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THEME
Pope Francis and Christian-Muslim Relations

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INTRODUCTION

Although the main issue with which we have to cope humanly and spiritually in this time is primarily the worldwide pandemic of the Covid-19 disease, we as theologians cannot ignore other significant transformations in global affairs. Among other things, we have to constantly return to the question of cultural and religious pluralism from a theological perspective; we have to repeatedly raise questions about the role of Christianity in a changing world. The variety of cultural and religious answers to the fundamental questions about the purpose and meaning of human existence and about the ways of dealing with suffering and death in these times calls on the Christian theology to be able to articulate well the affinity and empathy of Christians with this cultural and religious plurality, while at the same time offering the uniqueness of its own identity and presenting it in a credible and intelligible way.

The suggestions we find in Pope Francis' magisterium are a great challenge in this sense. In this issue, we will closely focus on his most recent documents, which touch on the theme of the fraternal coexistence between the members of different religious traditions (namely, Christianity and Islam) and, more generally, on the capacity to live in fraternal relationships as expressed in the 'Document On Human Fraternity' and, subsequently, in the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*.

The text by Luboš Kropáček with the title 'Making Fraternity an Essential Link in Christian-Muslim Relations' introduces the ideas and initiatives advanced by Christian and Muslim religious leaders and believers towards a mutual religious rapprochement. In addition to the theological reflection of the experts on Islam, which was subsequently

reflected in the magisterial documents of the Second Vatican Council and post-conciliar texts, it also shows Muslim efforts to seek dialogue. His article discusses the culminating point reached so far in the positive efforts of Pope Francis in his meetings with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyib, including their agreement on the fraternity as a desirable bond for all believers in God.

The text by Vojtěch Novotný ‘God’s Providence and the Plurality of Religions’ focuses on the hermeneutics of a particular formulation found in the ‘Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’, saying that ‘the pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings.’ Novotný’s intention is to present the way how this statement should be read with regard to its general intention and context. Then the author explores if it is compatible with the Quran and analyses the various ways it has been interpreted within Christian theology. Finally, he shows that the sentence does not have to be read as contradictory with the Christian faith if we pay attention to its purpose, origin, and corresponding theological interpretation.

The last thematic text is the study by Petr Vizina and Denisa Červenková called ‘Faith Embodied in Attitudes: Ethics of Dialogue and Brotherhood of All People in the “Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together” in Abu Dhabi and the Encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*’. It approaches the topic of the ethical principles of inter-faith dialogue in both documents. It is based on the assumption that the Abu Dhabi document is the result of a debate between Christian and Sunni religious scholars, so it is grounded on the ethics of interfaith dialogue. The encyclical *Fratelli tutti* moves the theme of dialogue further to the ethics of interpersonal relations on a general social level. According to the authors of the article, Pope Francis’ approach in the documents is that the theological truth and values of religious traditions are embodied in the attitudes of social friendship. Francis challenges us to build a specific environment that he calls a ‘new culture of dialogue’, having frequently called for the growth of a culture of encounter. This type of relations transcend political and social barriers and encourages creating a specific culture of social and ‘political love’. The authors of the article support the idea that Francis’ ethical approach refers to God the Creator of all and the call to the brotherhood of all human beings as well as to faith as a response to Revelation.

Of course, the presented articles do not cover the topic of religious and cultural pluralism in the context of Pope Francis' message in all its details and nuances, but we hope that they may serve as an inspiration for further theological dialogue in this field.

Denisa Červenková

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THEME
Pope Francis
and Christian-Muslim Relations

MAKING FRATERNITY AN ESSENTIAL LINK IN CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS

LUBOŠ KROPÁČEK

ABSTRACT

The article provides a survey of ideas and initiatives advanced by Christian and Muslim religious leaders and believers towards a mutual religious rapprochement in the past more than fifty years. On the Christian side, the process was started at the Second Vatican Council and developed with the great personal involvement of all popes of the following half-century. Muslim positive initiatives, from official centres as well as from committed intellectuals, have appeared somewhat later and still have to combat hostile moves of partisans of radical Islamism. Our article discusses the culminating point reached so far in the positive efforts of Pope Francis in his meetings with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyib, including their agreement on the fraternity as a desirable bond for all believers in God. Our reflections try to mark out the main points of understanding achieved by the two religious leaders in the document signed by them in Abu Dhabi in February 2019 and, thereafter, further developed by the Pope in his comprehensive encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, issued in Vatican on the feast of Saint Francis in October 2020.

Keywords

Second Vatican Council; Declaration *Nostra Aetate*; Interreligious dialogue; Islam and Christianity; Pope Francis' visits in Muslim countries; Encyclical *Fratelli tutti*

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The rapid spread of the Covid-19 pandemic all over inhabited continents may have made us realise how interwoven and interdependent our human world is, whether for better or worse. To be sure, this new element of oecumenicity does not make old contradictions disappear but rather can push them, along with our attitudes, towards

reconsideration. A positive outcome might be an increased sense of a basic co-responsibility of all humans for good relations among themselves and for the world. A great part of this responsibility lies with the believers of great universalist religions Christianity and Islam. Our concern in this paper will be to record and to appreciate ideas and initiatives developed from these two sides in order to serve the noble goals of their monotheist faiths in their mutual esteem and areas of possible cooperation. Needless to say, this trend has been for years meeting with various degrees of opposition, on the Muslim side even with violent resistance. Let us hope the fall of the so-called 'Islamic state' will mark a further decline of radical trends labelled for want of a better word Islamism or Islamicism. In our determined rejection of false allegations presenting murderous policy and hatred of other human beings as God's will, we wish to give the floor and our support to all sincere endeavours of both Christians and Muslims who wish to contribute to a better understanding in their mutual relations. After a diversity of experience in the past half-century in a search for an efficient means of rapprochement, for values that can bring us all closer together and to be perceived in the dialogue as authentic on both sides, it has appeared reasonable to lay the primary stress on the concepts of mercy, compassion, and fraternity.

1. In Our Time and Further Ahead

After centuries of hostilities or, at least, tensions and claims of one's own supremacy, a new course in inter-religious relations was started on the Christian side by the Second Vatican Council. The way to an unprecedented openness to dialogue and reciprocal reverence, which the Council drew up as general guidelines for the future relations of the Church to non-Christian religions, was defined in broad lines in the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*.¹ It has become a unique new element in the history of the Church, of its history, and its policy henceforth. Complex discussions that preceded the adoption of the Declaration have been recorded and analysed by several respected personalities. Along with brief introductory remarks of Karl Rahner, which are

¹ Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions. It was proclaimed by Paul VI on Oct. 28, 1965. Usual reference is *Nostra Aetate*, *NAe*.

sometimes published together with the Second Vatican documents,² in German-speaking Central Europe, including the Czech lands, the most widely used source of information on the prehistory, course of events, and results of the Council is the detailed monograph by Otto Hermann Pesch.³ As regards relations with Islam, the circumstances of its inclusion on the agenda of the Council have become widely known. Pope John XXIII considered a need to use the aggiornamento efforts of the Council also to purify teachings and liturgy of the Church from the views and expressions which, in the past, may have nursed antisemitic moods. Council fathers from Arab countries, however, warned of the possible undesirable effect of the gesture that might be viewed as compliance with the attitude of one side of the current Middle East conflict. To avoid any misrepresentations and inconveniences, the Council adopted a decision to transgress borders of the Christian oecumenicity with friendly words not only towards the Jews but also towards believers of other religions.

The Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, in its more than 50-year existence, has proved undeniable wisdom and vitality, sometimes even a capacity to foresee future developments of mankind ‘being drawn closer together’. This trend has led the Church to examine closely her relationship to non-Christian religions and ‘what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship’. The first two sections of NAe draw the general outline of this rapprochement. ‘The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in (other) religions,’ which in spite of their differences ‘often reflect a ray of that truth, which enlightens all men’. The Church herself, of course, ‘proclaims, and ever must proclaim Christ, the way, the truth and the life’ (John 14:6). In this spirit, the Church exhorts her sons to dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions... ‘in witness to the Christian faith and life... to recognise, preserve and promote the good things, spiritual and moral, as well as the socio-cultural values found among these men’.⁴

² See e.g. the Czech publication: *Dokumenty II. vatikánského koncilu* (Praha: Zvon, 1995).

³ Otto Hermann Pesch, *Das zweite Vatikanische Konzil: Vorgeschichte – Verlauf – Ergebnisse – Nachgeschichte* (Praha, 2005). O. H. Pesch (1931–2014) was a Catholic theologian teaching at German Protestant Universities. His account of the Council is generally appreciated as liberal, sometimes criticized.

⁴ This is a brief summary of the introductory part of *NAe* preceding the section on Islam.

Section 3 consists of two paragraphs on Islam. ‘The Church regards with esteem also the Muslims. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself merciful and all-powerful... They value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting...’ In the last part, the section calls emphatically upon both Christians and Muslims to forget their past quarrels and hostilities and to work sincerely for mutual understanding and to preserve as well as to promote for the benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare as well as peace and freedom.

The idea of opening a dialogue with the large part of the world represented by non-Christian religions was never strange to Cardinal Montini, who was elected to Peter’s stool in June 1963 after the death of John XXIII and adopted the name Paul VI. Right in the first year of his papacy, he started a new tradition of pastoral and bridge-building travels to foreign countries with a visit to the Holy Land. In his sermon in Bethlehem, he conveyed greetings to Jews and Muslims, addressing both as believers who, like ourselves, adore the one True and Living God of Abraham. In explicit words, the inclusion of Muslims into the Divine plan of salvation was adopted into the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, promulgated by Paul VI with a heading *Lumen Gentium* in November of the same year, 1964. Later, with the approval of John Paul II in October 1992, these words characterising the relation of the Church towards the Muslims were also included into the Catechism of the Catholic Church. They read: ‘But the plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator. In the first place amongst them are the Muslims, who, professing to hold the faith of Abraham, along with us, adore one and merciful God, who in the last day will judge mankind.’⁵

Paul VI himself made great efforts to promote the concept and practice of meaningful dialogue with non-Christians. As early as before the end of the first year of his pontificate, he established a Secretariat for Non-Christians as a part of the Papal Court. It has remained in operation until the present times, renamed since 1988 The Pontifical Council for Inter-Religious Dialogue. Since Paul had included it into his first encyclical *Ecclesiam Suam*, the very concept of dialogue (originally colloquium) became a new important theological term. He categorised partners in dialogue into three concentric circles: mankind as a whole,

⁵ Cf. LG 16 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, para. 841.

monotheists, and believers professing great extra-European religions. In general, Paul's encyclical urges all to build up relations between religions on the basis of reciprocal esteem, and not on antagonisms, and to cultivate common ideas of freedom of religion, of fraternity, and of a social consideration to the utmost limits.

Within his humanitarian efforts, Paul VI paid special attention to improving the Church's relations with Islam. This special concern is sometimes explained by a reference to friendly discussions, which the young Montini, since his time as archbishop of Milan, held with the pioneer of Christian-Muslim better understanding, Louis Massignon. The great French orientalist (1883–1962), whose Catholic faith had been remarkably invigorated through his own early experience of research in Iraq centred on the Muslim medieval mystic al-Hallaj, inscribed his name into a number of initiatives serving as a hand of friendship offered to Muslims. According to his suggestions, Christians might intercede for Muslims in their prayers. With the consent of a bishop, he even founded an association for such spiritual intercession called *badaliya* ('acting on behalf of').⁶ The 'Kopernican turn' accomplished by the Second Vatican Council in modifying the Church's view of Islam had, of course, several major architects and movers, readily cooperating with the benevolent Pope. In general, the Council proved receptive to a friendly theological openness towards non-Christian religions along the lines elaborated by Karl Rahner (1904–84) and his disciples. As regards Islam, the Council and thereafter the Curia had a chance to work in combination with outstanding experts in Islamology, such as Dominican Georges Anawati (1905–1994) or 'white father' Robert Caspar (1923–2007). The Egyptian Anawati,⁷ convert from Orthodoxy to the Greek Catholic faith, became a leading personality of the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies in Cairo (IDEO) and a widely respected partisan of Christian-Muslim good relations. Robert

⁶ Cf. Maurice Borrmans, 'Aspects théologiques de la pensée de Louis Massignon sur l'Islam,' in *Louis Massignon et le dialogue des cultures* (Paris: Cerf, 1996). Massignon's letters and other texts for the Association came out at the same Catholic Publishers Cerf in 2011: L. Massignon, *Badaliya, amour de l'autre* (1947–1962).

⁷ Anawati (in Arabic written Jurj Shahata Qanawati) wrote more than 250 books or articles on various aspects of Islam, its theology (George Anawati and Louis Gardet, *Introduction à la théologie musulmane* (Paris, 1948)), philosophy and theology of Ibn Sina compared to Thomas Aquinas, Islamic mysticism, Islam in modern age, etc. His memory is greatly studied and appreciated in Germany, cf. Jean-Jacques Pérennes, *Georges Anawati. Ein ägyptischer Christ und das Geheimnis des Islam*. (Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 2010), where was established The George Anawati Foundation.

Caspar, in his turn, also did not spare efforts to promote the research and activities of all islamological institutions formed or inspired by the Council, such as the reformed Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (PISAI), Secretariat for the Non-Christian Religions and the Groupe de Recherches Islamo-Chrétien. To assess his contribution to the Christian theological and practical understanding of Islam and to the dialogue, a mention should be made of his monograph *Pour un regard chrétien sur l'islam* (Centurion, 1990) and two volumes of *Traité de théologie musulmane* (PISAI, 1987 and 1991).⁸

Unfortunately, after a decade of rapprochement, the prospects for a fruitful dialogue with the Muslims collided with the growth of a totally opposing tendency – hostile fundamentalism, sometimes in extreme forms. This negative current got a strong impetus from the mental shock of the Arabs by the crushing defeat in the Six-Day War with Israel in June 1967. In many parts of the Islamic world, this *naksa* (failure) was interpreted as a punishment of a pro-Western secular policy of the Arab and other Muslim régimes, which could be set right only by rigid Islamisation. The search for this remedy inspired political movements in a number of countries throughout the 1970s and 1980s, culminating in the Islamic revolution in Iran (1979) and wide Islamic support for the Muslim guerrilla warfare campaign against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In spite of the anti-Western – sometimes conceived and stylised as anti-Christian – trends in several Muslim societies, a general tendency towards a closer contact with the (post)Christian West and even with the Christian Churches could not be excluded from the general economic and social progress of mankind. In spite of difficulties, most Christians remained faithful to this mission, as is demonstrated by the line of the dialogue drawn up by the Council and with some slight modifications also adopted and followed by Protestant, Anglican, and Orthodox Churches.

In the Roman Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II, during his pontificate 1978–2005, carried on the style of Paul VI with numerous pastoral and/or missionary visits even to the countries where Christians were only minorities. His name will go down in history especially for his participation in the fall of communism. Yet, his contribution to the progress of the dialogue with Muslims deserves recognition as

⁸ See R. Caspar's obituary written by Michael Fitzgerald: 'Robert Caspar, sa contribution à la pensée de l'Église sur l'islam,' in *Chemins de dialogue*, vol. 31, 2008, 151–154.

well. In his first encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* (from March 1979), he reproached Christians with a weakness of their faith in comparison with some non-Christian believers. Then, in autumn of the same year, he openly spoke about spiritual bonds uniting Christians and Muslims, which he was not shy to repeat on various occasions. A unique, unprecedented event in the interreligious history was the Pope's speech to young Muslims, assembled at a big stadium in Casablanca in Morocco (19. 8. 1985), laying stress on the common spiritual patrimony in spite of numerous differences between the two monotheist religions. A year later (27. 10. 1986), John Paul inaugurated a new tradition of common prayer for peace with the participation, side by side, of representatives of the great religions assembled in Assisi. The interfaith tradition, labelled the 'Spirit of Assisi', has been further maintained with an active organisational élan of the Sant Egidio Community. In the changing world of the 1990s, John Paul's kind-hearted moves towards Muslims found new ways and opportunities. To general surprise, he kissed a copy of the Qur'an offered to him by an Iraqi delegation visiting the Vatican (1999), and during his own visit to Damascus (2001), he entered the Umayyad mosque, well-known as i.a. a shrine with the tomb of John the Baptist, venerated by Muslims as Nabī Yahyā. The reverence shown to a non-Christian Scripture and a visit to a mosque have been unprecedented in papal history. Likewise, John Paul's visits to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, formerly Soviet republics, where he held discussions on Christian-Muslim relations, were clear marks of a new era. He became a real pontifex, active in building interfaith bridges. In his own words, he was well aware of the importance of this work in a world despiritualised by materialism, secular fundamentalism, and religious extremism.

Benedict XVI, during his tenure of the papacy (2005–2013), tried to build on the outreach of his predecessors in spite of the general worsening of the socio-political climate between the West and the Muslim world after the Islamist brutal strike of 9/11. The Pope still maintained that the dialogue between the two great religions was a vital necessity for the world marked by relativism and indifference to transcendence and the universality of reason. Feeling a need to insist on the necessity of respect for religions and their symbols, he condemned the insulting of Muslims by the publication of ludicrous cartoons of Muhammad in the Danish *Jyllands-Posten* and later in other European newspapers (2005) and did not hesitate to criticise the West for spreading wrong

life models excluding God. Yet, his goodwill in approaching Muslims in this spirit, critical of Western materialism, was overshadowed by the unfortunate effect of his lecture on 'Faith, Reason and the University' held at the University of Regensburg on 12 September 2006. Many Muslims felt offended by his quotation of disparaging remarks about Muhamad and his cultural merits by the 13th century Byzantine Emperor.⁹ Indignant voices resounded from Muslim leaders (i.a. Sheikh al-Qaradawi) as well as politicians. Before the end of the week, the Pope expressed his deep regret for the words that aroused such a reaction, stressing that they were just a quotation, not an expression of his opinion. At the same time, he invited potential Muslim partners to a mutually respectful dialogue. The strong emotional effect of the event bore fruit also in a good sense as an impulse to Muslim opinion makers to take an active stand on the need for dialogue. It found a loud expression in the 'open letter' signed finally by 138 Muslim authorities just a year later: in the first version in Ramadan 2007.

By that time, it had become obvious that the dialogue with Muslims could be held on various levels. It has become customary to speak about a dialogue of life, of action, of theological exchange, and of religious experience. When examining the history of Christian-Muslim relations in the past half-century, it would not be difficult to find examples of all these types. The acting subjects are, of course, varied on both sides. In addition to the above mentioned community Sant'Egidio, attention should be given to the movement Focolare inspired by Jesus' prayer for believers 'that they may all be one' (John 17:21). The movement, founded by Chiara Lubich in 1943, has succeeded in including in their inter-religious friendship a surprisingly large range of Muslim partners, especially intellectuals from Jordan or Algeria.¹⁰ The efforts to elaborate more specifically on the Christian-Muslim theological agreement and/or the differences have been attempted from various angles. To deal with the details would go beyond the scope of this paper.

⁹ Emperor Manuel II Palaiologos: 'Show me just what Muhammad brought that was new and here you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached.'

¹⁰ For a general survey of ideas and activities of the Focolare see Paul Lemarie, 'Vivere insieme l'unità nella diversità. Il movimento dei focolari e il dialogo con i musulmani,' *Islamochristiana* 40 (2014): 31–53. For Czech readers a general account is given by Luboš Kropáček in *Theologická revue* no.2 (2016): 397–415, where a special attention is paid to Islamological writings of the editor-in-chief of the Focolarinis' journal Città nuova Michele Zanzucchi.

Czech readers can find excellent analytical surveys in the monographs by Denisa Červenková.¹¹

As regards the essentials of Christian-Muslim relations, the Council, as we have seen, focussed its attention on the moral consensus, thus knowingly avoiding speaking about Muhammad and the Qur'an. Those few who have dared to look for an acceptable or just conciliatory approach towards a fair reciprocal understanding between the two faiths have always had to face a serious obstacle in the sensitivity of the historically younger partner. Evidently, Islam relies on a belief in its superiority over the older monotheisms, whose failures Muhammad's message was intended to rectify. For Christians, for their part, the problem is how to include Muhammad into the universal history of salvation. Among the attempts to do so, the most interesting seem to be those of Claude Geffré (1926–2017), professor of theology at the Institut Catholique de Paris, and of Kenneth Cragg (1913–2012), Anglican bishop and scholar. Both have worked out inclusivist concepts, which assign a distinguished place to the Prophet of Islam, though not comparable to the significance of the Redeemer Jesus Christ. Geffré, as an active co-founder of a Research Centre for Christian-Muslim Studies (GRIC) aroused attention by his differentiation of a/the Divine Word from the common human speech. A crucial difference appears in the use of the definite or indefinite article: thus Geffré refers to Jesus' Word as (in French) *la Parole*, while the Muslim Qur'an is *une Parole* (de Dieu). In other words, the Gospel and the whole Revelation in Christianity has been reflected anew in the Qur'an, which, however, lays a different accent on the mystery of God; on the Christian side, the transcendence has become immanent through love, while in Islam the stress is laid on the Oneness and radical transcendence. Presumably, Geffré's views may have had some influence on the religious living together in French-speaking countries in Europe and in the Maghreb.

In the English speaking contact zones, a similar effect may have been produced by broad activities, including about thirty books of Kenneth Cragg. He devoted about sixty years of his life, spent mostly in the Arab world, to a generous interpretation of Islamic spirituality and culture. Made in recognition of his merits an Anglican Bishop of Egypt in 1974, which was a new institution at that time, he worked devotedly for

¹¹ Denisa Červenková, *Náboženství jako teologický fenomén* (Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart, 2013); *Katolický pohled na náboženskou pluralitu* (Praha: Karolinum, 2016).

good relations with the Muslims. In his belief, put briefly, the Christian can sincerely recognise Muhammad as a Prophet of the Qur'an, while being well aware at the same time of how much more Jesus is for him.

Besides the whole set of his monographs on the fundamentals of Islam and their assessment in the Christian perspective,¹² Cragg enriched his presentations of the rival religion to Christian readers with a translation from Arabic of a philosophical fiction by the Egyptian surgeon Muhammad Kamal Hussein Qarya zālīma, in English translation *City of Wrong – A Friday in Jerusalem*.¹⁵ The book presents fascinating scenes taking place in Jerusalem on Good Friday, when various types of people insist that Jesus be crucified. Each of them has his or her personal reason to see him die, for he was awakening people's consciences, which they could not bear. Moreover, it shows how people in a group are ready to do what they would not approve of individually. The story is a unique case of a high appreciation of Jesus Christ's moral supremacy by a Muslim author, understanding, at the same time, the motives of the behaviour of all those who feel ashamed facing such hardly attainable height.

Before proceeding further on to discuss the present-day dialogue and its moral issues, more attention is to be given to trends and achievements on the Muslim side.

2. Muslims Seeking a Dialogue

Since the emergence of Islam in world history, its believers have always been anxious to establish its place and their own position in the past and future course of human affairs. According to its teaching, God (Allāh), revealed His will to the mankind He had created, usually through chosen prophets. Only some peoples and communities sought to obey, namely Jews and later Christians, but their submission suffered a lot of defects. The Muslims believe that the Jews corrupted the Divine revelation, especially in Ezra's (in the Qur'an called 'Uzair) attempts to reconstruct the passages of the Torah, which had got lost during the

¹² See esp. *The Call of the Minaret* (Oxford: University Press, 1956); *Muhammad and the Christians* (1984); *Muhammad and the Qur'an* – altogether about thirty valuable titles, full list on Wikipedia.

