on a couple of examples of expressing emotions. One might think emotions are shared by people regardless of place and time. That is true of basic feelings. However, perceptions of particular emotional conditions and contexts differ in cultures. Hence, expressions of finer feelings do differ, too, in languages. Ancient Greeks, by way of example, failed to recognise and term loneliness or jealousy in the modern sense. On the other hand, we rarely, if ever, use ὀργή, a violent rage. We get angry in a much weaker manner with no murdering intention. Jealousy and envy as φθόνος is rather rivalry, begrudging others what one reserves for oneself. Stoics coined ζηλοτυπία for anxiety not to lose position, again more of rivalry than anything. Romantic jealousy was unknown to Ancient Greeks. This complex emotion related to three people would be perceived as fear or rivalry (e.g. by a wife not to lose her privileges, ζηλοτυπία, as well as grudging against her husband for his pleasures). Ζῆλος, in turn, was positive: desiring what the other has can be motivating. Then it comes close to our zeal.

The Septuagint translators then had a problem with rendering the Hebrew קִנְאָה (qin'ā) and the verb קנא. You cannot use φθόνος nor ζηλοτυπία about God. If the condition allowed it, they used ζήλωσις and ζηλῶ. When, however, a jealous husband in Num. 5:14ff suspects his wife was unfaithful, LXX and Vul. put ζηλοτυπία, *zelotypia,* which in later Lat. and It. *gelosia* via Fr. *jalousie* gave Eng. *jealousy*.

Further examples of jealousy (e.g. Gen. 26:14; Acts 7:9) including the claim God is 'jealous' (Nahum 1:2, אֵל קַנּוֹא וְנֹקֵם, θεὸς ζηλωτὴς καὶ ἐκδικῶν) have demonstrated that trying to keep a consistent equivalent for a term leads to inaccuracies and makes comprehension harder.

The discussion turned to female emotions during labour (NT λύπη, J. Bartoň suggested 'pain' rather than 'sorrow') and a suggestion by J. Hedánek that Hebr.

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[17] Katedra biblických a historických vied *TF TU,* Bratislava.

רַחֲמִים (abstract pl. from רַחַם / רֶחֶם 'uterus') is closer to 'maternal love' than its customary equivalent 'loving kindness'.

'Language and Style of Polish Attempts to Render Bible Texts in Verse'

Prof. KUL, dr hab. Małgorzata Nowak-Barcińska[18] remarked that there are more rhymed renditions of Bible texts in Polish and Silesian. (In Czech, there is only one known, the 2016 *Poetry of the NT* by Káva-Týnecký.) Then she concentrated on Antoni Gazda (a. k. a. Bogurym Polski). His 2017 verse paraphrased the four Gospels of the 1599 *Wujek Bible* and the 1965 *Millenium Bible*. He paid particular attention to emotions and viewpoints, employed rare words if needed and was often more concise than the canonical texts.

Philologists and exegetes may find such attempts useless but – as the discussion pointed out – it manifests the reception of the text. Included may be local and artificially cultivated jargons (referred to occasionally at these symposia). All such endeavours revive and reverberate texts of the Bible. After all, setting the texts to music, socially well accepted, is just another form of the same phenomenon.

The fifth symposium on the West Slavic Bible upheld and upgraded the already apparent characteristics: Languages and exegeses of the Bible in the wide West Slavic region are intertwined across churches and centuries. Scholarly pursuit demands restrictions on a particular text, language, time, region, or people. Still, not missing mutual links brings new stimuli and outlooks to the research. A discussion where speaking Slovak, Polish, Upper or Lower Sorbian, or Czech turns unimportant, and when different cultural, historical, and literary conditions fuse in the shared mental space, the common heritage and commitment are clearly felt. No sooner had the symposium closed than it brought new impulses and expectations of new results next year.

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