¹⁵ Muhammad Kamil Husayn, *Qarya zālīma* was published and obtained the Egyptian State Prize for literature in Cairo in 1957; Cragg's translation came out in Amsterdam in 1959.

captivity in Babylon. The Christians, in their turn, have been made an object of strong criticism for their beliefs in the incarnation, Trinity and resurrection of Jesus (in Arabic 'Īsā), whom the Muslims respect and even venerate as a great Prophet, but only a human being. They show great respect also to his mother Maryam, whose name appears in the Qur'an more often than in the Gospels. The rapid expansion of Islam throughout the countries in North Africa, Southern Europe, and large parts of Asia subjected numerous Christian and Jewish communities to the Arab Caliphate with its clearly defined rules of religious policy. Both older monotheist religions were tolerated as a 'protected people' (ahl al-dhimma) with a clearly defined a sort of 'second class' position in the Muslim dominated society. However strange it may appear, some Islamist radicals would like to reestablish such a type of social structuring once again, after it has disappeared everywhere with the modern age.

Modern Muslims' discussions about their religious position amidst the plurality of world-views around them are an important challenge for research and analysis. The standard opinion, prevailing in the Middle Ages, was blaming Jews and Christians for corruption (tahrīf)¹⁴ of Holy Scriptures (Jewish Tawrāt or Christian Injīl) based on Allāh's revelation. Some leading intellectuals, in particular Ibn Khaldun (d. 1405), nowadays widely considered a precursor of sociology, did not, however, speak about an ideological deformation but simply about an erroneous interpretation. In our times, Islamic theology and jurisprudence have to deal with a much broader range of faiths than in the past, when it was sufficient to draw a line between the 'Abrahamic' three and unacceptable others. The very term 'Abrahamic' has come into general modern use by widening the scope of the Quranic reference to dīn Ibrāhīm (Abraham's religion). In its positive notices about monotheists, the Qur'an prefers the term 'people of the Book/Scripture' (ahl al-kitāb). In two instances (verses 2:62 and 5:69), those who 'shall have reward with their Lord' (lahum ajruhum 'inda Rabbihim) are indicated as Jews, Christians, and Sabians.¹⁵ In modern discourse, whether held by Muslims or non-Muslims, Islam is naturally included in the 'Abrahamic religions,' but the relevance of others, including some Islamic sects, is

¹⁴ The word *tahrif* is used in modern Arabic ideological texts in the meaning 'revisionism'.

¹⁵ The Quranic term Sabians (in Arabic Sab'in) is usually interpreted as referring to the gnostic sect in Harran (in Northern Mesopotamia) or, later more probably, to Mandaeans living (until recently) mainly in Southern Iraq.

subject to disputes. It seems that belonging to this group has become a matter of prestige. The Abrahamic religions share a number of honourable prophets, beliefs, and institutions, the stock-taking of them is a challenge for modern mass media.¹⁶

After the abolition of the Caliphate by Turkish republicans in 1924, Muslim political leaders tried hard, but without success, to reestablish a Central Authority for Sunni Islam. After the bitter defeat of Arab states by Israel in 1967, a partial substitution was found in setting up a large multi-purpose organisation of states with predominantly Muslim populations. At that time, the difference between Sunni and Shi'a did not matter. After about forty years of existence, the Organization, grouping 57 member states, adopted the name Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). In spite of its manifold activities in political or cultural fields, it has not become a convenient place for solving problems of a purely religious nature, such as heresy or the highest levels of the interfaith dialogue. Even the Sunni-Shi'a quarrel assumed a political rather than a religious substance and appearance, most often as the permanent tension between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In the past, in Nasser's era, the disagreement seemed to be calmed by a fatwa issued by the then al-Azhar Imam Mahmūd Shaltūt in 1959. It was admitting Shi'a Muslims into mainstream Islam, which was duly done in the setup of the OIC. Difficulties appeared in the 'Arab Spring' in 2012, when al-Azhar, then temporarily dominated by Salafists, strongly rejected the 1959 fatwa and banned the Shi'a worship and understanding of Islamic history. That move was thwarted a year later by the new leader Abdel Fattah Sisi's repression of the Muslim Brothers and by the position of the Grand Sheikh of al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib, in showing tolerance towards the Shi'a.

The Sunni-Shi'a split within the Islamic umma still persists along with other internal divisions. The problems were debated and pushed to a proposed settlement in *Amman Message* (Risālat 'Ammān), a document issued in November 2004.¹⁷ It was worked out and agreed by Muslim scholars with the assistance of Jordan's King Abdallah II in

¹⁶ See in Wikipedia: Table of prophets of Abrahamic religions; it includes Bahāi faith, Christianity, Druze, Islam, Judaism, Mazdaeism, Rastafari movement and Samaritanism. There exist also other lists and surveys, including many more religious groupings professing monotheist faith.

¹⁷ For details see *Amman Message*, accessed 9 July 2020, <https://ammanmessage.com/the-amman-message-full/>.

order to provide answers to urgent questions: who is Muslim, when is it legitimate to excommunicate anybody (takfīr) and on what principles should religious opinions (fatāwā i.e. fatwas) be delivered. By July 2005, the document was signed by 200 high ranking Islamic scholars from over 50 countries. It gives recognition to 8 large schools of fiqh, in addition to the standard Sunni madhāhib also to Shī'a Ja'farī, Shī'a Zaidī, Zāhirī and 'ibādī. Along with it, the Declaration extends the protection from takfīr on the followers of Ash'arī / Māturidī creed, real tasawwuf (Sufism), and what it terms 'true Salafi thought', as well as upon 'others recognised as Muslims'. Generally speaking, the trend manifested by the Declaration seems to have done away with the sectarianism of the old style. Yet, political ambitions and predatory lust got upperhand in a number of new groupings. Saudi King Abdallah unveiled their face in pointing to those 'who claim to be associated with Islam and hide behind Islam to commit irresponsible deeds.'¹⁸ This deplorable trend is embodied in a number of radical, even terrorist formations, such as al-Qaida (al-Qā'ida), Islamic State (ISIS, Dā'ish), Nigerian Boko Haram, Somali Al-Shabaab, Afghani Tālibān, and others. To our sorrow, many honest Muslim leaders are sometimes reluctant to inflict takfīr of this nature since, in their benevolent opinion, whoever professes the shahāda should not be labelled with unbelief.

An important factor in modern Islamic thought is, of course, seeking an appropriate relationship to the West and Christianity. After centuries of mutual rivalry and distrust, an assembly of high-ranking dignitaries, calling themselves 'leaders of the Islamic religion', agreed on sending an open letter to those they considered their Christian counterparts. It was dated Oct. 13 2007 (corresponding to the Ramadan 'īd al-fitr 1428 AH). Its title, according to its opening part, reads 'A Common Word between Us and You'. It is a quotation from the Qur'an (3:64), the text of the whole document being conceived as an invitation by Muslims to Christians to live together in peace, harmony, and cooperation. The structure and the general spirit reveal a deep influence of Christianity, namely the commandments of love, which constitute the axis of parts I 'Love of God' and II 'Love of the Neighbour', the attitudes of both religions being documented as concordant in numerous quotations from the Qur'an and the Bible. It is fair to remark that Islamic moralists had so far preferred to preach strict obedience to Allah and shari'a commands, an

¹⁸ King Abdallah, quoted in the *Jerusalem Post*, retrieved 15 August 2007.

appeal to love being more or less tolerated only in Sufism and its poetic expressions. The third part of this historic document invites Christians again to a Common Word, this time recalling the Gospel of Mark on Jesus defining the first of all commandments (12:29–31). In conclusion, the document points to the importance of its appeal: Christians and Muslims together make up more than 55% of the world's population. Therefore, 'let us respect each other, be fair, just and kind to another and live in sincere peace, harmony and mutual goodwill. Wal-Salaamu Alaykum. Pax Vobiscum.'

The document, unprecedented in its tenor in the history of Islam, originated as a response to Pope Benedict's regrets sent to Muslim leaders to explain the misunderstanding that had provoked so much bitterness following his lecture in Regensburg in September / Ramadan of the previous year. After a primary exchange of letters, the contact opened a way for the unique initiative of Muslim dignitaries to address the Pope, the Patriarchs of the Orthodox Churches and leaders of larger Christian denominations. The number of Muslim signatories rose from the original 138 to more than 300 finally. The response from the Christian side was mostly positive, sometimes marked with a varied degree of caution.¹⁹ About the time of the public appearance of the Common Word, the trend towards strengthening the interfaith dialogue with the Christians found a highly important Muslim representative in the person of the King of Saudi Arabia Abdallah b. Abdal'aziz. Shortly after his ascension of the throne and of the related office of Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques (which he held 2005–2015), he visited Pope Benedict, in November 2007 – the first Saudi monarch to do so. His enthusiasm for the interfaith dialogue found expression in conferences he held or sponsored in Mecca and in Spain, as well as in the United Nations, where he intervened to promote dialogue among civilisations. His name appeared in a similar connection also in Vienna with the official opening of the King Abdallah bin Abdal'aziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in November 2012. In his last year, he felt the necessity to raise his voice in warning against the 'Islamic State': 'From the cradle of revelation and the birthplace of the Prophet Muhammad I call on leaders and scholars of the Islamic nation

¹⁹ For details see *A Common Word* on Wikipedia. The version provided from Amman presents a slightly abridged full text. Other versions provide information on the purport, addresses, and aftermath of the document along with quotations of its important statements.

to carry out their duty towards God Almighty, and to stand in the face of those trying to hijack Islam and to present it to the world as a religion of extremism, hatred and terrorism... History will be witness against those who have been the tool exploited by the enemies to disperse and tear the nation and tarnish the pure image of Islam.²⁰ On the margin of Muslim discussions: is it appropriate to call 'Islamists' those who have gone astray?

The shameful image of Islam spreading in the world due to the atrocities of the Islamic State perpetrated now and then by Islamists anywhere induced responsible Muslim leaders to react. A brief mention should be made of at least two initiatives taken in Morocco and in Saudi Arabia by Muslim religious leaders and scholars anxious to promote the dignified face of Islam by concerted efforts involving all parts of the Umma. The Marrakesh Declaration, adopted in January 2016, defended the rights of religious minorities in predominantly Muslim countries. The Mecca Charter, endorsed in May 2019, specified pan-Islamic principles supporting anti-extremism, religious, and cultural diversity and building relations with other faiths.

In the modern West, the perspectives of the dialogue have become an important part of the Theology of Religions. In contrast to the general media, the authors of this type of research and expert literature try to avoid prejudices and cheap generalisations. Our brief introduction will point only to a handful of Muslim writers and ideas, which have been presented and studied in this type of the Christian (or Orientalist) literature. A convenient tool to start with is Hugh Goddard: *Muslim Perceptions of Christianity*.²¹ The author spent more or less his whole life studying Islam in Oxford and in Muslim countries and, afterwards, working for Christian-Muslim understanding at Universities in Nottingham and Edinburgh. His influential *Perceptions* opened the series called Studies on Islam and Christianity issued by the Centre specialising in this field of research in Selly Oak, Birmingham.²² In his detailed inspection of modern, predominantly Egyptian literature,

²⁰ Mathew Sammir, 'King Abdallah of Saudi Arabia and Christian Secret Wife,' on Facebook 26 August 2015, reproduced in Wikipedia.

²¹ Hugh Goddard, *Muslim Perceptions of Christianity* (London: Grey Seal, 1996); followed esp. by *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Edinburgh: University Press, 2000).

²² Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations (CSIC), established in 1976, has been made a part of the University of Birmingham. It has always had outstanding Islamologists on its staff (Jorgen Nielsen, David Thomas) as well as Muslim

he distinguishes three types of Muslim views of Christianity: polemical, eirenical, and intermediate. The first part offers three lines of polemics. In their forefront stands the famous *Lectures on Christianity* (Muhādarāt fī l-Nasrāniya, 1942, and numerous re-editions) of Muhammad Abu Zahra, with its detailed explication of how the pure, monotheist teaching of the prophet ‘Īsā (Jesus) was corrupted by converts from paganism.²⁵ Another substantial anti-Christian polemical study is due to al-Azhar’s Scheikh Ahmad Higazi al-Saqqa, the author of Muhammad’s prophethood in the Bible (*Nubūwat Muhammad fī l-kitāb al-muqaddas*, Cairo, 1978). In his opinion, the true Gospel revealed to Jesus was misrepresented by his followers, a great part of the distortions being ascribable to (Saint) Paul. Misrepresentations of a fatal type, according to the imagination of Saqqa and other Muslim authors, made the early Christians, then facing hard times persecutions, to perceive biblical predictions of Muhammad as referring to Jesus or the Holy Spirit.²⁴ The third line of polemics is directed against Christian Churches and their missionary activities. A wide range of Muslim authors blame them for enmity and intrigues against Islam, sometimes ‘in the service of Western imperialism’. This type of polemical, or rather critical zeal, has survived great transformations in the world with the end of the cold war and still goes on, with just occasional changes of foci of interest and vocabulary employed.

Certain views, discussed in the polemical style, seem to transcend generations with a great vitality. Such is the case of Paraclete, whom most Muslims are still ready to take for Jesus’ prediction of the coming of Ahmad / Muhammad. Another case is the apocryphal ‘Gospel of Barnabas’, which in some Muslim social circles has been enjoying more notoriety and credibility than the four canonical Gospels. Being probably a fake produced to serve the Ottoman propaganda against the Christian adversaries on the threshold of the modern times, it narrates Jesus’ predictions of Muhammad and, finally, his assumption to Heaven, while another man (Judas?) was crucified instead of him, in

post-graduate students and researchers among the authors of its valuable production of monographs on Christian-Muslim relations.

²⁵ Sheikh M. Abu Zahra (d. 1974) represented the conservative current of interpretation of the shari’a Law at al-Azhar as well as in the Maglis al-sha’b (Parliament) in Egypt of Nasser’s era. For Goddard’s discussion of his views see *Muslim Perceptions of Christianity*, 59–67.

²⁴ Most often, the Muslims point to Jesus’s promise to the apostles to send them ‘paraklétos’.

a way fully corresponding to the Qur'an.²⁵ In contrast to these widely spread critical lashes on the very sources of Christianity, some modern Muslim scholars try to reach a deeper understanding of the rival faith. In this respect, Goddard's intermediate category includes the Egyptian philosopher Hasan Hanafi (b. 1935), whom the present-day Wikipedia introduces as 'a leading authority on modern Islam'. In addition to his native Cairo, during his academic life, Hanafi held lectures as visiting professor in a number of Western countries (including Prague) and has won great international respect for his opinions about Islam, recognised mostly by liberals and condemned by fundamentalists. However, he shares the traditional Muslim opinion asserting the superiority of Islam to Christianity. He compares the relation between them 'as a relation of certainty to conjecture, of apodicticity to hypothecity, of evidence to paradox, or even of rationality to irrationality'.²⁶ Proud of his faith, he was one of the original signatories of the Common Word. Like him, some of his disciples combined being sincere Muslims with a modern professional approach to the study of religion learnt from their Western colleagues, which brought them difficulties and compelled them to emigrate. Such was the lot of a highly erudite scholar Nasr Abu Zayd (1943–2010), who had to leave Egypt and proceed with his project of a humanistic Quranic hermeneutics in Leiden and elsewhere in the West. His liberal theology of Islam may seem to us paradoxical: he studied the Qur'an as a cultural product of the 7th century Arabs, yet without denying its divine origin. Modern upsurge of the Islamic theological thought may still take us by surprise in more than one respect. As regards sincere efforts from the Islamic side to develop Muslim Christology and to contribute to a fruitful Muslim–Christian understanding in the theological field, let us mention at least two outstanding scholars: Mahmoud Ayoub (b. 1935) from Lebanon, active in the American academic life, and Adnane Mokrani (b. 1966 in Tunis), professor at PISAI and Gregoriana. We will meet him again in our last chapter.

The limited scope of our paper does not allow us to pay attention to modern ideas that have appeared in the philosophical and religious

²⁵ A classical account was given in Lonsdale and Laura Ragg, *The Gospel of Barnabas* (Oxford, 1907). For a modern, more analytical account see Christiane Schirmacher, 'Das "Evangelium des Barnabas." Hintergründe einer Polemik,' *Religionen unterwegs* 6, no. 2 (2000): 10–16.

²⁶ Hasan Hanafi, *Religious Dialogue and Revolution: Essays on Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (Cairo: Anglo-Egyptian Bookshoo, 1977), 56.

thought in the Maghreb, Pakistan, Turkey, Indonesia and, with a large – even Western – response, among Shi’a thinkers of Iran. Our topic being Christian-Muslim endeavours to improve their reciprocal understanding, it is fair to record the memory of Maurice Borrmans (1925–2017) and to highly appreciate his work as a professor at the Pontifical Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies (PISAI) in Rome and as the editor-in-chief of the journal *Islamochristiana*, which he founded in 1975 and directed almost until 2004. Borrmans carefully researched texts about Jesus (‘Īsā) in the textbooks and manuals used in Arab schools, as well as in important modern exegeses of the Qur’an (tafsīr), in theological treatises and in fiction.²⁷ The choice coincides with what Goddard has called eirenical. A large part of the examined texts in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, and other languages of the Muslim world has been found to contain respectful remarks of Jesus/‘Īsā. The highest level of understanding and ethical appreciation has been probably reached by the above mentioned Muhammad Kamil Husain’s *Qarya Zālīma*.²⁸

In the ever closer interrelations within our global world, it is not surprising to see the Muslim discussions on their attitudes towards other religions, in particular Christianity, to show a rising trend. They are carefully watched and kept under review by general Western media and politicians, as well as Christian intellectuals. Current views of the Muslim theologians of religions are, as a rule, followed with great interest by all of them. The collected volume published in Zurich²⁹ presents a selection of opinions voiced by prominent Muslim scholars from various countries and of various, though in general moderate, trends. There is a general agreement on God’s acceptance of the plurality of religions, as shown in several āyāt of the Qur’an, the stress being laid on 2:62, 5:69 (concerning ‘the people of the Book’) as well as on more general 5:48 (‘...so compete in good deeds’), sometimes as well on the primaevael pact with the Children of Adam (7:172). The authors introduced in the volume include several Islamic scholars of Asian origin whose liberal

²⁷ Maurice Borrmans, *Jésus et les musulmans d’aujourd’hui* (Paris: Desclée, 1996).

²⁸ The unique work translated into English by Cragg and widely discussed in Goddard’s *Perceptions* (esp. p. 96–118) is mentioned here in our first chapter, see footnote 15. The present text draws in part on our monograph in Czech Luboš Kropáček, *Islám a Západ* (Praha: Vyšehrad, 2002), 154–162.

²⁹ Ernst Fülīnger, Senad Kusur (Hg.), *Islam und religiöser Pluralismus. Grundlagen einer dialogischen muslimischen Religionstheologie / Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Religionen*, Band 17. (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 2019). Reviewed by Karl Prenner in *Religionen unterwegs*, Wien, no. 4 (2020): 33–35.

views found a large audience due to their final abode in USA: Fazlur Rahman (d. 1985) from Pakistan, Abdulaziz Sachedina (expert in both Shi'a and Sunni issues of India's cultural orbit) and Asma Afsaruddin (from Bangladesh). Nurcholish Madjid (Indonesian, 1939–2005) tried in a similar vein to modernise Islam and extend its pluralistic tolerance even to Hindus, Buddhists, and perhaps also the Chinese. The Turkish openness to dialogue is represented by Prof. Mahmut Aydin, who made his doctoral studies partly at the Gregorian University and the Papal Oriental Institute and partly in Birmingham. His PhD thesis bears the title *Modern Western Christian Theological Understandings of Muslims since the Second Vatican Council*. As to thought in modern Shi'a Islam, the volume presents Abdulkarim Soroush, at the time being probably the most respected Iranian philosopher. His contribution explains the plurality of religions as well as of our interpretations of religious texts and experiences. A specific case of European Islam is dealt with in the contribution of a Bosnian Nedžad Grabus, since 2006 Mufti of Ljubljana in Slovenia. In reference to the Quranic 13:11 ('Allah will not change the condition of a people as long as they do not change their state themselves'), as well as on the basis of the painful experience of Bosnia, Grabus pleads for a clear division between State and Religion in Islamic thought.

The rising interest in wider modern and contemporary Islamic thought is an obvious fact, easy to explain. Nevertheless, the abundant Western literature on the subject remains partly unsteady and even discordant in its assessment and the terminology it uses. The most current general labels used in categorising continue to be traditionalism, modernism, secularism, and liberalism. More recent additions include the Islamic feminism and various types of radical positions. All these terms appear in the most recent Islamic Reader published by a group of Czech Orientalists in Prague.⁵⁰ The editors have added some less usual general topics, such as environmentalism or Islam on the Internet. In general, the voluminous anthology offers a selection of Arab authors (texts in original and in the Czech translation), Islamic/Islamist writings in other languages have not been taken into consideration. And a real hindrance is an entire omission of the relationship to Christianity and concerns of the interreligious dialogue.

⁵⁰ Ondřej Beránek, Bronislav Ostránský, Pavel Ťupek (eds.), *Islámská čítanka* (Filozofická fakulta UK, 2020).

3. *Misericordiae Vultus*

By electing Jorge Mario Bergoglio to ascend the Holy See (Mar. 13 2013), the papal conclave handed the Church's supreme office to a man of unusual background. As a son of an Italian family settled in Argentina, he embodies both the traditional and the new horizons of Catholic Christianity. In Latin America, the Church cannot ignore problems of social inequality and oppression. It has to know how to speak meaningful and healing words on social issues and how to give the needy a helping hand. As an expression of his genuine Christian approach, Bergoglio chose his papal name in honour of Saint Francis of Assisi and adapted his lifestyle to devoted service to common people, including great care of the poor. The same patron's name and model have been as well for years manifesting his commitment to work for good relations with believers of other faiths. The current situation in the world reminds us often of the times of the Crusades, when St. Francis bravely talked with the Egyptian Sultan about a closer religious understanding and peace.⁵¹ This event has become a historic mile-stone, newly discussed and recalled as a welcome spark for the present-day endeavours to re-animate the Christian-Muslim interreligious dialogue.

In this respect, Pope Francis has had to face severe challenges from radical Islamist movements. The most brutal among them, such as ISIS, al-Qaida and their offsprings, enjoyed their heydays during the early years of his pontificate. Yet, he has always known how to differentiate among those who claim to profess Islam. His peace-seeking calls resound twice a year, in his *Urbi* and *Orbi* surveys, including Muslim majority countries and warnings against the spread of Islamist terror in Europe. His voice was heard and commented upon, sometimes, from the side of Islamophobic radicals, with toxic accents. Francis's commitment to work for better understanding and relations with Muslims were reflected in a number of his official as well as missionary and pastoral visits to their countries. Within the rich programme

⁵¹ St. Francis held talks with the Sultan al-Malik al-Kamil in Egyptian Damietta besieged by crusaders in 1219. Attempts to elucidate their contents and their obvious religious importance may be found in a number of modern historical and/or theologising works, esp. of Julien Green or of the Canadian Franciscan Giulio Basetti-Sani, OFM, *Mohammed et St. François* (Ottawa: Commissariat De Terre-Sainte, 1959); or, more recently, Gwenolé Jussset, OFM, *Rencontre sur l'autre rive* (Paris: Editions Franciscaines, 1996).

of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in May 2014, he met with political and religious leaders in Jordan, Palestine, and Israel, as well as with refugees and common people of all Abrahamic religions, expecting the benediction and perhaps assistance from the Catholic Church in their, sometimes, difficult situation. For his visit to the Holy Land, he invited two distinguished personal friends from Buenos Aires to accompany him: Rabbi Abraham Skorka and the Imam of the Argentinian Islamic community Omar Abboud. He embraced both in front of Jerusalem's Wailing Wall. In Turkey, he visited the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, said prayers with key Muslims as well as, in an ecumenical spirit, with leaders of the Orthodox Church (November 2014). His visit to the Central African Republic in November 2015 had specific risks and importance to bring reconciliation and as much peace as possible to a country torn apart by groups calling themselves Christians or Muslims without properly understanding the purport of these labels. His visit to Myanmar (Burma) in November 2017 faced hardly imaginable difficulties when the pontiff tried to help the powerless Muslim Rohingya exposed to persecution and expulsion. Following the advice of specialists, he knew he should not mention them by name; accordingly, he referred to them only in general within ethical commandments. As a rule, journalists got a chance to ask questions on board his plane.

Pope Francis engaged in a great number of activities, which set us an example for our own, however imperfect, efforts. After the wave of anger raised by the terrorist events of 9/11 had somewhat calmed down, a new wave appeared with the aftermath of the rather unsuccessful 'Arab spring' and the rise of crowds of Asian and African migrants pressing their way into Europe. The onrush reached a critical maximum in 2015. At that time, Pope Francis decided to declare an Extraordinary Jubilee of Year of Mercy to be held from Dec. 8 2015 to Nov. 20 2016. A detailed explanation of the targets of the Holy Year was given in the papal bull *Misericordiae Vultus* issued in April 2015.³² It starts by comparing mercy to 'the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness'. After a long account of the mercy in the Biblical and the Church's

³² For the full text in English see: Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*, accessed 9 July 2021, https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/bulls/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.pdf. The quotations are taken from the points 11 (John Paul II) and 23.

thought and history, the bull comes to discuss the modern era. John Paul II ‘highlighted the fact that we had forgotten the theme of mercy in today’s cultural milieu’. And, nowadays, ‘there is an aspect of mercy that goes beyond the confines of the Church. It relates to Judaism and Islam, both of which consider mercy to be one of God’s most important attributes... Among the privileged names that Islam attributes to the Creator are Merciful and Kind. This invocation is often on the lips of faithful Muslims who feel themselves accompanied and sustained by mercy in their daily weakness. They too believe that no one can place a limit on divine mercy because its doors are always open.’ The last symbolic image quoted from the bull reminds us of Vatican’s Holy Door open for the Jubilee Year.

The fitting concept of mercy has quite rightly been chosen for a friendly dialogue with Muslims. Motives and incentives for sympathy or compassion are expressed in both Testaments of the Bible in various terms (several in Hebrew, six in Greek), and the importance of this feeling or impulse in the Qur’an – proper to God and inspiring to mankind – is beyond any doubt.⁵³ The adjectives *Rahmān* and *Rahīm* stand at the head of 99 ‘(Allāh’s) most beautiful names’ (*al-asmā’ al-husnā*), each one belonging to Him as His epitheton constans. To start any important utterance, whether in spoken or written form, with the *basmala* (formula *bismi llāhi r-Rahmāni r-Rahīm*) is a matter-of-course part of the Muslim culture. Unfortunately, translations into European languages have not been standardised. In Latin texts of the early modern age, we could read ‘In nomine Domini Misericordis Misericordis’. In English, we find often expressions ‘Merciful and Compassionate’, but the Wikipedia offers alternative ‘God the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful’. Anyway, Christians and Muslims do certainly agree in the emphasis they both lay on mercy / *rahma* in their religious discourse. We could and still can hear it in the comments of Pope Francis when he speaks about concrete instances of misery, conflicts, and the unsettled problems of the migration crisis, warning against the prevailing indifference.⁵⁴ Besides mercy, the situation, however, calls for discussions

⁵³ See my introductory essay ‘O milosrdenství’ (About the mercy) in Zdeněk Vojtíšek (ed.), *Islám a křesťanství: Sborník k počtě Luboše Kropáčka* (Praha: HTE, 2019), 13–19. The collected volume was published to commemorate my 80th anniversary.

⁵⁴ The current covid pandemic induced the pontiff to a homily on Divine Mercy and prayers for a recovery. Several instances have been recorded on the Internet on 19 April 2020, see <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/>.

also on ethical and social concepts appearing closer to the modern secular way of life. Such is traditionally the tolerance for the Muslims. And such are human rights for the modern West. In a way, both settings of these social values have come to the fore as extensions of the *caritas* / *rahma* in the modern everyday life with its predominantly worldly concerns.

Many Muslim historians and social scientists are accustomed to extolling the toleration shown in the history of their societies, in particular in medieval Andalus, to religious minorities of ‘people of the Book’ (*ahl al-Kitāb*), i.e. Christians and Jews. It is in no way difficult to point to the inaccuracy of this flattering image in regard to most political formations and epochs constituting Islamic history. Our modern understanding of religious freedom and tolerance goes far beyond their limited scope, which used to be a daily bread in the past of both the Christian and the Muslim world. Recently, a strong initiative for a peaceful dialogue has come from the United Arab Emirates. Having set up The International Institute for Tolerance, the UAE held a large international conference to discuss tolerant Islam in November 2018, established a Ministry of Tolerance, the first of this kind in the Arab world, and proclaimed the following year the ‘Year of Tolerance’. The Emirates’ leaders take pride in their country’s economic policy, which includes employing more than a million Christian workers recruited from the Philippines or India. In contrast to their more powerful and less tolerant Saudi neighbour, the UAE allows their Christian migrant workers to practise their own religion. But at the same time, the Emirates have joined the anti-Shi’a military campaign in Yemen, which Francis did not hesitate to rebuke.

Pope Francis accepted an invitation to take part in the international conference held in Abu Dhabi on 3–5 February 2019, becoming thus the first pontiff in history to enter the Arabian peninsula – the ‘cradle of Islam’ in journalistic parlance. He met there with the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad al-Tayyib, with whom he had earlier opportunities to speak and to become friends on the occasions of the Sheikh’s visits to Vatican and his own to Cairo. This time, the Emirati post office had the chance to issue stamps with portraits of both religious leaders and inscriptions ‘Encounter of the human brotherhood’ in Arabic and English. The most important outcome of the journey and the meetings was the signing by both leaders of the ‘Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’, dated Feb. 4 2019. The key

concept of fraternity opens the long document by explaining its religious importance: Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved.

The general notion of brotherhood or fraternity is not, however, quite free of possible misunderstandings. They can be based on historical experience, as well as on a part of the shared traditions of both Christians and Muslims. They include the story of the first fratricide committed by Adam's son Cain (in Arabic *Qābīl*), killer of his brother Abel (*Hābīl*). In the Arab Near East, both brothers' memory is recalled in popular beliefs related to certain places, such as Abel's presumed tomb just above the main highway between Damascus and Beirut, or Cain's place of exile shown among inhospitable rocks in Aden. Stories of fratricide occur in narratives of European as well as of Eastern history from antiquity down to modern times. Nevertheless, on façades of *hôtels de ville* in French cities, it has become customary to place the famous slogan of the Revolution: *Liberté Egalité Fraternité*, although the Jacobins' policy was not very fraternal. In Arab societies, the concept of fraternity (*ukhūwa*) was mostly understood as applicable only to Muslims. Organisations called brethren/brotherhoods (*ikhwān*) were formed by Sufis, in modern times also by various socio-political associations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood (*Jam' iyyat al-Ikhwān al-Muslimīn*). To extend the notion of *ukhūwa*, in the universal meaning, to Christianity bears still a tinge of novelty in general Muslim thought. We have been all created by the One God, but the Muslims do not dare to call Him 'our Father'. In their general opinion, He is Lord (*Rabb*), to whom we owe obedience. Only the Sufis tried to speak of Love; signs of affectionate devotion, however, seem to emerge in some currents of modern spirituality. In like manner, the concept of human fraternity has found a passable way into Islamic thought in its outreach towards Christianity.³⁵

4. *Fratelli tutti*

There is no vestige of any ambiguity in Pope Francis' understanding of fraternity. To make it clear, he built on this notion a substantial

³⁵ Cf. Adnan Mokrani, *Wathīqat al-ukhūwa al-insāniya, qiyam mushtaraka wa risāla jāmi'a* (A Document on Human Fraternity, Shared Values and Common Mission), *Islamochristiana* 45 (2019): 1–22.

encyclical letter, whose mission was underlined by the date chosen for its release: the Pope signed it in Assisi on Oct. 3 2020, and on the following day, Sunday (Oct. 4), on the Feast of Saint Francis, he mentioned it before his Angelus Prayer in Rome. On the same day, distinguished personalities from different cultural backgrounds took part in its public presentation in the Vatican's new Synod Hall. Indeed, it was Saint Francis of Assisi, whom Pope Bergoglio has chosen as patron of his papacy and whose kindness to all shapes of creation gives a strong impetus to the present-day encyclical letter on 'Fraternity and Social Friendship'.⁵⁶ Even the opening words *Fratelli tutti* are the quotation from Saint Francis' love of all living creatures in the world. No doubt, the Pope's endeavours to reach peace and better understanding with Muslims have given the Saint from Assisi the privilege of receiving a prominent mention in the Pope's encyclicals: the previous one dealing with ecological problems *Laudato Si'* (2015), as well as the present one devoted to the pains of our present-day tottering humanity.

The reference to the Saint of Assisi pervades the opening part of the letter, conveying its general message:⁵⁷ '...the call for love that transcends the barriers of geography and distance, and declares blessed all those who love their brother as much when he is far away as when he is with him'. Next to Saint Francis, the Pope mentions as the source of inspiration his meetings with the Grand Imam in Abu Dhabi, where both religious leaders agreed on declaring that God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties, and dignity, and has called on them to live together as brothers and sisters (FT 5). The ensuing Letter consists of 287 paragraphs of varied length, exposing the Pope's sorrows caused by the current moral situation of humanity as well as hopes based on the Christian faith and the trust in human moral advance.

The gloomy nature of Chapter One resounds in its title 'Dark Clouds over a Closed World' (FT 8–55). The general regret reads, 'as society becomes more globalised, it makes us neighbours, but does not make us brothers' (FT 12). There appear new forms of cultural colonisation, as well as of gaining control over peoples by spreading despair and discouragement (FT 14–15). Wealth has increased but, together

⁵⁶ Cf. Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, accessed 9 July 2021, <https://bit.ly/2VoK0hw>.

⁵⁷ In referring to St. Francis of Assisi, the Pope uses quotations from modern Franciscan literature, such as Eloi Leclerc OFM, *Exil et tendresse* (Paris: Éd. Franciscaines, 1962).

with inequality, new forms of poverty are emerging. In practice, human rights are not equal for all (FT 21–23). In the world of conflicts and fears, the temptation grows to build a culture of walls, to raise walls in the heart, on the land (FT 27). Globalisation and progress go ahead without a shared roadmap; there exists a moral deterioration. We forget the lessons of history. Recently, the sense that we are a global community has been revived by the Covid-19 pandemic, but still, in the economy, we behave as having lost the taste of fraternity (FT 32–36). The policy towards migrants has revealed an absence of respect for human dignity in the conduct of certain populist political regimes. The problems of migration are discussed at greater length; in the Pope's opinion, they will play a pivotal role in the future of our world (FT 37–41). Real dangers appear in digital campaigns of hatred and destruction. Social aggression has found unparalleled room for expansion through computers and mobile devices; the destructive forms of fanaticism appear even among religious believers, including Christians (FT 42–46). What we need is to seek the truth in dialogue. Despite these dark clouds, which may not be ignored, Pope Francis proceeds in the following chapters to take up and discuss new paths of hope.

Chapter Two opens the way to renewed hope with New Testament's parables, starting with the Good Samaritan as a model for neighbourhood. Strengthened by the Biblical lessons, we are invited to seek our proper way in the modern world. We should not expect everything from those who govern (FT 77–78). The question 'who is my neighbour?' has been perfectly answered in the New Testament (Lk 10:37; Mt 25:35). The words of Jesus compel us to recognise Christ in each of our abandoned and excluded brothers and sisters (Mt 25:40–45; FT 80–86). The following chapter, having discussed the concepts of the open world and of love, pleads for a love ever more open. Open societies integrate everyone. At this point, the stress in the discussion is laid on fraternity; radical individualism is a virus (FT 105). The ongoing discussion then deals with social friendship, moral good and solidarity. An important point for our modern societies is, of course, the social role of property. The Pope advocates the rights of the poor. He quotes Saint John Chrysostom as a voice of early Christianity preaching to share wealth with the poor (FT 119). In his own opinion, the right to private property can only be considered a secondary natural right, derived from the principle of the universal destination of created goods. If we make something our own, it is only to administer

it for the good of all (FT 122). The chapter concludes with a stress on a global ethic of solidarity and shared responsibility in the whole human family.

In Chapter 4, the discussion bears on what follows from the universal fraternity. It concerns problems of migration as well as encounters between cultures. In this context, the Pope sums up his reflections with the Imam al-Tayyib on the positive impacts of relations between East and West. ‘The West can discover in the East remedies for those spiritual and religious maladies that are caused by a prevailing materialism. And the East can find in the West many elements that can help free it from weakness, division, conflict and scientific, technical and cultural decline...’ (FT 136). The universal horizon of our life should not be forgotten. We can work on a small scale, in our own neighbourhood, but with a larger perspective (FT 142–145). A critical note appears in a remark concerning local ‘narcissism’, unrelated to a healthy love of one’s own people and culture but prone to building walls (FT 146). Chapter 5 seeks a better kind of politics achievable in a global community of fraternity and a new economy, more attentive to ethical principles (FT 170–173). The reflections proceed towards specifying the concept of ‘political love’, which was discussed also with the Grand Imam. The two religious leaders ‘called upon the architects of international policy and world economy to work strenuously to spread the culture of tolerance and of living together in peace; to intervene at the earliest opportunity to stop the shedding of innocent blood’ (FT 189).

Chapter 6 praises a social dialogue as an always possible option between selfish indifference and violent protest (FT 198–202). The needed new culture and peace include recovering kindness, which facilitates a quest for consensus. Saint Paul mentioned the kindness among the fruits of Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22; FT 223–224). Chapter 7 draws the lines for paths of renewed encounters. They include the art and architecture of peace. Speaking about reconciliation, the Pope mentions the South African Bishop Tutu’s handling of the guilt of those responsible for the policy of apartheid. Sure, forgiving is not forgetting; the Shoah must not be forgotten, nor must we forget the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki (FT 246–249). To conclude, Pope Francis, in the footsteps of John Paul II, calls for the worldwide abolition of the death penalty. In Chapter 8, the Pope, referring to *Nostra Aetate*, pleads for peace between religions. He gladly recalls his fraternal meeting with the Great Imam: ‘...we resolutely declared that

religions must never incite war.’³⁸ (FT 285–286). In the last paragraph, he concludes the reflection on universal fraternity by mentioning the thinkers of various religious backgrounds who have inspired him.

Our concern in this study has been to find out how the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* was received among Muslim religious and intellectual leaders. The Grand Imam Ahmad al-Tayyib welcomed it through his Twitter account on the very first day as a good extension of the previous document signed in Abu Dhabi. Also Adnan Mokrani and other Muslim intellectuals, cooperating with Christian institutions in Europe, expressed positive comments. Arab media mostly brought into focus the emphasis laid on all of us being brothers and sisters, which was not a value judgment generally shared by Muslims in the past. A positive account of the document appears in the Saudi-based English daily Arab News, easily found on the Internet. The documents of the Holy See, come out in several languages, including Arabic, but not in Russian. This time, the translation of *Fratelli tutti* into Russian was provided by Muslim scholars living in the post-Soviet republics. It certainly manifests a sincere interest from the Muslim side in this kind of approach. Let us hope that the way forward shown in this style of active religious policy-making will help all of us to overcome surviving hostile instincts, both inborn and inherited from the past. ‘The effort to seek God with a sincere heart, provided it is never sullied by ideological or self-serving aims, helps us recognise one another as travelling companions, truly brothers and sisters’ (FT 274).

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³⁸ Pope Francis, ‘Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,’ *The Holy See*, last modified 4 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/Olzn6aZ>. For Czech readers, this document has been recently introduced in a detailed study by Lukáš Nosek in *Theologická revue* (Prague) 2021/2 and 3.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE AND THE PLURALITY OF RELIGIONS

VOJTĚCH NOVOTNÝ

ABSTRACT

The 'Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together', co-signed on 4 February 2019 by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayeb, states: 'The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings.' The article presents the starting points of correct hermeneutics of this statement. It points out that it is a positive reformulation of the anti-discrimination human rights declarations, which list the criteria according to which people cannot be discriminated. It shows the compatibility of the statement with the Quran, which presupposes a plurality of successive and graded revelations of God and religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It then represents the reactions with which Catholic theologians responded to the statement: the accusation of the Pope of heresy; the claim that while God's creative will has instilled a natural religion in human beings, it does not positively seek a plurality of religions; the claim that non-Christian religions are an evil by which God allows to achieve greater good; the claim that all religions are wanted by God's Providence in what is true, good, and beautiful in them as the preparation for the salvation of man in the encounter with Christ. In the end, it discusses the idea of St. John Paul II, who, for several years before the creation of the Abu Dhabi declaration, combined this last idea with the work of the Holy Spirit.

Keywords:

Document on Human Fraternity; Hermeneutics; Islam; Christianity

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The 'Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together', co-signed on 4 February 2019 by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al Azhar, Ahmad Al-Tayeb, is on a closer look very

complex with its genesis, content, goals and interpretive contexts.¹ As a theme of my paper, I have chosen one, but a very important passage, which reads as follows:

Freedom is a right of every person: each individual enjoys the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. The pluralism and the diversity of religions, colour, sex, race and language are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives. Therefore, the fact that people are forced to adhere to a certain religion or culture must be rejected, as too the imposition of a cultural way of life that others do not accept.²

I would like to approach this statement by reflecting on some of the hermeneutical starting points for working with the ‘Document on Human Fraternity’; then, I will focus on the literary sources of the above-mentioned statement and try to clarify in what sense it is in line with Islam. After that, I will deal with the question of its conformity with Christianity by, firstly, pointing out the negative reactions among Catholics and, secondly, presenting an acceptable Catholic theological interpretation.

¹ Srov. *Fratellanza* (Roma: La Civiltà Cattolica, 2020); Domenico Marafioti, ‘Documento sulla Fratellanza umana: una lettura ragionata,’ *Rassegna di Teologia* 60, no. 2 (2019): 235–268; Giacomo Costa, ‘Le religioni e il coraggio dell’alterità: la Dichiarazione congiunta di Abu Dhabi,’ *Aggiornamenti Sociali* 70, no. 3 (2019): 181–188.

² Pope Francis, ‘Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together,’ *The Holy See*, last modified 4 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/Olzn6aZ>. According to ‘Bolletino Sala stampa della Santa Sede’ it is necessary to consider the Italian and the Arabic version as the original text. They are also the source of this article. As concerns Arabic, I am grateful for the help of Mgr. Mlada Mikulicová, Ph.D.

‘La libertà è un diritto di ogni persona: ciascuno gode della libertà di credo, di pensiero, di espressione e di azione. Il pluralismo e le diversità di religione, di colore, di sesso, di razza e di lingua sono una sapiente volontà divina, con la quale Dio ha creato gli esseri umani. Questa Sapienza divina è l’origine da cui deriva il diritto alla libertà di credo e alla libertà di essere diversi. Per questo si condanna il fatto di costringere la gente ad aderire a una certa religione o a una certa cultura, come pure di imporre uno stile di civiltà che gli altri non accettano.’

نُؤَلِّلُ اَوْنِيْدِلَا يِفْ فَصَالْتِخَالِ اَوْ فَيْدَعْدُعْتَلَانِ اَوْ هَسْرَامُهْ اَزِيْبَعْتُو اَرْكُفُو اَدَاقْتِعَا: نِاسِنِ اِلْكَلِّ قَوْحْ فَيَرْحَلَانَا
عُرْفَتَتْ اَتَبَاثَ الصَّا اَطْلَعُو، اِهْيَلْعَ رَشْبَلَا لَهْلَا قَلْخَ دَقْ؛ هَيْهَلَا، هَيْشَمْلَ ةَفْطَحْ ةَخَلَّلَاوْ قُرْخَلَاوْ سِنِجَلَاوْ
وَأَفْدَحْمْ، فَمَاقَتْ وَأَفْنِيْعَبْ نِيْدِيْلَعَسْ اِنْلَا، دَارِكَا. مِيْرَجِيْتُو، فَمَاقَتْ خَالَا، فَيَرْحُو: دَاقْتِعَالَا، فَيَرْحُو قَوْوَجْ نَع
رَخَلَا مُلْتَبَقِي اَلْيَرَا ضَحْ بُولَسَا ضَرْفَ.

1. Hermeneutical Starting Points

The correct interpretation of the individual passages has to consider the authorship of the text, its literary type, intentions, and sources.

The 'Document on Human Fraternity' is a shared text⁵ by which the representatives of two world religions (if we may in this way refer to the Grand Imam of the University of Cairo alongside the Bishop of Rome) jointly address their fellow believers and the world in an effort to express such religious attitudes and social as well as cultural intentions which would be a manifestation of human fraternity and an instrument of joint efforts for world peace and peaceful coexistence. It is a manifestation of religious diplomacy as the document states that both parties 'declare the adoption of a culture of dialogue as the path; mutual cooperation as the code of conduct; reciprocal understanding as the method and standard'.

Such a text cannot be criticised for what it does not contain in terms of one religion or another because the common text of two religions does not include the details of only one party and consciously refrains from injuring the other and thus jeopardising the purpose of the document. On the contrary, the use of religious themes is placed at the service of common goals in such a way as to maximise interfaces by indicating identical or similar doctrinal contents and religious attitudes, i.e. those which can be described by the same terms even if each party attaches somewhat different meaning to them; these differences, however, are deliberately unpronounced.⁴

Therefore, it would be detrimental to this diplomatic document if we considered it to represent the magisterial teaching of the Pope or the Catholic *Glaubensmanifest*.⁵ It is not a manifestation of the extraordinary or ordinary magisterium of the Catholic Church, which the Catholics must accept as 'divine and Catholic truth' (*Lumen gentium* 25;

⁵ Giacomo Costa, 'Le religioni e il coraggio dell'alterità,' 183.

⁴ Vincenzo Pinto goes even further: Giovanni Marcotullio, 'Se Gesù è l'unico salvatore, come può Dio aver voluto le altre religioni?,' *Aleteia*, last modified 11 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/CIS1woV>: 'la Dichiarazione [...] non solo non potrà contenere esplicite confessioni di fede cristologica/trinitaria, ma dovrà essere giudicata anzitutto per cosa è riuscita a far firmare alla controparte. [...] È ovvio che un simile documento "d'unione" sia per sua natura un testo compromissorio, i cui effetti collaterali sono anzitutto il risultare compromettente per le due parti in causa.'

⁵ Cf. Gerhard Ludwig Müller, 'Glaubensmanifest Euer Herz lasse sich nicht verwirren,' accessed 29 February 2020, <http://document.kathtube.com/47411.pdf>.

Dei verbum 10). Nor is it a Christian theological treatise. Therefore, the document cannot be interpreted according to the demands of factual completeness and coherence of argument, which are necessary as concerns, for example, the declaration of the Second Vatican Council *Nostra aetate* on the Church's relationship to non-Christian religions or the declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith *Dominus Iesus* on the uniqueness and saving universality of Jesus Christ and the Church.

On the other hand, it is not even a document that expresses only the private opinion of the Pope, and that would not concern the believers entrusted to his pastoral care. Therefore, the document can be rightfully expected not to contain anything that would be in direct conflict with the Catholic faith. In addition, something similar has to be applied to the other party's faith. It is thus more of a kind of doctrinal minimum than a maximum. This minimum is to be interpreted by each party in the light of the whole of its faith, but with the preservation of the whole intention of the document. However, even in this regard, it is not entirely easy since what is contained in the text in the form of a declaration or proposition should be reflected by each addressee in a proper way, with some kind of self-questioning. In this sense, it can be a text of asymmetric practical consequences.⁶

2. Sources

Another necessary condition for the correct interpretation of the relevant passage is the attention to its sources. All the known interpretations of the Abu Dhabi document have overlooked an important fact – the fact that the statement under discussion is a paraphrase of anti-discrimination human rights declarations, whether those bound to

⁶ One of the commentators, for example, rightly remarked that if the 'Document on Human Fraternity' postulates 'freedom of religion, thought, expression, and action,' then it does not directly mention freedom to change religion and does not explicitly support the right of Muslims to convert to another religion, which Islamic law punishes with death. However, it can be read to support such a right. In this respect, the document sounds like an Islamic declaration *Nostra aetate* and the claim that God wants religious pluralism is a direct and provocative response to the conservative elements of Sunni Islam (such as Salafism), which are only interested in Islam's triumph over other religions in the form of proselytism or holy war. Gabriel Said Reynolds, 'After Abu Dhabi,' *Commonweal*, accessed 27 March 2019, <https://cutt.ly/JIS19Ks>.

the Euro-Atlantic area or those created in the Arab world.⁷ As evidence, we can use the following comparison:

<p>Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together (2019)</p>	<p>Freedom is a right of every person: each individual enjoys the freedom of belief, thought, expression and action. The pluralism and the diversity of <i>religions, colour, sex, race and language</i> are willed by God in His wisdom, through which He created human beings. This divine wisdom is the source from which the right to freedom of belief and the freedom to be different derives. Therefore, the fact that people are forced to adhere to a certain religion or culture must be rejected, as too the imposition of a cultural way of life that others do not accept.</p>
<p><i>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</i> (1948) art. 2, para. 1</p>	<p>Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as <i>race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status</i>.</p>
<p>art. 18</p>	<p>Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.</p>
<p><i>Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights</i> (1981) art. 3</p>	<p>All persons are equal before the Law and are entitled to equal opportunities and protection of the Law. All persons shall be entitled to equal wage for equal work. No person shall be denied the opportunity to work or be discriminated against in any manner or exposed to greater physical risk by reason of <i>religious belief, colour, race, origin, sex or language</i>.</p>

⁷ The documents are quoted according to the collection University of Minnesota: 'Human Right Library,' Human Rights Library, accessed 29 February 2020, <http://hrlibrary.umn.edu>. For basic introduction, see, for example, Attilio Pisanò, *I diritti umani come fenomeno cosmopolita: internazionalizzazione, regionalizzazione, specificazione* (Milano: Giuffrè Editore, 2011), 110–134.

arts. 10, 12, 13	The Qur'anic principle "There is no compulsion in religion" shall govern the religious rights of non-Muslim minorities. In a Muslim country religious minorities shall have the choice to be governed in respect of their civil and personal matters by Islamic Law, or by their own laws. (...) Every person has the right to express his thoughts and beliefs so long as he remains within the limits prescribed by the Law. (...) Every person has the right to freedom of conscience and worship in accordance with his religious beliefs.
Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990) art. 1	All human beings form one family whose members are united by submission to God and descent from Adam. All men are equal in terms of basic human dignity and basic obligations and responsibilities, without any discrimination on the grounds of <i>race, colour, language, sex, religious belief</i> , political affiliation, social status or other considerations. True faith is the guarantee for enhancing such dignity along the path to human perfection.
<i>Arab Charter on Human Rights</i> (1994) art. 2	Each State party to the present Charter undertakes to ensure that every individual located within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction, shall have the right to enjoy all the rights and freedoms recognised in this [Charter], without distinction on the basis of <i>race, colour, sex, language, religion</i> , political opinion, national or social origin, wealth, birth or other status, and without any discrimination between men and women.
<i>Arab Charter on Human Rights</i> (2004) art. 5, letter a)	Each State Party to the present Charter undertakes to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the right to enjoy all the rights and freedoms recognised herein, without any distinction on grounds of <i>race, color, sex, language, religion</i> , opinion, thought, national or social origin, property, birth or physical or mental disability.

<p><i>Declaratio de Ecclesiae habitudine ad religiones non-christianas Nostra aetate art. 5</i></p>	<p>The Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against men or harassment of them because of their <i>race, color, condition of life, or religion</i>.</p>
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Although there are different preconceptions behind the same or similar concepts, what has already been implied by the cited overview is that the chosen part of the ‘Document on Human Fraternity’ follows the diction of the anti-discrimination human rights declarations. It cites some categories that describe the differences between people without allowing these differences (religion, colour, gender, race, and language) to lead to inequality or discrimination against people as such.

However, the Abu Dhabi declaration changes the meaning of these statements. Where the Human Rights declarations negatively state that these differences are not a manifestation of inequality between people, and where the declaration of the Second Vatican Council *Nostra aetate* says that such discrimination is ‘foreign to the mind of Christ’ (art. 5), our document positively states that these differences are the expression of God’s will in his creative wisdom. It provides a religious explanation of the origin of these differences and thus a rationale for why they are not a manifestation of inequality between people.

The second shift of the document compared to human rights declarations is that the list of differences between people is directly linked to the principle of freedom of religion, thought, expression, and action. Moreover, these differences between people, including the difference between religions, are derived from God’s creative wisdom, which implies the freedom of religion as well as the condemnation of the imposition of religion and corresponding civilisation style.

It is to this affirmation of religious plurality and freedom of religion that the whole statement is directed. However, the question is whether positive religious reformulation of a negative human rights anti-discrimination norm is intellectually coherent and justified, in other words, whether the statement can be reconciled with Islam and Christianity and whether and how it will stand up to the question of truth.

3. Compliance with Islam?

So is the statement that the plurality of religions is the result of a wise decision of the divine will in accordance with Islam? Probably yes, if a high representative of this faith stood up for it. For Islam, the pluralistic concept of religions wanted by God is inherent, and perhaps because of the authorial contribution of the Islamic side, the negative human rights anti-discrimination norm in the Abu Dhabi document has been reformulated in religious terms.

For example, the above-cited *Arab Charter on Human Rights* (1994, 2004) states in the preamble that it is composed ‘pursuant to the eternal principles of brotherhood and equality among all human beings which were firmly established by the Islamic Shari’a and the other divinely-revealed religions’. As can be seen, human fraternity and equality are derived here from the plurality of religions revealed by God – as if the statement of the ‘Document on Human Fraternity’ we focus on was an echo of this passage.

However, on the part of Islam, the real root is, of course, the Quran. Not only does it explicitly state that the diversity of languages and colours is the work and sign of the Creator,⁸ but it also attributes to God the diversity of revelations and religions. It repeatedly declares the Jewish Torah and the Christian Jesus of the Gospels as God’s revelation, which is confirmed, corrected, and overcome by the final revelation given to the Prophet Muhammad.

For example, the third Surah states that God ‘has sent down to you the Book [the Quran] with the truth confirming what was [revealed] before it, and He had sent down the Torah and the Evangel before as guidance for mankind’. On the other hand, they claim that the only religion, according to God, is Islam (3: 3–4,19). The Quran is well aware that Jews and Christians alike struggle to claim the exclusive truth of their faith and thus adds that it, in fact, belongs to Islam as much as it is a summary and transcendence of what was right in these religions (2: 111–113,120,136–137).

Islam is thus entitled to make the final decision about the truthfulness and correctness of religions. This decision is full of tensions. In

⁸ ‘Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the difference of your languages and colours. There are indeed signs in that for those who know’ (30:22). Quoted according to the database: ‘The Quran: Online Translation and Commentary,’ accessed 29 February 2020, <http://al-quran.info>.

various parts of the Quran, the Jew and the Christian are called 'unbelievers' (*kāfir*), and this is also expressed in militant texts and their violent interpretations. Elsewhere, Christians are exalted compared to the Jews: 'They are among the righteous' (3: 113–115); yet, the basic dogmas of Christianity are explicitly denied.⁹ In addition, however, there are signs of a kind of pluralist tolerance in the claim that different religions coexist and that their multiplicity is caused both by the will of man and God. For God, although he could have formed a single community of Islamic nations (*ummah*), he has in fact admitted the multitude of religions until the day of the Last Judgment, in which he gathers all around him, clarifies everything, and concludes contradictions and disputes. After all, he is the only God of all – 'our God and your God is one [and the same]' (29:46). Therefore, nobody can be forced into one faith. Believers of various religions should compete in good deeds.¹⁰

⁹ These facts are repeatedly highlighted by Samir Khalil Samir, e.g. in ID, *Violence et Non-violence dans le Coran et l'Islam* (Beyrouth: CEDRAC, 2005); Samir Khalil Samir S.J., 'Giovanni Paolo II e i musulmani,' *Asia News*, last modified 30 April 2011, <https://cutt.ly/bIS3GaM>.; Samir Khalil Samir S.J., 'Giovanni Paolo II e i musulmani II,' *Asia News*, last modified 2 May 2011, <https://cutt.ly/4IS8OCl>.; Samir Khalil Samir S.J., 'Giovanni Paolo II e i musulmani III,' *Asia News*, last modified 5 May 2011, <https://cutt.ly/hIS3gtj>.; Samir Khalil Samir S.J., 'Benedetto XVI e l'Islam,' *Asia News*, last modified 26 April 2006, <https://cutt.ly/2IS4FZZ>.; Samir Khalil Samir S.J., 'Papa Francesco e l'invito al dialogo con l'Islam,' *Asia News*, last modified 19 December 2013, <https://cutt.ly/xIS4V8w>.; Samir Khalil Samir S.J., 'La nuova legge anti-discriminazione è un passo avanti nella libertà religiosa,' *Asia News*, last modified 27 July 2015, <https://cutt.ly/WIS7h49>.; Samir Khalil Samir S.J., 'Sinodo: cristiani e islam, esigere la libertà religiosa, combattere l'estremismo,' *Asia News*, last modified 19 October 2010, <https://cutt.ly/tIS73KB>.; Samir Khalil Samir S.J., 'Cristiani e musulmani: vivere insieme con Gesù diversi,' *Asia News*, last modified 1 April 2008, <https://cutt.ly/RIS5g3i>.; Samir Khalil Samir S.J., 'L'improbabile dialogo di Benedetto XVI con i 138 saggi musulmani,' *Asia News*, last modified 9 January 2008, <https://cutt.ly/lIS5SeV>.

Different approach is presented by other authors, e. g. Klaus von Stosch, 'Gewalttexte in Bibel und Koran,' *IKaZ Communio* 46, no. 2 (2017): 140–149; Emmanuel Pisani, 'La violence dans le Coran,' *Croire – La Croix*, last modified 12 June 2015, <https://cutt.ly/qIS688Y>, etc.

¹⁰ 'O faithless ones! I do not worship what you worship, nor do you worship what I worship; nor will I worship what you have worshiped. To you your religion, and to me my religion' (109). 'We sent down the Torah containing guidance and light. [...] And We followed them with Jesus son of Mary, to confirm that which was before him of the Torah, and We gave him the Evangel containing guidance and light, confirming what was before it of the Torah, and as guidance and advice for the Godway. We have sent down to you the Book with the truth, confirming what was before it of the Book and as a guardian over it. So judge between them by what Allah has sent down, and do not follow their desires against the truth that has come to you. For each [community] among you We had appointed a code [of law] and a path, and had Allah wished He would have made you one community, but [His purposes required] that He should test you in respect to what He has given you. So take the lead in all good works. To Allah shall be

From the above-said, the following statements can be deduced: The Quran admits a plurality of religions wanted by God, i.e. revealed religions, meaning Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; these religions or rather revelations are placed in the sequence of history and truth by claiming that Christianity corrects the deviations of Judaism and the deviations of Christianity are corrected by Islam, which is, therefore, the ultimate, truest, and decisive religion; it is also a reason of a certain tolerance for those religions and for the idea that ‘our God and your God is one and the same’ although alongside the idea that ‘with Allah religion is *Islām*’, which may also lead to the promotion of its domination.

It can be argued that all these texts are only about the relationship between the monotheistic Abrahamic religions and that the relationship between Islam and other religions is even more complicated. Its tolerance does not include equality of different religions but takes the form of legally protected enclaves (*dhimma*) of Jews or Christians within the majority rule of Islam. In light of this, there is a question how contemporary Muslims actually understand the general, universal validity of the document, which takes into account the plurality of religions as wanted by God and is defined as an invitation to reconciliation and fraternity not only ‘among all believers’ but also ‘among believers and non-believers, and among all people of good will’. However, we will no longer investigate this point.

the return of you all, whereat He will inform you concerning that about which you used to differ.’ (5:44–48). ‘And had your Lord wished, all those who are on earth would have believed. Would you then force people until they become faithful? No soul may have faith except by Allah’s leave, and He lays defilement on those who do not apply reason. [...] And follow that which is revealed to you, and be patient until Allah issues [His] judgement, and He is the best of judges’ (10:99–100,109). ‘Had your Lord wished, He would have made mankind one community; but they continue to differ. [...] And say to those who do not have faith, Act according to your ability; we too are acting. And wait! We too are waiting’ (11:118,121). ‘Say, Will you argue with us concerning Allah, while He is our Lord and your Lord, and our deeds belong to us, and your deeds belong to you, and we worship Him dedicatedly?’ (2:139). ‘I believe in whatever Book Allah has sent down. I have been commanded to do justice among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. Our deeds belong to us and your deeds belong to you. There is no argument between us and you. Allah will bring us together and toward Him is the destination’ (42:15). ‘Do not dispute with the People of the Book except in a manner which is best, barring such of them as are wrongdoers, and say, We believe in that which has been sent down to us and has been sent down to you; our God and your God is one [and the same], and to Him do we submit’ (29:46). ‘And say, [This is] the truth from your Lord: let anyone who wishes believe it, and let anyone who wishes disbelieve it.’ (18:29). ‘There is no compulsion in religion: rectitude has become distinct from error’ (2:256).

Suffice it to say that if the document states that ‘God has created us to understand one another, cooperate with one another and live as brothers and sisters who love one another’, it paraphrases the verse of the Quran where it says, ‘O mankind! Indeed We created you from a male and a female, and made you nations and tribes that you may identify yourselves with one another. Indeed, the noblest of you in the sight of Allah is the most Godwary among you. Indeed, Allah is all-knowing, all-aware’ (49:13). The work with this verse and the overall message of the document is a manifestation of the will on the Muslim side to choose such an interpretation of the Quran, which would help – as the last words of the text say – to achieve ‘a universal peace that all can enjoy in this life’.

4. Compliance with Christianity?

4.1 Only Christianity Is from God

The lack of considerations similar to those we have presented above has burdened critical commentaries of the document, which came from the Catholic side immediately after its signing. Their origin was mainly from the Church’s right flank (Raymond Leo Burke, Nicola Bux, Roberto de Mattei, Davide Pagliarani, Josef Seifert, Athanasius Schneider, Carlo Maria Viganò, Thomas G. Weinanda, etc.), which is not surprising since the liberal left is not so much concerned with the tradition or dogma so the possible discrepancy between the Abu Dhabi document and the Christian faith would not be so much disturbing for them.

In particular, two topics were criticised:

The first of these is the phrase ‘our common belief in God’, into which the basic premise of the document is inserted. It was contrasted with the statement of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the declaration *Dominus Iesus*, which states that it is vital to maintain the distinction between the theological faith (*fides theologalis*), which is a gift of grace and answers to the self-revelation of the Triune God, and the beliefs (*credulitas*) of other religions, which are the sum of human experience, reflection, and religiosity in relation to the Divine and the Absolute. This distinction expresses and underlines the difference between Christianity and other religions.¹¹ After all, the erroneous

¹¹ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Declaratio Dominus Iesus de Iesu Christi atque Ecclesiae unitate et universalitate salvifica,’ *La Santa*

teaching of the Abu Dhabi declaration is refuted by the infallible teachings of the First Vatican Council, which in the doctrinal constitution *Dei Filius* stated that ‘there is no parity between the condition of those who have adhered to the Catholic truth by the heavenly gift of faith, and the condition of those who, led by human opinions, follow a false religion’ (chap. 3 and can. 6).¹² And there is a significant notification from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the case of Jacques Dupuis SJ.¹⁵

The second criticised topic is the studied passage on the plurality of religions according to God’s will, which is commented in the following indignant way: Pope Francis denied Jesus Christ. He has committed ungodliness and heresy because he attributes to God the positive will that there should be religions that contradict the Revelation and are adversarial, erroneous, and untrue, and even extremely cruel. Does God want people to confess the contradictory facts about himself? Does he want people to worship false gods, be followers of atheistic or pantheistic religions, or worship demons? Does he want religions with human sacrifices or worshipping a golden calf? Does he want religions that deny the divinity, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? The Pope denied God’s plan of salvation, according to which Jesus Christ crucified is the only Saviour and the incarnate truth of God. The document is based on the Islamic image of God: it does not mention the Trinity or Christ, and therefore the Pope did not confess the only Name in which people can be saved. After all, the document

Sede, last modified 6 August 2000, <https://cutt.ly/IDqVL6>.: ‘For this reason, the distinction between theological faith and belief in the other religions, must be firmly held. If faith is the acceptance in grace of revealed truth, which “makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it coherently”, then belief, in the other religions, is that sum of experience and thought that constitutes the human treasury of wisdom and religious aspiration, which man in his search for truth has conceived and acted upon in his relationship to God and the Absolute. This distinction is not always borne in mind in current theological reflection. Thus, theological faith (the acceptance of the truth revealed by the One and Triune God) is often identified with belief in other religions, which is religious experience still in search of the absolute truth and still lacking assent to God who reveals himself. This is one of the reasons why the differences between Christianity and the other religions tend to be reduced at times to the point of disappearance.’

¹² Diane Montagna, ‘Interview on “Fratelli Tutti” with Bishop Athanasius Schneider,’ *The Remnant*, last modified 14 October 2020, <https://cutt.ly/7IDkQrF>

¹⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. Joseph Ratzinger, ‘Notification on the book *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, New York 1997) by Father Jacques Dupuis, S.J.’ *La Santa Sede*, last modified 24 January 2001, <https://cutt.ly/JIDkD1h>.

does not even speak of sin, conversion, and salvation. Peter's successor thus resigned to the claim that Christianity is the *religio vera* that brings people a supernatural life with the Triune God. He devaluates the sacrifices of martyrs, who could actually be content with the fact that even pagan religions corresponded to God's will. He also implicitly acknowledged that God wanted a plurality of Christian denominations, thus denying Jesus' prayer that everyone should be one. He professed a fraternity without Christ and without the Church, outside which there is no salvation. He chose a purely humanistic conception of fraternity and became the protagonist of the Masonic united world religion. The relevant statement should, therefore, be removed as incorrect. More precisely, Pope Francis should publicly recall it. If he does not do so, the canon of the *Code of Canon Law*, according to which the Pope loses his Peter's office if he professes heresy, will be applied. And this is the sum of all heresies. After all, with this declaration, the Pope himself renounced the task of strengthening the brothers in faith in Christ.¹⁴

4.2 Religiosity Comes from God, Not the Plurality of Religions

Alongside these reactions, which accused the Pope of extremely serious offences, others were trying to defend him. For example, according to Thomas Petri OP, the relevant passage intended to express that, just

¹⁴ 'Bergoglio firma documento musulmano rinnegando Gesù Cristo,' *Le Croniche di apa Francesco*, last modified 4 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/sIDIR5h>.; Mic, 'Una pace che rinnega Cristo e la nostra Fede,' Blogger, last modified 4 January 2019, <https://cutt.ly/EIDzc4m>.; Thomas G. Weinandy, 'Pope Francis, the uniqueness of Christ, and the will of the Father,' *The Catholic World Report*, last modified 2 June 2019, <https://cutt.ly/YIDz7YN>.; Edward Pentin, 'Does the New Catholic-Muslim Declaration Deviate From Catholic Teaching?,' *National Catholic Register*, last modified 15 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/IWJ9Pak>.; Aldo Maria Valli, 'Questa crisi viene da molto lontano,' *Aldo Maria Valli*, last modified 3 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/kIDxArs>.; ID. Roberto de Mattei, 'Il più terribile scisma che il mondo abbia mai visto,' *Corrispondenza Romana*, last modified 1 May 2019, <https://cutt.ly/yIDvwOk>.; Aldo Maria Valli – Nicola Bux, 'Ma se togliamo la Croce di Cristo non ci resta che il deismo (massonico),' *Aldo Maria Valli*, last modified 11 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/HDvYty>.; Davide Pagliarani, 'Comunicato del Superiore generale della FSSPX: La vera fratellanza esiste solo in Gesù Cristo,' *FSSPX*, last modified 24 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/pIDvMJH>.; Josef Seifert, 'Grave Concerns About Pope Francis' Abu Dhabi Document,' *en.neus*, last modified 8 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/cIDbdfk>.; Athanasius Schneider, 'Il cristianesimo è l'unica religione voluta da Dio,' *Stilvm Cvriae*, last modified 8 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/gIDnwNC>.; ID, 'There is no divine positive will or natural right to the diversity of religions,' *Life Site*, last modified 1 June 2020, <https://cutt.ly/ZIDnBvK>.; Marco Tosatti, 'Il papa minaccia la sopravvivenza della chiesa cattolica,' *Stilvm Cvriae*, last modified 22 November 2019, <https://cutt.ly/TWJ5qtz>.; Steve Skojec, 'Vatican II marked the beginning of a false, parallel Church,' *One Peter 5*, last modified 9 June 2020, <https://cutt.ly/rIDmKBp>.

as God created us with a specific colour of skin, gender, and language, he also created us with a desire to know transcendence and worship the highest divine power, i.e. with a disposition to the virtue of religiosity.¹⁵ Alfredo Morselli then provided a more detailed interpretation in the same line: God tilts all people toward himself as their goal and thus wants them to be religious. They get to know the existence of God and are obliged to express their relationship to him in the form of a cult even without supernatural Revelation. They have to do everything they are able to do. And those who do so are not denied God's grace (*facienti quod in se est Deus non denegat gratiam*: Thomas Aquinas, In II Sent. d. 28, q. 1, a. 4 ad 4); although without their own guilt they are not Christians, they can be viewed as having 'implicit faith' (*fides implicita*: Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II, q. 10, a. 4 ad 3) in that God who revealed himself in Jesus Christ and who established fellowship between people and himself in the Catholic Church. The material minimum of the believed content, which is associated with incompleteness and error, corresponds to the formal maximum of an act of faith. Such a person may not be aware that he or she is wrong and therefore does not have to have any guilt. However, it is only this inclination to religion (respectively, the religious act), which comes from God, not a false religion as such. This, like sin, comes from God insofar as it is a being and an act; but God is not the cause of the fact that the act is defective (Thomas Aquinas, STh I-II, q. 79, a. 2 co. and ad 2). Man is, together with God, the cause of the act, but only man is the cause of its defect. Therefore, it cannot be said that God wants religious plurality. He wants and causes human religiosity, not its defect.¹⁶

¹⁵ Edward Pentin, 'Does the New Catholic-Muslim Declaration Deviate From Catholic Teaching?', *National Catholic Register*, last modified 15 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/GIDQhWx>.: 'St. Thomas Aquinas says that religion is almost like a virtue that everyone should acquire, whether believer or not [...]. And by that, he simply means the desire to worship a higher power, a desire to seek that which is beyond. I suspect that's what the Holy Father is getting at, [...] that just like our skin color, just like our sex, just like our language, God created us with this desire to know the transcendent, to know the divine, and we believe and have always believed that the answer to that desire is Jesus Christ who is incarnate.'

The natural desire to know God has been also pointed out by Chad Pecknold: Diane Montagna, 'Pope Francis under fire for claiming "diversity of religions" is "willed by God"', *Life Site*, last modified 5 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/RIDQDOR>.

¹⁶ Alfredo Morselli, 'Il pluralismo e la diversità di religione sono voluti da Dio nella sua sapienza?', *Cooperatores Veritatis*, last modified 17 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/LIDQ6GR>.

In this respect, the Second Vatican Council's claim in the doctrinal constitution *Lumen Gentium* 16, according to which Muslims worship God together with Christians (*nobiscum Deum adorant*), seems to be very theologically problematic. Thanks to their natural act of religiosity and the natural knowledge of the Creator, non-Christians who sincerely worship God, the Creator, worship the same God whom the Christians worship with supernatural faith and supernatural knowledge as the Triune. However, it is true that 'the acts of adoration, and the acts of knowing on which they are based, are substantially different, though the object is the same in that it is the same God.' The list of differences in the knowledge of God and God's actions is, therefore, extensive.¹⁷

4.5 God Does Not Want the Plurality of Religions but Admits It

It was the commentary by Father Z., i.e. John Zuhlsdorf, published the day after the signature of the document, which played a crucial role in its Catholic interpretation. He said that, when we speak of God's will, we must distinguish between 'active and positive will', which is what is good, true, and beautiful, and 'permissive will', which allows happening something which is not in accordance with an order established by God himself. If we read the document from Abu Dhabi in the light of God's positive will, then it would be true that he would place the positive values (differences in skin colour, gender, race, and language) on the same level with something that should not be positive in itself, namely plurality and differences of religions: the plurality implies that some people believe false things, so the same God, who wants all people to be saved and to know the truth, should also want people to believe in other things than the truth itself. However, if we read the document in the light of God's permissive will, it would be – Father Z. said – acceptable because then it would not say that God wants the diversity in religions in the sense that they are all the same, equal paths to God. False religions are evil, and God does not actively want evil, he only allows it to achieve some greater good.¹⁸

¹⁷ Athanasius Schneider, 'Catholics and Muslims share no common faith in God, no common adoration,' *Corrisopndenza Romana*, last modified 8 June 2020, <https://cutt.ly/iLDW08s>.

¹⁸ John Zuhlsdorf, 'Francis signed document saying that God willed the "pluralism and diversity of religions". What's up with that?,' *Twitter*, last modified 5 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/JIDEsYD>: 'God did not will a diversity of religions in the sense that all religions are equal paths to God. False religions are evil. God does not actively will evil. When we speak of God's will we make distinctions. God has an "active or positive

This is exactly the argument that Pope Francis himself adopted. On the way from Abu Dhabi, he defended the document by saying that, from the Catholic point of view, he ‘did not deviate by even a millimeter from the Second Vatican Council’ and was, on the contrary, drafted ‘in the spirit’ of this council, which is thus being further developed.¹⁹ On 3 April 2019, he returned to the relevant passage of the document during the general audience, saying:

[W]hy does God allow many religions? God wanted to allow this: Scolastica theologians used to refer to God’s *voluntas permissiva*. He wanted to allow this reality: there are many religions. Some are born from culture, but they always look to heaven; they look to God. But what God wants is fraternity among us and in a special way [...] with our brothers, Abraham’s children like us, the Muslims. We must not fear differences. God allowed this. We should be afraid were we to fail to work fraternally to walk together in life.²⁰

The Pope allegedly confirmed this position in contact with Bishop Athanasius Schneider. He was said to have acknowledged that the sentence could be misunderstood because even if the plurality of religion was the subject of God’s *voluntas permissiva*, the same is no longer the case, for example, with the plurality of sex which God wants directly and positively. Schneider adds that the only religion God desires is the faith in Jesus Christ, and demands that the Pope publicly revoke or correct his statement. However, Francis did not do anything like that and did not even publish what Schneider quoted from the interview anywhere. The Catholic right flank, therefore, repeats that plurality and diversity of religions is a moral evil that God admits but is not the

will” and a “permissive will”. God’s “active will” concerns that which is good, true and beautiful. On the other hand, God has a “permissive will” by which He allows that things will take place that are not in accord with the order He established. [...] Read in this way, namely, that by God’s permissive will there are a multiplicity of religions, etc., that statement in the document, above, is acceptable. If you read the statement to mean that by God’s positive or active will there are a multiplicity of religions, that’s an error. That would impute to God the active willing of false religions and, therefore, evil, which is impossible and contrary to reason. God cannot positively will evil. God can only, by His nature, permissively will evil. I don’t know what the writers of the document intended. I’m just telling the truth about what is written.’

¹⁹ Pope Francis, ‘Conferenza Stampa del Santo Padre sul volo di ritorno da Abu Dhabi,’ *La Santa Sede*, last modified 5 February 2019, <https://cutt.ly/eIDE1gB>.

²⁰ Pope Francis, ‘Udiienza Generale: Catechesi sul Viaggio Apostolico in Marocco,’ *La Santa Sede*, last modified 3 April 2019, <https://cutt.ly/7IDRiqC>.

result of his positive will. His will is that all people receive faith in Jesus Christ and are saved in him through the fellowship with the Catholic Church. God simply did not prevent the existence of other religions to derive another good from it, which is to encourage Christians to grow in their faith and develop their missionary love.²¹

4.4 The Plurality of Religions Belongs to God's Providence

The Jesuit Domenico Marafioti proceeded further than the above-cited authors, stating that the pluralism of religions probably does not belong to God's original purpose for creation, but rather to God's leading of man through the history. That is why he also suggested reading the key sentence of the declaration as if it said: the plurality and differences of religions 'are the result of the wise decision of the divine will with which God created and led man in the history'. However, this does not belong to a pre-lapse reality (Gen. 1-2) but to a post-lapse reality (Gen. 3). In history, which is burdened with guilt, the Providence leads humanity temporarily also through religious pluralism. 'In the past, he let all nations go their own way' (Acts 14:16), and this includes religious pluralism as a manifestation of the common experience of the sacred and its interpretation according to its intellectual and cultural categories.²²

However, it can be objected against Marafioti that these speculations about God's will as such, regardless of his salvific historical will, are inappropriate, as the Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, the former prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, pointed out in this context. In other words, there has never been any other will of God about his rational creatures than the desire for their eternal salvation in the Church of Christ and its gradual realisation in the history: 'His providence, His manifestations of goodness, His saving design extend to all men, until that time when the elect will be united in the Holy City,

²¹ Diane Montagna and Athanasius Schneider, 'Bishop Schneider wins clarification on "diversity of religions" from Pope Francis, brands abuse summit a "failure",' *Life Site*, last modified 7 March 2019, <https://cutt.ly/iIDRVgs>; Maiké Hickson and Athanasius Schneider, 'Pope must formally correct statement that God wills false religions,' *Life Site*, last modified 8 May 2019, <https://cutt.ly/FIDRSZy>; Roberto de Mattei, 'Che cos'è la "volontà permissiva" di Dio,' *adici Cristiane*, accessed 29 February 2020, <https://cutt.ly/xlDRBbp>; Alfredo Morselli, 'La voluntas permissiva di Dio e il Documento di Abu Dhabi: Quando la toppa è peggio del buco,' *Cooperatores Veritatis*, last modified 7 April 2019, <https://cutt.ly/5IDTdhD>.

²² Domenico Marafioti, 'Documento sulla Fratellanza umana'.

the city ablaze with the glory of God, where the nations will walk in His light' (*Nostra aetate* 1).

Müller, therefore, described the plurality of religions as a positive manifestation of the Providence.²⁵ Individual specific religions – despite all their shortcomings in details – have a role to play in God's plan of salvation, in which God manifests himself as the Creator and Goal, who ultimately wants to unite humanity in communion with himself. On the one hand, they are the ways of realising the natural effort of reason to know God and to be in blissful communion with him. Each person is directed towards God, and this focus is manifested in natural religiosity as well as by a historically conditioned (i.e. in concrete time, society, and culture) belonging to a specific religious community. On the other hand, these religions are a manifestation of God's Providence, which in time and with a view to eternity promotes a universal vocation to salvation in Christ: not always with an explicit personal faith in him, but always through the incarnate Son and through his Church as the sacrament of salvation (*Lumen gentium* 1; 45; *Gaudium et spes* 48).

This does not mean that all religions – in the plurality of their forms – are in themselves ways of salvation, nor that God simply admits them as a kind of allowed evil, but that God actively wants everything which is true, good, and beautiful in them as the preparation to the salvation of man in the encounter with Christ, whether it occurs in time explicitly or at least implicitly by acting according to the known truth. Precisely because of what 'is true and holy in these religions', they can be regarded from a Christian perspective as often reflecting 'a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men' (*Nostra aetate* 2). They are the 'seeds of the Word', which is like a good seed sown in human hearts and minds or in the rites and cultures of nations (*Ad gentes* 11; *Lumen gentium* 17). In our case, it means: 'What God certainly does not want in Islam is the denial of the Trinity, the incarnation, the divine sonship of Christ, and the redemption of mankind from sin through him,' as Müller points out. However, with regard to the universal saving will, it can be said that God wants a Muslim to profess the one God and Creator, who is omnipotent and merciful to all, he wants him to believe in

²⁵ Gerhard L. Müller; 'Das Abu Dhabi Dokument: Eine katholische Lesehilfe,' *IkZ Communio* 49, no. 3 (2020): 293–311.

the judgment of good and evil deeds and to expect an afterlife in heaven or hell (*Nostra aetate* 3; *Lumen gentium* 16).²⁴

Conclusion

As concerns our commentary on the passage from the 'Document on Human Fraternity', the foregoing considerations demonstrate that it is not a doctrinal statement of the papal Magisterium and may not be a statement which is, standing alone, entirely coherent with the Christian faith; however, it cannot contradict this faith and has to be interpreted to have a positive meaning from the point of view of the whole Catholic faith, while supporting the interpretation which helps to realise the common intentions of the document.

It was further clarified that the passage quoted in the document echoes anti-discrimination human rights declarations, which list the criteria according to which people cannot be discriminated; nevertheless, the document turns their negative diction into a positive wording explaining the existence of these differences as a consequence of God's creative wisdom.

In terms of the genesis and the redaction of the text, this could be an echo of the fact that the Quran admits a plurality of religions wanted by God (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam), which results in a certain tolerance of Judaism and Christianity (not their equality with Islam) and a basic openness to the principle of freedom of religion.

From the Christian point of view, which is based on the confession that Jesus Christ is – in his Church – the only mediator of salvation for all people, the commented statement was accepted with hesitation. Some commented that the Pope had committed ungodliness and heresy because he attributes to God a positive will to welcome religions that deny the uniqueness of Jesus Christ and that are contradictory, erroneous, and untrue. The next approach claims that Christians should understand the document in the sense that God's creative will has inserted natural religiosity in all human beings, which, however, does not mean that he also positively wants a plurality of religions as all non-Christian religions are actually evil and God never actively wants

²⁴ Armin Schwibach and Gerhard L. Müller, 'Die "heißen Themen" zwischen den Jahren 2019 und 2020,' *Katholische Nachrichten*, last modified 23 December 2019, <https://cutt.ly/4IDTYqg>.

evil; he only allows it to achieve some greater good, which is to encourage Christians to grow in their faith and to their missionary love. A more open interpretation stated that all religions are the manifestations of natural religiosity, and they are actively wanted by God's Providence as a preparation for the salvation of man in the encounter with Christ in what is true, good, and beautiful in them.

However, it is possible to go a little further if we look at the commented statement of the 'Document on Human Fraternity' through the prism of the catechesis of John Paul II from 9 September 1998, in which he pointed out that every openness of the human spirit to truth and good, and ultimately to God, is awakened by the Holy Spirit, and that it is the origin of various non-biblical religions. In their beginnings, we often find founders who, with the help of the Holy Spirit, made a deeper religious experience, which was then passed on to other people by taking on the form of doctrines, ceremonies, and commandments of various religions. By practising what is true and good in them, and by showing love to others, these pious people, in the power of God's Spirit, respond positively to God's invitation to salvation in Jesus Christ and participate in his Easter sacrifice.²⁵

²⁵ 'It must first be kept in mind that every quest of the human spirit for truth and goodness, and in the last analysis for God, is inspired by the Holy Spirit. The various religions arose precisely from this primordial human openness to God. At their origins we often find founders who, with the help of God's Spirit, achieved a deeper religious experience. Handed on to others, this experience took form in the doctrines, rites and precepts of the various religions. [...] "The Spirit's presence and activity", as I wrote in the Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris missio*, "affect not only individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions" (n. 28). Normally, "it will be in the sincere practice of what is good in their own religious traditions and by following the dictates of their own conscience that the members of other religions respond positively to God's invitation and receive salvation in Jesus Christ, even while they do not recognize or acknowledge him as their Saviour (cf. *Ad gentes* 5, 9, 11)". Indeed, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, "since Christ died for all, and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of coming into contact, in a way known to God, with the paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et spes* 22). This possibility is achieved through sincere, inward adherence to the Truth, generous self-giving to one's neighbour and the search for the Absolute inspired by the Spirit of God. A ray of the divine Wisdom is also shown through the fulfilment of the precepts and practices that conform to the moral law and to authentic religious sense. Precisely by virtue of the Spirit's presence and action, the good elements found in the various religions mysteriously prepare hearts to receive the full revelation of God in Christ,' John Paul II., 'General audience,' *La Santa Sede*, last modified 9 September 1998, <https://cutt.ly/EIDYWiA>. Quotation from Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, 'Instruction Dialogue and Proclamation' (19.05.1991), 29.

God created the world 'so that [people] would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him' (Acts 17:27), and 'to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life' (Rom. 2:7). This search, the manifestation of natural religiosity, is the cause of the existence of various historical forms of religions, which, in what is authentic in them, are caused by the Spirit of God, who leads these believers to meet Jesus Christ in his Church or rather in the final space of salvation, which is the heavenly Jerusalem. It is, from God's Providence, a *paedagogia ad Deum verum* and *praeparatio evangelica*.²⁶

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²⁶ Second Vatican Council, *Ad gentes* 3: 'This universal design of God for the salvation of the human race is carried out not only, as it were, secretly in the soul of a man, or by the attempts (even religious ones by which in diverse ways it seeks after God) if perchance it may contact Him or find Him, though He be not far from anyone of us (cf. Acts 17,27). For these attempts need to be enlightened and healed; even though, through the kindly workings of Divine Providence, they may sometimes serve as leading strings toward God, or as a preparation for the Gospel.'

FAITH EMBODIED IN ATTITUDES:
ETHICS OF DIALOGUE AND BROTHERHOOD
OF ALL PEOPLE IN THE ‘DOCUMENT
ON HUMAN FRATERNITY FOR WORLD PEACE
AND LIVING TOGETHER’ IN ABU DHABI
AND THE ENCYCLICAL *FRATELLI TUTTI*¹

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ABSTRACT

This text is concerned with the ethical approach of inter-faith relations and the dialogue of culture in two documents of Pope Francis: ‘On Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’ and the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti*. This ethical approach refers to God the Creator of all and the call to brotherhood of all human beings and refers to faith as a response to Revelation. Faith also forms ethical approaches for interreligious dialogue. Pope Francis’ approach in the documents is that the theological truth and values of religious traditions are embodied in attitudes of social friendship. Francis challenges us to build a specific environment that he calls a ‘new culture of dialogue’, having frequently called for the growth of a culture of encounter that is capable of transcending political and social barriers and encourages creating a specific culture of social and ‘political love’.

Keywords

Pope Francis; Interreligious dialogue; Ethics of dialogue; Dialogue of cultures; Fraternity; Theology of religions; *Fratelli tutti*; Document on Human Fraternity

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Before approaching the topic of the ethical principles of inter-faith dialogue in the ‘Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’² and the dialogue of cultures in *Fratelli*

¹ This work has been supported by Charles University Research Centre programme No. 204052.

² See Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, ‘Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’ (4th February 2019), available at <https://bit.ly/3hyvw78>, accessed 4 March 2021. Further referenced as ‘Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb:

Tutti,⁵ let us remember the basic framework and purpose/aim of these documents. The first document, ‘On Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’, focuses on the strategies and values in the inter-faith dialogue between Christians and Muslims. The second, the encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* is concerned with social dialogue in a broader sense, in the individual, political, and economic contexts. This ethical approach has a strong theological foundation. The foundation refers to God the Creator of all and the call to brotherhood of all human beings. Faith as a response to Revelation forms concrete ethical attitudes and approaches. The interconnection between faith and ethics is crucial in the hermeneutics of both documents of Pope Francis, especially understanding his ethics of brotherhood which is not primarily a social but a theological category. Francis’ strategy of dialogue does not give up on the idea of the absolute horizon of truth in God’s Revelation; however, the theological truth is embodied in attitudes that refer to the absolute horizon.

At the outset, the ‘Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’ refers to a shared theological foundation, a faith in God the Creator of everything and all people. This ‘transcendental value’ represents the foundation of common speech and a starting point for the negotiations between the representatives of the Holy See and the scholars of Al-Azhar Mosque, between Pope Francis and the imam Muhammad Al-Tayyeb.

The main topic of the discussions and the resulting document is the relationship of the religions and cultures, Christianity and Islam, often interpreted after the historical events of 11 September 2001 as a conflict. The religious foundation of the dialogue presupposes that a mutual relationship between humans, who are created by the one Creator, is the basis of fundamental equality between people.

Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved. Through faith in God, who has created the universe, creatures and all human beings (equal on account of his mercy), believers are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire

Document’ with the article number. Due to the restrictions during the pandemic this text will refer predominantly to digital sources.

⁵ See Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti: Encyclical letter on Fraternity and Social Friendship*, available at <https://bit.ly/3hzisP5>, accessed 20 January 2021. Further referenced as FT with the article number.

universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need.⁴

The definition of brotherhood is based on the notion that since God created people equal in rights, duties, and dignity, all people are also called equally to common relationships of brotherhood so to share values of goodness, love, and peace. These general categories of values are later on in the document made more specific by notions of what is antagonistic in relationships, i.e., the reference to God's command not to kill other human beings but on the contrary to support the poor, those in need, and the marginalised. Signing the document with the Pope, the Muslim representative explicitly identified with the culture of dialogue, mutual collaboration, and knowledge as a way to act and a method for brotherhood to take place.

So, the value of human brotherhood has a theological basis. Brotherhood itself becomes a source of other values creating human society according to God's plan. This theological perspective creates efforts to meet and have a dialogue. The document itself is an outcome of brotherly meetings between Christians and Muslims, aiming to support and build a culture of mutual respect. This is possible for those of deep faith in God, believing that we are brothers and sisters.

The document seeks 'mutual understanding as a method and a standard' and looks for understanding in practical matters, finding parallels in the issues of maintaining peace, the importance of family as a 'fundamental nucleus of society and essential in bringing children into the world, raising them, educating them, and providing them with solid moral formation and domestic security'.⁵ It also seeks preserving personal freedom in faith, thinking, expressions, and actions, as well as female rights not to be second rate citizens and believers, and preserving the plurality of religion as God-given in his wisdom. Emphasis is on rejecting terrorism as a blind fanaticism that takes faith as a hostage. The matter in political abuse of religion is an image of God. We are not created by God to make wars, torture, and humiliate each other.⁶

Therefore, when the second document of Pope Francis, the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* speaks about the truth, it is not aiming to compare

⁴ Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb: Document, Introduction.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

different philosophical and theological concepts of truth (i.e., coherence, pragmatic, or the correspondence theory of truth). The aim of the document is not an abstract definition but practical consequences of true teaching to ethical concerns.⁷ Speaking of truth in the context of religion, the document is a reminder that both religious traditions are convinced that true teaching values peace, getting to know each other, and peaceful coexistence. Pope Francis explicitly mentions Francis of Assisi on a pilgrimage with a similar mission:

There is an episode in the life of Saint Francis that shows his openness of heart, which knew no bounds and transcended differences of origin, nationality, colour or religion. It was his visit to Sultan Malik-el-Kamil, in Egypt, which entailed considerable hardship, given Francis' poverty, his scarce resources, the great distances to be traveled and their differences of language, culture and religion. That journey, undertaken at the time of the Crusades, further demonstrated the breadth and grandeur of his love, which sought to embrace everyone. Francis' fidelity to his Lord was commensurate with his love for his brothers and sisters.⁸

1. Theological Fundamentals of Inter-Faith Dialogue

The document from Abu Dhabi speaks of a God-given plurality of religious traditions. Surely, that is not an implication of the philosophical reasoning that either knowingly or unknowingly makes religious truths relative. As Christians, we do not find agreement with Muslims in arguments such as the unique and fundamental Christian experience of the Triune God and Jesus Christ's role in salvation. Does this document pose a threat to the fundamental identity of Christian faith? We dare say that from the point of the worries formulated in *Dominus Iesus*, it is not the case. Both faiths are firm in their fundamental presentation of religious experience. No consequences formulated in the

⁷ See Domenico Marafioti, 'Documento sulla Fratellanza umana. Una lettura ragionata,' *Rassegna della teologie* 60, no. 2 (2019): 243–246; Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot, 'Prophetic Meaning of the Document on Human Fraternity,' *The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue*, last modified 26 March 2019, accessed 20 April 2021, <https://bit.ly/3hwNerE>

⁸ FT 5. Pope Francis is certainly not doing pioneering work here. For the history of a dialogue with Muslims, see the aforementioned Domenico Marafioti ('Documento sulla Fratellanza umana,' 236–238). Ethical accents in dialogue are also characteristic for theologians as Hans Küng or K.J. Kuschel.

document *Dominus Iesus* as results of acceptance of religious plurality apply to the dialogue between Islam and Christianity. There is no trace of indifferentism or relativism in the ‘Document on Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together’ from Abu Dhabi. There is no assumption that both religions ‘are alike’, which is the notion *Dominus Iesus* disapproves of.

The roots of these problems are to be found in certain presuppositions of both a philosophical and theological nature, which hinder the understanding and acceptance of the revealed truth. Some of these can be mentioned: the conviction of the elusiveness and inexpressibility of divine truth, even by Christian Revelation; relativistic attitudes toward truth itself, according to which what is true for some would not be true for others.⁹

Facing many reservations from both religious traditions, the document is knowingly a manual for religious practice. Expression of faith is supposed to support relationships among people. Both texts, the document from Abu Dhabi and also *Fratelli tutti*, which from now on will be more in the focus of this text, claim that faith should support human life’s dignity, spiritual, human, and social values. Both texts are clearly rejecting not just religious but any form of terrorism.

It could be argued that the ideals in the documents are too high.¹⁰ However, looking closely at the theological background of both traditions, Christian and Muslim, it should be noted that the ethical ideal is in agreement with the main features of the religious faith of both traditions engaged in the dialogue.

Both documents anticipate that the ‘culture of encounter’ leads to wisdom, justice, and love.¹¹ True relations are able to awaken the desire for faith in new generations, saving them from a materialistic mind

⁹ ‘On the basis of such presuppositions, which may evince different nuances, certain theological proposals are developed “at times presented as assertions, and at times as hypotheses” in which Christian revelation and the mystery of Jesus Christ and the Church lose their character of absolute truth and salvific universality, or at least shadows of doubt and uncertainty are cast upon them’. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dominus Iesus. On The Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church*, 4, in *Acta Apostolicae Sedis. Commentarium officiale*, 2000, p. 745.

¹⁰ For example, in passages of Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb: Document: L’Osservatore Romano, 4–5 February 2019, 6.

¹¹ See, for example, FT 213.

and from the logic of the survival of the fittest that sometimes has been substituted for the power of the law.¹²

Both documents hold up freedom of thought, speech, and action. *Fratelli tutti* explicitly states the idea that freedom of thought and acting is not just rooted in social agreement; it is a reference to God's intention.¹³ Going back to the sensitive issue mentioned at the beginning of the document, apparently, the idea of religious pluralism as a legitimate phenomenon might pose a problem not just for Muslims. Also, for some streams in the Catholic world, this grounding of religious plurality as a part of God's plan seems difficult to accept and not to see as contradictory to some magisterial texts. Religious pluralism *de iure* is most vividly under vocal criticism in the document *Dominus Iesus*. The document deals with the risks of relativist approaches of religious plurality as a threat to the call of the Church for mission.

However, in this instance, the idea of religious pluralism appears in a completely different context. We are not in the field of general philosophical-theological hypothesis penned by specific theologians but in the space of a concrete dialogue of two prominent faith figures with a clearly defined goal which is not a theological debate but a dialogue about the possibilities of coexistence.

In the context of Christian reflection, the encyclical *Fratelli tutti* could be seen as part of the theological lineage of Vatican II with an inclusivist approach in considering the salvation of those who follow other religions.¹⁴ Such an approach is rooted in the assumption that God's salvation initiative took place once and for all in Jesus Christ, and it includes all that is right and good in other religions.¹⁵

In *Fratelli tutti*, the ethics of dialogue and brotherhood especially is connected to understanding Revelation as a communication and a dialogue as it was defined in Vatican II.¹⁶ Transcendental reality enters history, revealing itself to humanity in the history of salvation.¹⁷ The

¹² See FT 275.

¹³ See FT 211–214.

¹⁴ See the interfaith study in Denisa Červenková, *Katolický pohled na náboženskou pluralitu* (Praha: Karolinum 2016), 87–125, see also Giacomo Canobbio, *Nessuna salvezza fuori della Chiesa? Storia e senso di un controverso principio teologico* (Brescia: Queriniana, 2009); Claude Geffré, *De Babel à Pentecôte: essais de théologie interreligieuse* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2006).

¹⁵ See Denisa Červenková, *Náboženství jako teologický fenomén* (Červený Kostelec, Nakladatelství Pavel Mervart, 2013), 100.

¹⁶ See *Dei Verbum* 2.

¹⁷ See Červenková, *Katolický pohled*, 77.

Christological and trinitarian hermeneutics of religious pluralism upholds a personal character of the truth and a relational perspective built on Christological foundations. The event of Christ created a command of positive acceptance of The Other or the difference of others in theology.¹⁸ The Mystery of the Trinity is an example for us constantly reaching the Other, with the crowning paradigm of the crucified and resurrected Christ penetrating the depth of human reality, breaking the barriers between God and human beings. From this radically relational perspective, a question of truth may be posed since, for Christians, truth is the person of Jesus Christ.¹⁹

Parallels can be found between both documents of the current pontificate and the encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* of the late Pope John Paul II, where he speaks of creating a just and brotherly community of dialogue.²⁰ According to the encyclical, in inter-faith dialogue,

a vast field lies open to dialogue, which can assume many forms and expressions: from exchanges between experts in religious traditions or official representatives of those traditions to cooperation for integral development and the safeguarding of religious values; and from a sharing of their respective spiritual experiences to the so-called ‘dialogue of life,’ through which believers of different religions bear witness before each other in daily life to their own human and spiritual values, and help each other to live according to those values in order to build a more just and fraternal society.²¹

From this perspective, the ethics of brotherhood developed by Pope Francis is advancing three of the four fundamental elements of the dialogue (a dialogue of life, cooperation, and religious experience) which the document *Redemptoris Missio* speaks about.

Therefore, the ethics of brotherhood has its theological foundation in a certain approach to a Christian mission, referring to the experience of God’s people with God’s Revelation. St Francis is an example of such principle: a medieval saint on his journey to the Sultan of Egypt, Francis was capable of transcending the differences of origin, nationalities,

¹⁸ See Piero Coda, *Il logos e il nulla. Trinità, religioni, mistica* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2005), 137.

¹⁹ See Červenková, *Katolický pohled*, 153.

²⁰ See John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio* 57. *L’Osservatore Romano*, 23 January 1991.

²¹ See *ibid.*

religion, making an enormous effort to define a position that is not in denial of their own identity. The aim was to share God's love, facing cultural and religious differences.²² The *Fratelli tutti* encyclical seems implicitly to refer to the fundamental Triune *missio* of the Church – God the Father sent his Son and The Spirit for a purpose: that believers might be able to live in relationships of brotherhood and sisterhood.²³ Only from this theological fundament of the Church's *missio* can the social and political consequences be drawn.²⁴

Similarly, another layer of the theological foundation of *Fratelli tutti* is a reference to God the Creator of mankind, calling us to a brotherly community of all. At the very outset of the encyclical, Pope Francis returns to the formulation from the document from Abu Dhabi: 'God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters.'²⁵ The encyclical focuses on the universal dimension of brotherly love and its openness to all. The style of expression and argumentation is, however, accommodated to people of good will²⁶ so it is not only believers who can understand and be inspired. *Fratelli tutti*, as in all the papal documents, has first of all a theological basis. It is the trinitarian faith in God's *missio*: God is sending his Son and the Spirit so that people are able to live in the brotherly relationship St Francis spoke about. Only on this basis is it possible to speak about the social and political consequences of brotherhood.²⁷

2. Relationship Ethics of Brotherhood

Both texts, the Abu Dhabi document and the encyclical *Fratelli tutti*, have social and, therefore, political implications, albeit without mentioning specific political movements or dealing with politics in an

²² See FT 3.

²³ For the Triune fundament in the Church mission see Pavol Bargár, 'Konceptie teológie relevantné pre súčasnú dobu vo významných misiologických dielach,' *Acta missiologica* 10, no. 2 (2016): 9–16.

²⁴ See Fabio Colagrande, 'Fratelli tutti, Forte: traduce il Vangelo per il mondo di oggi,' accessed 28 January 2021, <https://bit.ly/3kdurn5>; see also David J. Bosch, *Dynamika kresťanskej misie* (Praha: Stredo-evropské centrum misijných štúdií, 2009), 10; Denisa Červenková, *Etika mezináboženského a mezikultúrného dialogu* (Praha: Karolinum, 2018), 58–59.

²⁵ FT 5.

²⁶ FT 6.

²⁷ Colagrande, 'Fabio, Fratelli tutti.'

organisational sense.²⁸ Both texts are political in a broader sense of the word, understanding humans as social beings who are political from their very nature.²⁹

The ethos of human brotherhood is not entirely new idea. The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948)³⁰ states equality of people: ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.’ The Declaration also points out that society is needed for each individual to achieve their full growth. The society is to respect and keep the rights of individuals. Individuals are obliged with duty to their societies. ‘Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.’³¹ Societies differ in their understanding of duties according to their culture and political and spiritual traditions. Therefore, they are as a human family ‘destined’ to dialogue and called to acceptance of differences on the basis of mutual relationship.

The chapter called ‘Dark Clouds over a Closed World’³² in *Fratelli tutti* describes some aspects straining the development of brotherhood – even with the experience of wars, we have not learned to live a brotherly life. Old conflicts masked as a defence of national interest return, ‘myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalism are on the rise’.³³ Among ‘new forms of cultural colonialism’, the Pope lists preferring individual interests over the community dimension of human existence and growing dependency of poor and weaker regions on strong countries. The Pope talks about a growing loss of the sense of history, looking down on the past, of the human and spiritual richness of previous generations. We become people uprooted, without trust,

²⁸ However, it is quite clear from *Fratelli tutti* that criticism of ‘economic powers that demand quick profits’ (17) or about ‘temptation to build a culture of walls, to raise walls, walls in the heart, walls on the land, in order to prevent this encounter with other cultures, with other people,’ Francis, albeit indirectly points out to the hegemon power of the USA. In the past, Francis made clear that he sees being Christian and building a wall as contradictory. See the Pope’s comments on Donald Trump in 2016 in ‘Donald Trump’s Christianity questioned by Pope Francis,’ *BBC News*, last modified 18th February 2016, <https://www.bbc.com/news/av/world-35607538>.

²⁹ The term ‘politic’ appears in FT 97 times in different contexts.

³⁰ United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (10th December 1948), accessed 1 June 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

³² *Ibid.*, 9.

³³ FT 11.

easily falling prey to ideologies.⁵⁴ Those that ‘abandon their tradition and allow others to rob their very soul’ in order to mimic and copy a stronger culture ‘end up losing not only their spiritual identity but also their moral consistency and, in the end, their intellectual, economic and political independence’.⁵⁵

Brotherhood is also weakened by spreading despair and discouragement, even under the guise of defending traditional values, employing a strategy of ridicule, suspicion, and relentless criticism; in a variety of ways, one denies the right of others to exist or to have an opinion. Their share of the truth and their values are rejected, and as a result, the life of society is impoverished.⁵⁶ We find ourselves in the times of ‘everybody against everybody’ when it is all the more difficult to perceive another being as a fellow human, a neighbour in need.⁵⁷ Some members of humankind: the poor, the disabled, unborn children, the elderly, we are able to ‘throw away’. Our obsession with cost reduction results in unemployment even when we know that ‘some economic rules have proved effective for growth, but not for integral human development.’⁵⁸

In such conditions, the search for cooperation for justice and peace seems an outdated utopia.⁵⁹ The encyclical mentions the Covid-19 pandemic as a reminder of a problem that no government can solve alone.⁴⁰ The pain, uncertainty, fear, knowing our limits that the pandemic took to the fore – all challenges our lifestyles, relationships, organisation of society, and the meaning of human existence.

Christological justification of the position that is introduced as the basis of human relationships can be recognised in the topic of migration: the relationship with the foreigner is built on the capability of ‘recognizing Christ’s face in the other’⁴¹ because ‘a believer has the chance to recognize that God loves every human being with endless love’. This love was manifested in Christ and his salvation sacrifice

⁵⁴ See FT 13.

⁵⁵ FT 14.

⁵⁶ FT 15.

⁵⁷ FT 16.

⁵⁸ FT 19, 21.

⁵⁹ See FT plans to set a goal for the development of entire human family are described as ‘madness’ (16), or ‘utopia’ (FT 30, 180, 190). This choice of words seems to underline the need of a vision for the future.

⁴⁰ FT 32.

⁴¹ FT 84: ‘I was a stranger and you accepted me...’.

for every human, ‘we believe that Christ shed his blood for each of us and that no one is beyond the scope of his universal love’.⁴² The mentality of xenophobia and closedness are incompatible with Christianity; human dignity is more important than origin, skin colour, or religion. Human dignity is the *legge suprema* of brotherly love.⁴³ Violence, nationalism, xenophobia, contempt, and oppression are, from the point of view of Christianity, unacceptable forms of relationships between humans.⁴⁴

The biblical and theological fundamental of brotherhood builds on the foundational characteristics of God in Jewish-Christian tradition: our experience shows God as the merciful Father and Creator of all. We are called to act like God: to have mercy on everyone (‘man has mercy over neighbour, but God has mercy for all his creatures’), he is merciful to all, (‘be merciful as your Father is’). There are no specifications in the category of ‘neighbour’, be it ethnic or national, because the category points to the father of all people. The goal of human life is also understood theologically (formulated in FT 68): we are created for fullness that can be attained only through love. In the language of Pope Francis, to love means to shift one’s attention to the other person and appreciate how nice, beautiful, and dear the person is. The ability to focus on the other and not to leave them even when facing their pain, but on the contrary, to spend time and come closer to them is again more than solidarity. According to the encyclical, it is an expression of the Christian faith. In *Fratelli tutti*, brotherhood has a significantly Christological fundamental; we are to recognise ‘Christ in each of our abandoned brothers and sisters’. It is through faith as the source of knowing God and his relationship with the world, ‘for believers come to know that God loves every man and woman with infinite love’. A part of Christian faith is a strong belief that ‘we believe that Christ shed his blood for each of us and that no one is beyond the scope of his universal love’.

⁴² FT 85.

⁴³ FT 39.

⁴⁴ According to FT it is sad that the Church took so long to denounce slavery and violence. It is for the development of theology and spirituality (i.e., not because of agreement in society or for some other reasons), there is no excuse for violence, etc.

3. A Dialogue in Society

In Chapter 6, the encyclical returns to the topic of dialogue, which means ‘approaching, speaking, listening, looking at, coming to know and understand one another, and to find common ground’.⁴⁵ Reason for the dialogue is to keep society together: ‘What would our world be like without the patient dialogue of the many generous persons who keep families and communities together. Unlike disagreement and conflict, persistent and courageous dialogue does not make headlines, but quietly helps the world to live much better than we imagine.’⁴⁶

Dialogue in society is impossible unless we respect the other person’s opinion, unless we recognise that their opinion consists of legitimate interests, and unless we believe that the other person has something to offer. The plurality of opinion may not be perceived as threatening:

When individuals or groups are consistent in their thinking, defend their values and convictions, and develop their arguments, this surely benefits society. Yet, this can only occur to the extent that there is genuine dialogue and openness to others. Indeed, ‘in a true spirit of dialogue, we grow in our ability to grasp the significance of what others say and do, even if we cannot accept it as our own conviction. In this way, it becomes possible to be frank and open about our beliefs, while continuing to seek points of contact, and above all, to work and struggle together.’⁴⁷

In our opinion, the following topic of the relation between the plurality of opinion and values and the search of universal values and truthfulness is one of the key passages in the encyclical. A true dialogue, according to Francis, cannot be based on relativism that is convicted that there are no universal principles or objective truths. This kind of tolerance ultimately leaves the interpretation of moral values to those in power: ‘When the culture itself is corrupt, and objective truth and universally valid principles are no longer upheld, then laws can only be seen as arbitrary impositions or obstacles to be avoided.’⁴⁸

On the contrary, Pope Francis claims it is possible to search for the truth that responds to our deepest convictions and gives meaning to

⁴⁵ FT 198.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ FT 203.

⁴⁸ FT 206.

our lives. Even laws have meaning when based on the conviction that ‘each human being is sacred and inviolable’.⁴⁹ The truth is defined as a firm foundation for human decisions and making laws. The truth is, according to Francis, connected with the recognition that ‘the intellect can investigate the reality of things through reflection, experience and dialogue, and come to recognize in that reality, which transcends it, the basis of certain universal moral demands.’⁵⁰ In this respect, Pope Francis cites John Paul II in the encyclical letter *Centesimus annus*: ‘If there is no transcendent truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people.’⁵¹

4. Dialogue as a Means of Finding Permanent Values and Objective Truth

However, is there a possibility of finding agreement in a pluralist society without resigning ourselves to the question of truth? The encyclical shows that any ephemeral agreement is not enough: ‘in a pluralistic society, dialogue is the best way to realize what ought always to be affirmed and respected apart from any ephemeral consensus.’⁵² Such a dialogue is to be built on rational arguments with a variety of perspectives and the contribution of different fields of knowledge and points of view. ‘Nor can it exclude the conviction that it is possible to arrive at certain fundamental truths always to be upheld.’ These enduring truths are to be always held by society: they are above all agreement and transcend our situational contexts. Our understanding of these values, their meaning and scope can increase, but in themselves, these truths are ‘held to be enduring by virtue of their inherent meaning’, Pope Francis states.

From values, we are moving towards the truth – values are not necessarily a goal of society’s interests, social agreement, or objective truth: there is no need to perceive social convenience and objective truth as opposites. The Pope speaks about certain basic structures ‘to support

⁴⁹ FT 207.

⁵⁰ FT 273.

⁵¹ John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (1st May 1991), 44. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 83 (1991), 849, accessed 1 June 2021, <https://bit.ly/3wzaQjK>.

⁵² FT 211.

our development and survival⁵³ – there are enduring and robust ethical principles with their source in human nature. This nature was created by God; therefore, he is the basis.⁵⁴

An example of truth that corresponds to human nature apart from all cultural change is respecting human dignity: people are worth more than things and circumstances, therefore cannot be apprehended as objects:

The dignity of others is to be respected in all circumstances, not because that dignity is something we have invented or imagined, but because human beings possess an intrinsic worth superior to that of material objects and contingent situations. This requires that they be treated differently. That every human being possesses an inalienable dignity is a truth that corresponds to human nature apart from all cultural change.⁵⁵

Given this idea of the basis of our social interaction and culture of dialogue in enduring truth, we see that, in *Fratelli tutti*, the Pope approaches the reader out of the Jesus-like basis of brotherhood and personal character of truth. This truth is not at our disposal; we do not own it. On the contrary, we answer to this truth. By setting this truth, our goal leads to an ethical commitment to our neighbour.

For this message, the Pope chooses a radical Christocentric attitude as a starting point for the dialogue, showing that dialogue is not a threat to the identity of those engaged. On the contrary, dialogue presupposes an identity deeply rooted. Ethical aspects of *Fratelli tutti* reveal a strategy that does not give up on the idea of the absolute horizon of the truth in God's Revelation, yet instead of deducing the truths from Revelation the Pope chooses to look in the opposite direction – faith is embodied in attitudes that point to the absolute horizon of Revelation.

In *Fratelli tutti*, the Pope embodied his deeply rooted faith in values. The encyclical engages the reader, religious or secular alike, as a partner in a dialogue, inviting them to what might be a fruitful journey in

⁵³ FT 212.

⁵⁴ 'As believers, we are convinced that human nature, as the source of ethical principles, was created by God, and that ultimately it is he who gives those principles their solid foundation. This does not result in an ethical rigidity nor does it lead to the imposition of any one moral system, since fundamental and universally valid moral principles can be embodied in different practical rules.' FT 214.

⁵⁵ FT 213.

search of fundamental truth and enduring values⁵⁶ that anchor human dignity and social justice. The attitude creates a ‘culture of dialogue’ rooted deeper than in ephemeral agreement, in eternal values that, for Christians, are embodied in the story of Jesus Christ.⁵⁷ In this sense, the Pope’s attitude is both dialogical and *missiological*.

The value of truth and the meaning of truth as value is upheld and repeatedly stressed in *Fratelli tutti*. The overall concept is that the fact of the existence of humanity is in favour of ‘objective’ (transcendent) truth. As a first step, the existence of such truth is not to be *a priori* excluded as nonsensical. Opposing relativism, *Fratelli tutti* points out that deeper truth and meaning is inherent to the very core of humanity:

Is it possible to be concerned for truth, to seek the truth that responds to life’s deepest meaning? What is law without the conviction, born of age-old reflection and great wisdom, that each human being is sacred and inviolable? If society is to have a future, it must respect the truth of our human dignity and submit to that truth. Murder is not wrong simply because it is socially unacceptable and punished by law, but because of a deeper conviction. This is a non-negotiable truth attained by the use of reason and accepted in conscience. A society is noble and decent not least for its support of the pursuit of truth and its adherence to the most basic of truths.⁵⁸

To a situation of corrosive politics of endless differentiating between ‘us’ and ‘them’, the Pope brings a message of ‘political love’⁵⁹ that views differences as God-given plurality. Engaging the imagination of the reader, Francis encourages working in a small scale yet with a larger

⁵⁶ FT 211.

⁵⁷ See FT 277. The Pope adheres to the idea that God’s is present in different religious traditions (as stated in the document *Nostra Aetate*). Yet the Pope strongly affirms the idea that Jesus Christ is the fundamental and unique source of values for Christians and the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the approval of human dignity and brotherhood of all people.

⁵⁸ FT 207.

⁵⁹ Pope Francis uses this rather unusual term consisting of two words from seemingly different vocabularies, public (political) and private (love), echoing the slogan ‘Private is political’ coined in late 1960s human rights movement. However, in *Fratelli tutti* this slogan seems to encourage thoughts on private vices (malice, hatred) that in the age of populism became political force. For more on *Fratelli tutti* as a political programme, see a paper by Prof Petr Kratochvíl from the Institute of International Relationships in Prague: Petr Kratochvíl, ‘Foundation of Pope Francis’ (Geo)political Programme, International Studies Association’s Religion and International Relations Section,’ last modified 14 December 2020, accessed 1 June 2021, <https://bit.ly/3yNZ6LY>.

perspective of human society as a ‘polyhedron, in which the value of each individual is respected, where “the whole is greater than the part, but it is also greater than the sum of its parts”’.⁶⁰

The model chosen from geometry illustrates the principle of appreciating differences in society. Yet another example of differences adding value to pluralist society in *Fratelli tutti* comes from Saint Irenaeus: ‘One who seeks the truth should not concentrate on the differences between one note and another; thinking as if each was created separately and apart from the others; instead, he should realize that one and the same person composed the entire melody.’⁶¹

Again, this appreciation of the differences that can create melody is not some shallow positive and sentimental outlook on reality. Rather, the Pope is realistic in describing the culture of ‘comfortable consumerist isolation’ that ‘encourages remarkable hostility, insults, abuse, defamation and verbal violence destructive of others’.⁶² *Fratelli tutti* makes sure the reader is being constantly reminded of the illusion of an individual with no ties to society and relationship with others.⁶⁵

As already mentioned, Francis’ idea of social and political life comes from Christian ethics of dialogue: being aware of one’s own identity allows for not perceiving otherness as a threat; on the contrary, as a God-given difference, it allows others to be themselves and be different from us: ‘Seeing ourselves from the perspective of another, of one who is different, we can better recognize our own unique features and those of our culture: its richness, its possibilities and its limitations.’⁶⁴

In both documents from Abu Dhabi and in the *Fratelli tutti* encyclical, there is no polishing or whitewashing the differences between the foundations of Christianity in the person of Jesus Christ and Islam in order to reach agreement. Both documents are reminders that values like truthfulness, justice, and mercy are common denominators pointing to the truth, being starting points from the current situation in which religion is often mentioned as a dividing force. In this sense, the values are not a compromise at the expense of truth claims, but they are called to serve a pragmatic goal, the goal of peaceful coexistence.

⁶⁰ FT 145.

⁶¹ FT 58.

⁶² FT 44.

⁶⁵ FT 44.

⁶⁴ FT 147.

This brings us back to the theological fundamentals of the *Fratelli tutti* encyclical: the secular basis, i.e., a declaration of equality and civic society, do not suffice for a claim to treat each other in a brotherly way. Citing Benedict XVI and John Paul II, the encyclical reminds us that the lasting fundamental principles of human relationships are impossible to be found without grounding them in transcendental truth: ‘If there is no transcendental truth, in obedience to which man achieves his full identity, then there is no sure principle for guaranteeing just relations between people.’⁶⁵ Then, self-interests of classes, groups, or nations take place, setting people against each other. ‘If one does not acknowledge transcendental truth, then the force of power takes over, and each person tends to make full use of the means at his disposal in order to impose his own interests or his own opinion, with no regard for the rights of others...’⁶⁶

5. Faith Embodied in Attitudes: Ethics of the Good Samaritan

We have summed up the main ethical approach in both texts being faith embodied in attitudes. A practical question arises: What reaction do the authors expect? How practically to achieve the attitudes of brotherhood and solidarity? The Pope portrays the reality lacking in both principles. The main ethical question arises here: What are we to do?

The three major categories of normative ethics (consequentialism emphasising the consequences of actions, Kantian deontology emphasising norms and rules, and virtue ethics based on virtues and moral character) in reality often blend or overlap or are complementary.⁶⁷ However, in order to capture the main principle in the documents that warn against the divisive spirit, aggression, and destruction, we come to think that a change in the character of individuals and society is desirable to create the ‘culture of dialogue’, of ‘political love’.

There is a hint at the beginning of *Fratelli tutti* pointing to the biblical source of the Pope’s ethical approach demonstrated in both documents.⁶⁸ The approach serves as an example of faith embodied in

⁶⁵ FT 273.

⁶⁶ FT 273.

⁶⁷ See Jef Van Gerwen, *Origins of Christian Ethics in The Blackwell Companion of Christian Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 213.

⁶⁸ There is a connection between the two documents. At the beginning of *Fratelli tutti* the Pope refers explicitly to the ‘Document on Human Fraternity’: ‘Issues of human

attitudes: 'A plan that would set great goals for the development of our entire human family nowadays sounds like madness.'⁶⁹

The Pope summarises his persistent effort of peaceful living of the entire human family in the word 'madness'. Further on, the text explains reasons for such a strong expression not commonly used in the official language of declarations and encyclicals. A poignant and realistic portrait of the society in the 21st century shows growing estrangement between individuals and a failing effort to make the world less divided and more just. The word madness, in this sense, may point out the inequality of the means to reverse the trend. The concept of reason coming short, of madness or foolishness in this context might, in a document relying so often on biblical imagery, point in yet another direction: when the apostle Paul in the First Letter to the Corinthians defines his approach to the Gospel among Greek and Jewish culture and thinking, Paul coins the phrase 'foolishness' (μωρία) of the Cross.⁷⁰

Paul addresses his message of 'foolishness' of the Cross to the Church in Corinth divided and disagreeable about whether to follow Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or Christ. The unusual term 'madness' in *Fratelli tutti*, therefore, might suggest that the same strategy that Paul uses in the divided Church in Corinth, Pope Francis suggests and plans on using in our divided world. What seems 'mad' is a reference to the humility and *kenosis* of Jesus Christ on the Cross as a fundament of strategy in the divided world of particular opinions.

The Pope, in this strategy of the 'madness' of the Cross, adopts the concepts that the modern world was built on freedom, equality, and

fraternity and social friendship have always been a concern of mine. In recent years, I have spoken of them repeatedly and in different settings. In this Encyclical, I have sought to bring together many of those statements and to situate them in a broader context of reflection. In the preparation of *Laudato Si'*, I had a source of inspiration in my brother Bartholomew, the Orthodox Patriarch, who has spoken forcefully of our need to care for creation. In this case, I have felt particularly encouraged by the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, with whom I met in Abu Dhabi, where we declared that "God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters." This was no mere diplomatic gesture, but a reflection born of dialogue and common commitment.' (5)

⁶⁹ FT 16. In Pope Francis and Ahmad Al-Tayyeb: Document, family is often mentioned in the context of a basic cell in society, the place of moral education and safety, deserving respect, protection, and support. Pope Francis uses the wider term 'human family' 41 times in *Fratelli tutti*.

⁷⁰ 1Cor 1:18–25.

the brotherhood of all people – and connects them again with their meaning. Embracing these concepts has its precedents especially in the documents of the Second Vatican Council. The novelty here is the Pope’s radical emphasis on the ethics of brotherhood. The Pope’s struggle to care for the *polis* is summarised here: the polis meaning the whole world and all people its legitimate citizens. As the Pope notes in *Fratelli tutti*, ‘extremism and polarisation have become political tools.’⁷¹ Solidarity and mutual love in this sense can be considered political qualities and tools. Therefore, either directly or non-directly, we can speak, albeit unusually, of ‘political love’, which is even the name of one chapter in *Fratelli tutti*.

Differences in opinion about organising and leading society and values have become tools in the hands of populists. The social networks on the internet encourage and capitalise the users’ inclination to controversy. There is an unlimited number of creating and dividing lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’. The Pope addresses this principle as one of the reasons of the current growth of nationalism and repeatedly warns against this phenomenon recalling the inauspicious historical lessons with nationalism.

This might be a point where we can afford a sceptical approach coined at the beginning of *Fratelli tutti* as ‘madness’. How can such trends be reversed? No less than a steady change in attitudes is asked for. This might be the reason why the parable of the Good Samaritan is the axial text in *Fratelli tutti* trying to attract our imagination and moral sense. The core of the parable is the Samaritan’s attitude.

The parable in which a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan come across a hurt man by the side of the road speaks to reality on a deeper level; when the Pope explains the inherent human dignity in *Fratelli tutti*, he implies that the reflection of reality and a real dialogue brings us to fundamental ethical principles:

For this reason, human beings have the same inviolable dignity in every age of history and no one can consider himself or herself authorized by particular situations to deny this conviction or to act against it. The intellect can investigate the reality of things through reflection, experience and dialogue, and come to recognize in that reality, which transcends it, the basis of certain universal moral demands. To agnostics, this foundation

⁷¹ FT 15.

could prove sufficient to confer a solid and stable universal validity on basic and non-negotiable ethical principles that could serve to prevent further catastrophes. As believers, we are convinced that human nature, as the source of ethical principles, was created by God, and that ultimately it is he who gives those principles their solid foundation.⁷²

The parable of the Good Samaritan uses the same logic, warning the reader against the knowledge (truths) about God yet abstracting from reality (and the neighbour beside the road). This is why the late German theologian Dorothee Soelle calls this parable ‘an anti-fundamentalist one par excellence’.⁷³ Warning against fundamentalism, political or religious, is the ethical heritage of both documents. When reading the parable, it is obviously very easy to identify with the Samaritan and, in this way, get ahead of the moral of the story. The moral is a constant examination of whether the truth about God becomes a reality in the relationship with the neighbour.

Conclusion

In his doctrine of faith, it is clear that the Pope does not diverge from his predecessors. Novelty is the radicality of his dialogical approach with which the Pope enters the debate with the reader, demonstrating the very attitude the reader is challenged to adopt. Francis is not entering the debate with clearly defined doctrinal truths, yet he is challenging the reader not to *a priori* exclude the possibility that absolute, eternal, and objective truths exist. The Pope shows that belief in the existence of objective truth is not necessarily contradictory to society’s interest in finding agreement. In other words, Francis is inviting the reader to discover the world enlightened by the objective truth without putting himself into a position that identifies itself with the truth. He repeatedly warns against moral relativism in which particular opinions masked as ‘truths’ claim to be universal.

The key part is the Pope’s belief in the transcendental dignity of each individual: that is, the ‘religious basis of brotherhood’. Brotherhood built on the experience of God the Creator and Father of all is, from

⁷² FT 213, 214.

⁷³ Quoted in Maureen Junker-Kenny, *Approaches to Theological Ethics* (London: T&TClark, 2019), 94.

the perspective of Christian theology, the only relevant possibility of discussing the category. According to Francis, this foundation can be offered even more generally.

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VARIA

FRANCIS' IDEA OF THE CHURCH: OUTLINE OF AN ECCLESIOLOGY

MARK JOSEPH ZAMMIT

ABSTRACT

In the past eight years, since the election of Francis as the first Latin American pontiff in history, the Church has experienced new manners of being and acting. Even though she has also been in a constant state of *aggiornamento*, Francis' vision has contributed greatly to this concept of being a perfect image of the ideal Church of Christ (cf. *Ecclesiam Suam* 10) and a better servant of humanity. The objective of this study is to present an outline of Francis' main ecclesiological concepts, in the awareness that this endeavour can never be completely exhaustive. For this reason, the article is divided into two main sections. In this first one, the bedrocks of his ecclesiological thoughts are studied. These include his Jesuit vocation, the CELAM conferences and vision, and the Argentine theology of the people. In the second section, his main ecclesiological themes are analysed: the people of God, a poor Church for the poor, ecumenism, reform, and an ecological Church.

Keywords

Church; Ecclesiology; Evangelisation; Francis; Mission; People of God; Reform; Theology of the people

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His gentle and humble *buonasera!* with which, upon being elected, he started his Petrine ministry, marked the start of the pontificate which influenced the universal Church with his gestures and attitudes. Despite appearing simple and worldly, they carry a theological and ecclesiological profundity, which significantly changed the pastoral attitudes of the Church.

These words and gestures are based on theological and pastoral options – mainly found in the teachings of Vatican II and Latin

American theology – serving as the guiding light for the Church today. The ecclesiological vision of Francis is very particular since it never distances itself from the cultural realities of people and the concrete situations in human life. Francis’ pontificate is proving to be an evangelical hermeneutic of culture, which assumes the praxis of Jesus as the focus of all theological and pastoral work for the renewal of the Church and society.

This study is divided into two parts. In the first section, Francis’ ecclesiological roots are presented: his Ignatian vocation, the CELAM conferences and the theology of the people. By delving into Francis’ roots, one may understand today’s ecclesiological priorities. In the second section, the salient ecclesiological concepts are analysed. The article finally recapitulates Francis’ main objectives for a clearer understanding of his vision of the Church.

1. Jesuit, Latin American, Argentine: In Search of his Ecclesiological Roots

Having a Latin American pope after more than 1000 years of European pontificates and the first Jesuit pope in history implies that the Church is being marked with a particular kind of newness, which has not been experienced for many years. This newness includes realities such as the Church’s peripheries, mission, and Ignatian discernment—all intimately bound in the person of Francis. All of these theological themes find their roots in three experiences which greatly influenced the personality of Bergoglio: his Jesuit vocation, the CELAM conferences, and the Argentine theology of the people.

1.1 The Ideal of St Ignatius

Pope Francis’ Jesuit formation, influenced by the Spiritual Exercises and the reform of heart to which these Exercises aspire, reflects itself in how he perceives reform in the Church.¹ What are the salient elements of this spirituality, which may help us understand Francis’ thoughts? First of all, change is brought about in the Church when her members empty themselves from elements and attitudes which hinder

¹ Antonio Spadaro, ‘La reforma de la Iglesia según Francisco. Las raíces ignacianas,’ in *La reforma y las reformas en la Iglesia*, eds. Antonio Spadaro and Carlos María Galli (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2016), 33–50, 36.

her mission. In his homily to his fellow Jesuits on the 3rd of January 2014, we can read:

Each one of us, as Jesuits, who follow Jesus should be ready to empty himself. We are called to this humility: to be 'emptied' beings. To be men who are not centred on themselves because the centre of the Society is Christ and his Church. And God is the Deus semper maior, the God who always surprises us. And if the God of surprises is not at the centre, the Society becomes disoriented. Because of this, to be a Jesuit means to be a person of incomplete thought, of open thought: because he thinks always looking to the horizon which is the ever greater glory of God, who ceaselessly surprises us. And this is the restlessness of our inner abyss.²

This implies an emptying of self in favour of the greater mission of the Church, with the aim of acquiring a universal vision in readiness to serve in any part of the world.³

Secondly, discernment is fundamental to Francis. The late philosopher, theologian, and friend of Bergoglio, Juan Carlos Scannone, describes him as 'governing through discernment'.⁴ The Ignatian spirituality is totally grounded in history and in dialogue with culture. For Francis, a correct ecclesial discernment is lived when discerning one's interior experience while journeying in history and dialoguing with reality.⁵ In other words, it means discerning God's will in the daily circumstances of one's life and in the life of the Church.

Thirdly, this implies openness to reality. Discernment and reform necessitate an attitude open to all possibilities, which aids historical processes to arrive at their objective of reform. Francis' style is based on listening and dialogue with people, understanding reality, and engagement in the lives of the people. Following the same spirit of the Exercises of openness to God and to discernment, Francis prefers to use processes in his manner of leading the Church. He advances and decides at par with the whole Church.⁶

² Pope Francis, Homily, (Rome, 3 January 2014), <https://bit.ly/3d5HxiB>.

³ Spadaro, 'La reforma de la Iglesia según Francisco,' 36.

⁴ Juan Carlos Scannone, *El papa del pueblo. Conversaciones con Bernadette Sauvaget* (Madrid: PPC, 2017), 14.

⁵ Spadaro, 'La reforma de la Iglesia según Francisco,' 37.

⁶ Scannone, *El papa del pueblo*, 30.

Fourthly, his idea of processes includes encountering limits and conflicts as part of the spiritual journey.⁷ His method of graduality and of accepting limits belongs to his manner of humanising society, which opens up to the greater glory of God. At the same time, his idea of historical processes also tackles temptations and problems within the Church. These he confronts with the vision he has of reality, which comes from the meditation of the two standards of St Ignatius, which involves the battle between good and evil.⁸

Furthermore, he owes great inspiration to the Jesuit saint Peter Faber, whom he considers as an exemplar and model not only of a profound interior life but also of structural reform.⁹ We may highlight four elements from Faber's spirituality and life which influenced Bergoglio and marked his being.

Firstly, Faber's Ignatian ideal of the spirituality of journeying influenced Bergoglio's notion of journeying and encounter. In particular, he affirms:

In the personal experience of God, I cannot do without the journey. I would say that God is found walking, searching for him and allowing oneself to be searched by Him. They are two paths that meet ... That is why I say that my experience with God occurs along the way, in the search, to let Him search for me.¹⁰

Secondly, Bergoglio owes to Faber his spirit of discernment, a crucial element within the Ignatian vocation and a guide for the Bergoglian pontificate.¹¹ Discernment may be supported by living the Ignatian maxim *non coerceri maximo, sed contineri minimo divinum est*.¹² In other words, it means not to pose any limit to that which is great, while keeping at heart that which is small and simple. This implies showing greatness through the daily living of the mundane moments, giving value to everything in the light of the kingdom of God. In a spiritual

⁷ Spadaro, 'La reforma de la Iglesia según Francisco,' 41.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 43.

⁹ Santiago Madrigal Terrazas, 'Fundamentos teológicos de la reforma eclesial en el proyecto del Papa Francisco,' in *La reforma y las reformas en la Iglesia*, Instituto Teológico Compostelano (Santiago de Compostela, 2017), 353–387, 385.

¹⁰ Francis as quoted by Madrigal Terrazas, 'Fundamentos teológicos de la reforma eclesial,' 385.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 386.

¹² *Ibid.*

conference given in 1981 in Buenos Aires, Bergoglio describes this maxim as showing interest in small things while not being fearful of what is great.¹⁵ This maxim can be easily felt in *Evangelii Gaudium's* [EG] principle that *the whole is superior to the part*.

Thirdly, Faber was a man who lived the joy of the Gospel. His entire spiritual life reflected the beauty of God's word. In EG 171, we encounter Faber's phrase 'time is God's messenger,' which serves, in a way, as the basis of Francis' other principle that *time is greater than space*. The joy of the Gospel is lived in time, the place where God's experience is lived and hoped for.

1.2 CELAM Conferences: The Awakening of the Latin American Ecclesiology

Francis is not only a Jesuit but also a Latin American Jesuit. To understand him, we must also analyse which salient ecclesial moments of the continent marked both the Pope and the Church's mission.

The CELAM conference of Medellín (1968) was a crucial experience in Latin America since it gave an important thrust to the evangelising mission for the Church in this continent by introducing Vatican II to this continental Church with an attitude of compromise, in favour of liberation of the poor. The Puebla conference (1979) assumed the call for the evangelisation of culture, which *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [EN] (1975) had presented, and made it the central vocation of the pastoral work of the Church. Mission is viewed as the relationship between evangelisation, liberation, and culture.¹⁴

These former conferences are the foundation of the Argentine theology of the people. However, Aparecida [DA] (2007) is the CELAM conference which mostly influenced Bergoglio, due to his active involvement in the redaction of its final document. This conference gave a new motivation to the Latin American Church for it to be in a permanent state of mission, strongly favourable to pastoral conversion by means of retrieving the sense of discipleship with Jesus Christ in order to be able to communicate this life of Christ with others (DA 368). For Bergoglio, this conference was the impetus of a vocation to embrace a Church which goes forth to meet the world, especially those who are

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴ Carlos María Galli, 'En la Iglesia sopla un viento del sur. La novedad de América Latina en la nueva evangelización. Diálogo con el *Instrumentum laboris* para el Sínodo de 2012,' *Teología* 108 (2012): 101–172, 130.

considered the least.¹⁵ To delve into the document of Aparecida actually means to enter into the heart of Francis' reaching out to the world, especially to the peripheries, and into his interest in mission.¹⁶

Hence, we may affirm that Francis' idea of the Church reform and missionary concept of *the Church which goes forth* find their roots not only in Vatican Council II but in a special way in the Latin American manner of appropriating the council's teaching in Medellín, in Puebla, and in Aparecida.¹⁷

1.3 The Theology of the People: Bergoglio's Theological Roots

Francis' theology forms part of the branch of the theology of liberation, which focuses on the praxis of the people. This Argentine theology, also called *theology of the people*,¹⁸ highlights the integral and evangelical character of liberation, which is pursued in the culture of the people through the evangelisation of their culture. This theology distinguishes itself from liberation theology in two main elements: firstly, the centrality of the role of the people and popular praxis; secondly, the importance of culture. Therefore, the people and culture are the two pillars of the Argentine theology of the people and the way in which an integral liberation can be achieved. A definition of *people* and their *culture* from this theology may help us comprehend better Francis' thoughts on these themes in his idea of the Church because he is 'son of the theology of the people'.¹⁹

In the theology of the people, *people* is a central theme and includes its own history, culture, and beliefs. In other words, the people are 'a community of men gathered on the basis of the participation of the same culture and that, historically, realize their culture in a determined political will or decision',²⁰ a definition based upon the vision of the Argentine episcopal document of San Miguel (1969), which serves as the basis of the main elements of the theology of the people. A people

¹⁵ Ibid., 149.

¹⁶ Madrigal Terrazas, 'Fundamentos teológicos de la reforma eclesial,' 369.

¹⁷ Santiago Madrigal Terrazas, *El giro eclesiológico en la recepción del Vaticano II* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2017), 298.

¹⁸ See Juan Carlos Scannone, *La teología del pueblo. Raíces teológicas del papa Francisco* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2017), 16–20.

¹⁹ Ibid., 15.

²⁰ Lucio Gera, 'Pueblo, religión del pueblo e Iglesia,' in *Escritos Teológico-Pastorales de Lucio Gera I. Del Pre concilio a la Conferencia de Puebla (1956–1981)*, eds. V.R. Azcuay, C.M. Galli and M. González (Buenos Aires: Ágape, 2006), 717–744, 724.

is formed where there is the common goal of unity between persons who share a common culture, history, and politics and in which the Gospel values are already present. The strength of the people is not encountered in its political objectives, like other branches of liberation theology, but rather in its culture and faith, which makes it subject to its own promotion and liberation.

On the other hand, in the theology of the people, *culture* is the activity which places the person in relation to other realities (God, nature, and other persons) with the scope of one's realisation.²¹ It is the style of life, which characterises one's manner of living by particular values. Thus, culture has an active dimension (the cultivation of culture) and an objective (the person and the people realise themselves). Culture is a historical reality, deeply immersed in history, since the realisation of the person, of the people, and of culture as a whole is achieved in time.²² The people creates its own manner of living, based upon particular values which reflect the being of the particular people and which help it reach its realisation.²³

The themes of people and culture are united by the option for the poor, central to Latin American theology. The poor are the ones who conserve the fundamentals and values of the culture of a people, whose projects coincide with the historical project of justice and peace, which the Latin American continent strives for.²⁴ Thus, the preferential option for the poor, which began in Medellín and was crystallised in Puebla, finds its necessary strength in the evangelisation of culture, which the Argentine theologians reflect upon in their theology of the people.

2. An Outline of Francis' Ecclesiological Themes

Heretofore the three main elements which influenced Bergoglio in his vision of the Church have been briefly presented. We shall now attempt to analyse the main themes of his ecclesiology that are a result of these elements. The scope is not to conduct an exhaustive investigation of his ecclesiology but rather to present an outline of the main

²¹ Lucio Gera, 'Puebla: evangelización de la cultura,' in *Escritos Teológico-Pastorales de Lucio Gera I*, 817–839, 823.

²² Lucio Gera, 'Identidad cultural y nacional,' *Sedoi* 73 (1984): 5–40, 16.

²³ Lucio Gera, 'Cultura y dependencia a la luz de la reflexión teológica,' in *Escritos Teológico-Pastorales de Lucio Gera I*, 605–625, 606.

²⁴ Scannone, *La teología del pueblo*, 20.

concepts, which serve as guiding force for his vision of Church and manner of leading the Church today. These include his gestures, his idea of people of God, the poor Church of the poor, the ecumenical endeavour, reform, and finally his idea of an ecological Church.

2.1 An Ecclesiology of Gestures

Francis' gestures already indicate a new way of presenting the Church. They complement and explain more vividly his principal theological themes. This is because 'the way he says things, the *how*, the gestures, contain a strong symbolic value,'²⁵ which help understand deep theological concepts and through which Francis creates a sort of incarnated theology. The following are the main gestures that have contributed towards a presentation of the Church that belongs to the people and serves them:

- i) The attention given to the poor: His whole life and pontificate are marked with particular attention given to the most vulnerable and marginalised. In fact, every meeting with the faithful and every apostolic journey includes encounters with such realities. His own choice of name reflects this priority of poverty given to his pontificate and to all the Church.
- ii) The female face of the Church: Francis also gives priority to women, not only by nominating women within the various structures of the Holy See, but also by being close to their sufferings. These include visiting female prisons, denouncing labour exploitation and abuse, and being close to the victims of mafia.
- iii) Close to migrants: Francis's gestures invite the Church to hold in her bosom migrants and denounce their suffering. Two of these include his apostolic visit to the migrant camps in the Italian island of Lampedusa in 2013 and his moment of prayer at the U.S.-Mexico border in 2016 and thus presenting a Church which is against the building of walls of segregation but in favour of integration of nations.
- iv) Simplicity: Francis' simplicity of life, simplicity of clothes, choice of a car, and home apartment all present a model for all Christians to live a simple but intense life as people of God.
- v) Close to the people: It is not the first time that we see Francis taking a selfie with groups of people, or rejoicing over something typically

²⁵ Scannone, *El papa del pueblo*, 71.

Argentine donated to him, or even joking with visitors, or surprising many with his phone calls. All these actions reflect his will of being a 'normal' person journeying with others and sharing everything that belongs to humanity by being close to people. His daily mass in Casa Santa Marta also reflects a pontificate, which is open to the faithful and being with them.

Whilst appreciating the gestures of every pontiff, the election of Pope Francis brought about a style of gestures that also carry pedagogical meaning since they represent an ecclesial lifestyle which Francis is trying to instil in the daily lives of the faithful and in the Church institution. Nevertheless, gestures are accompanied by words, which together present an outline of an ecclesiology more holistically, as we shall now analyse.

2.2 The 'Holy, Faithful People of God': The People of God in the Peoples of the World

Francis' understanding of people of God is formed by two essential elements: the teachings of Vatican II and the idea of the theology of the people. In line with his predecessors, Francis continues with this search for ecclesiological identity especially in his programmatic *Evangelii Gaudium*, which highlights the vision of his pontificate and idea of the Church based upon *Lumen Gentium* [LG] (cf. EG 17).

In an interview by Antonio Spadaro, the new elected Pope Francis immediately expresses his idea of people of God:

The image of the church I like is that of the holy, faithful people of God. This is the definition I often use, and then there is that image from the Second Vatican Council's 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' (No. 12). Belonging to a people has a strong theological value. In the history of salvation, God has saved a people. There is no full identity without belonging to a people. No one is saved alone, as an isolated individual, but God attracts us looking at the complex web of relationships that take place in the human community. God enters into this dynamic, this participation in the web of human relationships. The people itself constitutes a subject. And the church is the people of God on the journey through history, with joys and sorrows.²⁶

²⁶ Pope Francis, Interview by Antonio Spadaro, (Vatican, 19 August 2013), <https://bit.ly/5x2c9Jj>.

These words totally condense the teaching of the Argentine theology of the people on the people of God, and this theme forms the foundation of Bergoglio's ecclesiology. What salient elements can we extract from this affirmation regarding his idea of people of God, which crystallises itself in EG?

First of all, Francis' idea is very conciliar, based on LG 12. This constitution highlights the common priesthood of everyone, before any ministerial division or service, as an essential element of the Church. It presents the election of the new people of God, the Church, guided by Christ as its head, and called to love and be missionary to all people.²⁷ This same doctrine is very much the basis of EG, in which this conciliar doctrine is linked to the category of people as understood in Argentina. Francis' intention is to enhance the relation between the mystery of the Church originating in the Trinity and the concrete historical and cultural forms of the people of God in the world.

Secondly, by including the history of salvation in his definition, he is showing the importance of history, especially since God reveals himself in history, which is the reality in which the people of God is journeying. Through the discernment of the signs of the times, one may capture the salvific presence of God in the events of history, the way He acts in history, where He is conducting it and what He reveals to it.

Moreover, and in a third setting, history includes all that forms the people: the journey of faith, political endeavours, economic progress, and cultural changes. Since the Church is formed in history and shaped by culture and, as Francis affirms, 'grace supposes culture' (EG 115), this implies that God's salvation is experienced and passes through the fabric that builds up the community. Essential to this fabric, according to the Argentine Pope, is popular religiosity, which is 'a spirituality incarnated in the culture of the lowly' (EG 124 & DA 263). It is a spirituality pregnant with symbols, which already holds the seeds of the Gospel, and the place in which God's presence can be discerned. Hence, culture is a constitutive element of the people of God on earth. Francis holds that the 'universal Church is a communion of particular inculturated churches and, indirectly, of peoples and cultures.'²⁸ The catholic dimension of the Church is fully realised in the unity of this diversity.

²⁷ Gérard Philips, *La Iglesia y su misterio en el Concilio Vaticano II. Historia, texto y comentario de la constitución Lumen gentium*, vol. 1 (Barcelona: Editorial Herder, 1968), 171–172.

²⁸ Galli, 'En la Iglesia sopla un viento del sur,' 116.

We perceive Francis' appreciation of diversity in his words: 'beauty of her varied face' (EG 116), 'multifaceted and inviting harmony' (EG 117), and 'cultural diversity is not a threat to Church unity' (EG 117).

Fourthly, Francis thinks of the Church as a concrete human community of mutual influence and interdependence. Conceiving the Church in this manner implies thinking of the concrete realities of the community together with the need of including and integrating every person within the whole group. The role of the local Church becomes crucial here since it serves as the ideal integrating community within a particular geographical territory. Its role is important not only on the level of human aid but also on an evangelising level owing to the fact that it is 'the primary subject of evangelisation, since it is the concrete manifestation of the one Church in one specific place' (EG 30).

In fifth place, within this community, the people are a collective subject. We immediately sense this role of the common priesthood of the people of God when he asks their blessing in St Peter's Square upon being elected as pontiff. Moreover, this means that the people are not only the subject of their own history and culture, but also of evangelisation, that is, of the Church's mission: 'the entire people of God proclaims the Gospel' (EG 111). In the theology of the people, the poor amongst the people are the authentic subjects of evangelisation since the presence of God, who chooses to direct his love to them in a preferential manner, can be encountered in them. They are also living signs of evangelical fraternity and solidarity.²⁹

2.5 A Poor Church for the Poor: 'Called to Care for the Vulnerable of the Earth' (EG 209)

Francis' social reflections on the reality of poverty are a continuation of Paul VI's *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (EN 29–39) and *Populorum Progressio*, which teach the relation that must exist between evangelisation and the social commitment of the Church.³⁰ Moreover, similarly to the initiatives in Medellín and Puebla, Francis continues with the call of making the Church conscious of the structural injustices, which create poverty.

If the Council represents the Church reaching out to the world, Medellín is the great breakthrough of the Church that reaches out

²⁹ Lucio Gera, 'San Miguel, una promesa escondida,' in *Escritos Teológico-Pastorales de Lucio Gera II. De la Conferencia de Puebla a nuestros días (1982–2007)*, eds. V.R. Azcuy, J.C. Caamaño and C.M. Galli (Buenos Aires: Ágape, 2007), 271–295, 289.

³⁰ Madrigal Terrazas, 'Fundamentos teológicos de la reforma eclesial,' 377.

to the poor. Furthermore, Puebla then crystallises the vocation of the Church in favour of the poor: ‘we affirm the need for the conversion of the whole Church for a preferential option for the poor, with a view to their integral liberation’ (DP 1134). Francis continues with the incomplete agenda regarding the poor of Vatican II, of Medellin, and of Puebla to move the issue of poverty from the peripheries towards the centre of the Church and of society.⁵¹

Involvement with the poor does not mean simply giving alms, but rather a choice based on God’s example of becoming poor for the sake of humanity, which serves as a dimension for the life of the Church. When delving into the theme of the poor, the Church is encountering God’s face whose love commences from the poor.⁵² Therefore, a Church of the poor implies serving them whilst at the same time learning from the lives of the poor, from their participation in the *sensus fidei*, and from their experience of the suffering Christ (cf. EG 198). This is because the life of the poor and their expressions of piety are a theological locus⁵³ of the experience of God and coordinates of the new evangelisation (cf. EG 126). They are criteria for the Church’s discernment of the authenticity of her life and mission (cf. EG 195).

He addresses two important issues in order to be a Church of the poor and for the poor⁵⁴:

- i) Social inclusion of the poor: EG 186 explicitly shows that the Church’s mission in favour of the poor must start from ‘our faith in Christ, who became poor, and was always close to the poor and the outcast’. God’s mercy is authentically experienced in the preferential option of the poor of the Church, to include both their liberation as well as the promotion of their lives. Moreover, working in favour of the poor does not only mean making changes to structures but also to the culture of the people (cf. EG 188).
- ii) Dialogue in favour of social peace and friendship: A Church for the poor implies striving to integrate the poor into society resulting in social peace and friendship. This theme, discussed in EG 217–237

⁵¹ Scannone, *La teología del pueblo*, 191.

⁵² Juan Carlos Scannone, ‘Encarnación, kenosis, inculturación y pobreza,’ in *La reforma y las reformas en la Iglesia*, eds. Spadaro and Galli, 497–521, 504.

⁵³ See Jacob Phillips, ‘A bride bedecked with her jewels. Understanding inculturation and popular piety as la *locus theologicus* in *Evangelii gaudium*,’ in *Pope Francis, Evangelii gaudium and the renewal of the Church*, eds. Duncan Dormor and Alana Harris (New York: Paulist Press, 2017), 112–131.

⁵⁴ Madrigal Terrazas, ‘Fundamentos teológicos de la reforma eclesial,’ 378–379.

and in *Fratelli Tutti* 198–224, fosters a spirit of respect for the common good, as well as creates a culture of encounter⁵⁵ (cf. EG 220) which goes beyond individualism in favour of the integration of every person within the community.

Both these issues present a Church which unites her evangelisation with the need for justice and liberation in the world.

His vision of a poor Church for the poor builds upon his concept of ‘experiences of communitarian salvation’ (*Laudato Si* [LS] 148). In his ideas regarding an ecology of daily life, described in LS, the Argentine Pope focuses on the daily life of the people as the place where change can really start: ‘Authentic development includes efforts to bring about an integral improvement in the quality of human life, and this entails considering the setting in which people live their lives’ (LS 147). This implies that communitarian salvation occurs in the culture of the community.

What is specific to the theology of the people and to Francis is that communitarian salvation can originate from the poor themselves since ‘many people in these conditions are able to weave bonds of belonging and togetherness which convert overcrowding into an experience of community in which the walls of the ego are torn down and the barriers of selfishness overcome’ (LS 149). These bonds of belonging and sharing of life create the fabric for a communal Church in which salvation may as of now be experienced in the form of liberation through human living experiences.

2.4 The Priority of Ecumenism

Francis appropriates the conciliar theme of ecumenism as an ecclesiological priority: ‘the pursuit of full Christian unity remains a priority for the Catholic Church, and thus it is daily one of my chief concerns’.⁵⁶ His idea of the culture of encounter and of dialogue partly includes the ecumenical mission of the Church. Francis motivates in favour of an ecumenism of journeying together, which necessarily includes the other Christian churches. He states in one of his ecumenical discourses:

⁵⁵ See Julio Martínez, *La cultura del encuentro. Desafío e interpelación para Europa* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2017).

⁵⁶ Pope Francis, Letter to the participants in the plenary assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity for the 50th anniversary of the Decree *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Vatican, November 20, 2014) as quoted by Rodrigo Polanco, ‘El Papa Francisco y el ecumenismo del camino,’ *Medellín* 169 (2017): 651–674, 654.

Often, we think that the ecumenical endeavour is only for theologians. For this reason, it is important that theologians study, come to agreements, and express disagreements; this is very important. However, in the meantime, ecumenism is created on the path. In walking with Jesus, it is not with my Jesus versus your Jesus, but our Jesus. The path is simple: it is made with prayer and with the help of others.³⁷

It is a missionary journey, which inevitably involves openness to the other on all levels of ecclesial structures and of all the people of God.

His ecumenical thoughts include the following four dimensions:³⁸

- i) On a theological level, he insists on returning to the Sacred Scriptures and to the hierarchy of truths (cf. UR 11) so that ‘if we concentrate on the convictions we share, and if we keep in mind the principle of the hierarchy of truths, we will be able to progress decidedly towards common expressions of proclamation, service and witness’ (EG 246). Even though all truths proceed from the same divine fount, some express more directly than others the heart of the Gospel with the scope of favouring a more integral perspective of truths and their hierarchy.³⁹ Francis conceives theological dialogue as part of the ecumenical mission of journeying together as a whole Church of Christ.⁴⁰ Being influenced by the theology of the people –from which perspective we can better understand his four principles: time is greater than space, unity prevails over conflict, reality is more important than ideas, and the whole is greater than the part—Francis also considers the ecumenical endeavours within this framework and is influenced by these tensions. Hence, taking all the time needed to work towards unity between churches, always choosing the way of unity instead of conflict, encountering situations and people rather than ideas or theories, and striving to perceive the larger scenario rather than specific problems all pertain to Francis’ idea of ecumenism.⁴¹

³⁷ Pope Francis, Address to the participants in the conference of secretaries of ‘Christian World Communions,’ (Vatican, October 12, 2016) as quoted by Polanco, ‘El Papa Francisco y el ecumenismo del camino,’ 636.

³⁸ Elias Wolff, ‘Through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness,’ *Medellin* 168 (2017): 515–530, 519–521.

³⁹ Madrigal Terrazas, ‘Fundamentos teológicos de la reforma eclesial,’ 372.

⁴⁰ Polanco, ‘El Papa Francisco y el ecumenismo del camino,’ 663.

⁴¹ William Henn, ‘Intercambio de dones: la recepción de los frutos del diálogo y la reforma de la Iglesia,’ in *La reforma y las reformas en la Iglesia*, ed. Spadaro and Galli, 399–423, 405.

- ii) On an ecclesiological level, Francis appreciates the ecclesial pluralism which exists today even outside Catholic structures:

If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us. To give but one example, in the dialogue with our Orthodox brothers and sisters, we Catholics have the opportunity to learn more about the meaning of episcopal collegiality and their experience of synodality. (EG 246)

Francis chooses the model of the local church to show how the Gospel is incarnated in a specific culture and place. This model presents a Church governed by the many, rather than centralised, and within this synodality and collegiality, he includes other non-Catholic churches: 'we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another' (EG 244).

- iii) On a missionary level, decentralisation and pastoral conversion have proven to help the Church remain faithful to the spirit of the Gospel, especially when she opens up to differences in ecclesial traditions and ecumenical denominations. Mission and the common good of humanity, are issues which serve as binding forces between all Christian churches. The perennial issues regarding humanity and the social dimension of mission serve as areas of encounter between the churches in favour of social inclusion, social justice, and social peace.

- iv) On a spiritual level, Francis also invites the whole Church to be able to exchange spiritual gifts with other churches as part of its pastoral conversion in order to be a more perfect image of the one undivided body of Christ: 'through an exchange of gifts, the Spirit can lead us ever more fully into truth and goodness' (EG 246). Moreover, he insists that prayer lies at the basis of this search for unity since it creates the necessary spiritual bonds which help create other external bonds.⁴²

Additionally to these four dimensions, Francis understood the reduction of ecclesial autoreferentiality as a manner of opening itself

⁴² Pope Francis, Speech at the Ecumenical Encounter and Prayer for Peace (Armenia, 25 June 2016), <https://bit.ly/3j41F70>.

up not only to its margins but also to other Christian churches. Moreover, his own manner of living the papacy also reflects a shift towards openness and service to the Church, of a collegial idea of authority—not only through the importance he gives to the Synod of Bishops but also through the style of ecclesial governance with the Council of Cardinal Advisers—and at the service of the unity of Christians (cf. EG 32 & 244–246).

By way of conclusion of this section, how can the Church find its original unity among Christians? Francis contemplates this unity in terms of the image of the polyhedron:

Here our model is not the sphere, which is no greater than its parts, where every point is equidistant from the centre, and there are no differences between them. Instead, it is the polyhedron, which reflects the convergence of all its parts, each of which preserves its distinctiveness (EG 236).

Francis favours both unity and diversity in ecumenism and, hence, this endeavour actually means that the diversity between the churches is harmonised with the power of the Holy Spirit until it reaches its unity.

2.5 ‘Francis, Go Rebuild my House’: Ecclesial Reform

Francis’ idea of reform does not find its motivation in anthropology, that is, in an explanation of a deviant humanity, but rather in a sick ecclesiocentrism, or better explained, in a Church that closes upon and within itself, thus distancing itself from the world.⁴⁵ He affirms:

We must recognize that if part of our baptized people lack a sense of belonging to the Church, this is also due to certain structures and the occasionally unwelcoming atmosphere of some of our parishes and communities, or to a bureaucratic way of dealing with problems (EG 63).

An authentic reform of the Church strives for perfection on different levels in following the Lord. This can be crystallised in the following three bergoglian reforms:

⁴⁵ Amparo Alvarado Palacios, ‘Revolución de la ternura: un nuevo paradigma eclesial en el pontificado de Francisco,’ *Revista Albertus Magnus* 10/2 (2019): 165–184, 171.

2.5.1 *Reform of the Heart: The Revolution of Tenderness*

Each authentic reform commences in spirit, in virtues, and in attitudes. Accordingly, Francis' reform of the Church commences from the loving mercy of God, which transforms attitudes and instils new practices. His logic of mercy influences the manner reform is conducted in the Church, and his tenderness revolution is a force which integrates people in the Church and which includes everyone.⁴⁴ Mercy, therefore, is the basic criterion with which the Church must read society and undergo reform.

Francis' ecclesiology is completely conciliar: both his teachings and his spirit of doing things are motivated by the same spirit and vision of Vatican Council II. Paul VI concluded Vatican II affirming: 'The old story of the Samaritan has been the model of the spirituality of the council. A feeling of boundless sympathy has permeated the whole of it. The attention of our council has been absorbed by the discovery of human needs.'⁴⁵ Vatican II was a crucial opportunity for the Church to open her doors and reread her mission from an openhearted and merciful viewpoint, in order to meet the needs of contemporary society. This same conciliar spirituality of the Good Samaritan, that is, of mercy, is Francis' own in his reforming mission in the Church which is at the service of humanity.⁴⁶ Upon crossing St Peter's door at the opening of the jubilee of mercy, he recalls once again this spirituality and vision: 'May our passing through the Holy Door today commit us to making our own the mercy of the Good Samaritan.'⁴⁷ Converting into a Samaritan Church, which walks 'the way of mercy' (*Misericordiae Vultus* 10–12), is how she may perfectly express her mission of going forth to the world, how she can always be first in loving (cf. EG 24) and how she may be credible in the world.

Francis' idea of the revolution of tenderness centres itself on the joy of Christ. This centrality of the Gospel is the fount of ecclesial reform, a vision presented in his EG, in which document the joy of the Gospel

⁴⁴ Carlos María Galli, 'Revolución de la ternura y reforma de la Iglesia,' *Medellín* 170 (2018): 73–108, 75. See also Walter Kasper, *Pope Francis' revolution of tenderness and love* (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 31–36.

⁴⁵ Paul VI, Address during the last general meeting of the Second Vatican Council, (7 December 1965), <https://bit.ly/2TWdaDI>.

⁴⁶ Galli, 'Revolución de la ternura y reforma de la Iglesia,' 80.

⁴⁷ Pope Francis, Homily at the opening of the holy door, (Vatican, 8 December 2015), <https://bit.ly/3gJIY7T>.

runs parallel to the mission of mercy.⁴⁸ ‘The delightful and comforting joy of evangelizing’ (EN 80), described by Paul VI, crystallises itself in Bergoglio’s spirit of reform due to the fact that it is this joy which creates and nourishes ecclesial communities of missionary disciples. This bergoglian reform starts from the grassroots, from the lives of the poor and suffering, and from the presence of the Church in the concrete situations of life. This implies two essential elements: the social dimension of the ecclesial mission and inculturation of the Gospel. Firstly, this denotes a good understanding of the situations of the people and defending their basic human needs and rights. Secondly, inculturation means appreciating the diversities of cultures and the relevance of the Gospel to all cultures around the world. Moreover, his exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* concretely manifests this spirit of tenderness and pastoral priority to accompany, discern, and integrate the many fragile Christians who suffer difficult moments in family life (cf. AL 307–312).⁴⁹ On these lines, we may affirm that, in the bergoglian ecclesial mission, this logic of tenderness necessarily includes compassion and integration.

2.5.2 Reform of Structures: The Way of Synodality

Central to his ecclesiology and to his reform of ecclesial structures is his idea of an inverted pyramid, also referring to a synodal Church that is ‘the principle which structurally configures the Church in a constant movement of missionary outgoing’.⁵⁰ Due to the influence of the theology of the people, Francis inverts Church structures in order to place the whole people of God, and in a special way the local church (cf. EG 30), as the main actor in the mission of the Church. In his emblematic discourse on the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, Francis describes synodality of the people of God as the ‘constitutive element of the Church’.⁵¹

Within this context, what does his image of *the inverted pyramid* signify? In fact, synodality does not really represent a new way of understanding the Church and its mission, since it has always accompanied its history, but it is rather a concrete and contemporary application of

⁴⁸ Galli, ‘Revolución de la ternura y reforma de la Iglesia,’ 86.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁵⁰ Santiago Madrigal Terrazas, ‘La eclesiología pastoral del Papa Francisco: relejendo *Evangelii gaudium*,’ *Misión Joven* 492–495 (2018): 27–52 at 49.

⁵¹ Pope Francis, Address on the ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the Synod of Bishops, (Vatican, 17 October 2015), <https://bit.ly/3d3g28J>.

the vision of LG which places the people of God as a doctrinal priority before the hierarchical division of the Church. This inverted order, represented by the inverted pyramid, explains the fact that the hierarchical ministry of the Church is at the service of the communion of the people of God.⁵² In practical terms, this implies a Church which listens, dialogues, learns, and cooperates within itself (faithful people, episcopal college, bishop of Rome) and with all humanity in order to encounter the way of true growth.

In practical terms, this denotes a conversion of hearts and attitudes not only of all the people of God but also within the institution of the Church, represented explicitly in the reform of the Holy See's Curia.⁵³ Together with this reform one may also include an increased appreciation of the role of the laity, going beyond clericalism and centralisation, recognising the importance of every local bishop and Episcopal Conference⁵⁴ in the universal Church, facilitating the canonical process of nullity of marriage⁵⁵, creating a culture of transparency and safeguarding of the most vulnerable, reforming the papacy, and exalting the role of women in the Church.⁵⁶ Finally, the objective of these structural reforms is to create a missionary Church rather than a Eurocentric one.⁵⁷

2.5.3 *The Missionary Transformation of the Church: The Connection between Mission and Reform*

New manners of understanding the Church imply new forms of action on the personal, communal, institutional, and pastoral levels. This is what Francis terms 'the reform of the Church in her missionary outreach' (EG 17), which encounters its roots in the missionary and

⁵² Galli, 'Revolución de la ternura y reforma de la Iglesia,' 96.

⁵³ See Hugo H. Cappello, 'El papa Francisco y la reforma de la Curia Romana,' *AADC* 24 (2018): 185–200; Libero Gerosa, ed. *La Chiesa in uscita di papa Francesco. Spunti per un rinnovo della missione apostolica* (Siena: Edizioni Cantagalli, 2018).

⁵⁴ See Hector Scerri, *The gentle breeze from the peripheries. The evolving role of episcopal conferences* (Malta: Horizons, 2018).

⁵⁵ Gianluca Belfiore, *I processi di nullità matrimoniale nella riforma di Papa Francesco* (Catania: Studio Teologico S. Paolo, 2017); Montserrat Gas Aixendri, 'La reforma del proceso canónico de nulidad del matrimonio Algunas claves de lectura desde el magisterio del Papa Francisco,' *Revista Jurídica Digital UANDES* 1 (2017): 85–100.

⁵⁶ Galli, 'Revolución de la ternura y reforma de la Iglesia,' 100.

⁵⁷ Carlos Schickendantz, 'Las conferencias episcopales: 'Este deseo no se ha realizado plenamente' (EG32),' in *La reforma y las reformas en la Iglesia*, eds. Spadaro and Galli, 375–395, 383.

pastoral conversion proposed by the document of Aparecida (cf. DA 365–372).⁵⁸ For the Argentine pontiff, his vision of a synodal Church is connected with his ecclesiology of missionary disciples.⁵⁹ However, the novelty in such a perennial vocation of the Church is the constant and permanent renovation of mission and pastoral structures. Therefore, reform is understood as the never-ending ecclesial attitude of missionary conversion, which in turn motivates the reform of ecclesial structures, and whose starting point is always the peripheries of the Church.

Pastoral conversion⁶⁰ implies a Church which goes forth to humanity in ever-renewed ways as a natural consequence of the encounter with the Gospel. At the basis of this vocation is Jesus' missionary sending of his disciples to the world. It may be appreciated that,

such a kind of missionary approach of the outgoing Church is novel, since for Francis the primacy in the task of the Church is the mission to the peripheries and not so much internal communion, and for this reason when he uses the expression communion, he adds the precise adjective of missionary.⁶¹

Francis' primary task does not exclude ecclesial communion but directs it in favour of a Church without any boundary or frontier. The foundational principle of the theology of an outgoing Church is the doctrine of the Church as a sacrament, as a clear sign of salvation and ferment *in* the world. This is in line with GS 45, which states: 'every benefit which the people of God during its earthly pilgrimage can offer to the human family stems from the fact that the Church is the universal sacrament of salvation.' This interaction with the world is the manner how the Church evangelises and remains faithful to the Gospel.

Two images, which vividly describe Francis' idea of pastoral conversion, are *mother* and *hospital*. In EG 46–49 he describes the Church as 'a mother with an open heart'. As a mother, she opens up her doors so that everyone may enter, but also so that those inside may go forth to

⁵⁸ Galli, 'Revolución de la ternura y reforma de la Iglesia,' 97.

⁵⁹ Santiago Madrigal Terrazas, *La sinodalidad en la vida y en la misión de la Iglesia. Texto y comentario del documento de la Comisión Teológica Internacional* (Madrid: BAC, 2019), 84.

⁶⁰ See Instituto Superior de Pastoral, *La conversión pastoral* (Estella: Editorial Verbo Divino, 2015).

⁶¹ Salvador Pié-Ninot, 'La ecclesiología del papa Francisco,' *RCatT* 45/2 (2018): 505–526, 510.

encounter others (cf. EG 46).⁶² In AL 291, he describes the Church as 'a field hospital' implying the role of the people of God to accompany, care, and offer a cure for the new and complicated situations of contemporary society. These images show that an evangelised Church is necessarily a missionary Church that goes forth with open arms and a merciful heart.

2.6 An Ecological Church: The Care for Humanity and for all Creation

According to Francis, the central task of the Church is to care for God's creation, and in a special way for the most vulnerable. When conceiving a Church and society which are ecologically integral, in his LS, Francis goes beyond the anthropological debate of the 20th century of integral humanism and anthropocentrism, and shifts his sight towards a *biopersonalism*, which includes the *biological* (nature) and the *biographical* (cultural) and hence is trying to tackle the social and environmental crises in a complete manner.⁶³ This implies a new way of being the Church today: a biopersonalistic one which assumes the scientific preoccupation regarding the environmental and social crisis and which invites all humanity to tackle it in an integral manner by uniting nature, reason, and culture.⁶⁴ Thus, integral ecology and social justice are united in one unique mission for the reason that Francis understands clearly that human suffering exists at par with the environmental crisis.

Francis favours a Church that not only thinks of an integral humanism which promotes all the dimensions of the person but that also reinvents a humanism caring for the person, the community, and all the natural environment (cf. LS 231). Hence, an integrally ecological Church cares for our common home and likewise for every person and community through social justice.

Without any doubt, here again we encounter the influence of Francis' theology of the people which tries to unite politics, economics, history, culture, and religion in one unique ecclesial option. In this Argentine theology, culture is the style of daily living of the people, characterised by particular values that give meaning to the community. Hence, this

⁶² Ibid., 516.

⁶³ Agustín Domingo Moratalla, *Condición humana y ecología integral. Horizontes educativos para una ciudadanía integral* (Madrid: PPC, 2017), 40.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 57.

integral ecological manner of being the Church must characterise the daily responsible living of the people. This is what he means when affirming: ‘All of this shows the urgent need for us to move forward in a bold cultural revolution’ (LS 114), where ‘cultural revolution’ implies a personal and communitarian transformation of our daily lives in favour of the good of each individual, of the community, and of nature.

3. By Way of Balance, Always Provisional

By way of a provisional conclusion regarding Francis’ idea of the Church, we may affirm the following as constituting his ecclesiological vision:

- i) *No new ecclesiology, but a fresher one*: Francis does not invent a new Church, but rather builds on Vatican II and his predecessors in favour of a fresher way of being the Church which meets today’s needs. His understandable words and gestures continue to show a Church which has always entered into dialogue with society and culture, and is committed to the peripheries. However, his manner of speaking to the world, his invitation of journeying together, of experiencing God’s mercy, of encountering the other, as though he were a parish pastor, is perhaps what creates this freshness in the Church and the motivation for the growth of an authentic ecclesial community.⁶⁵
- ii) *Discerning Church*: The basic criterion for discernment is the periphery, from which the Church may understand the totality of reality. An ongoing reform of the Church must start from this pastoral motivation and end with it, in order to be faithful to the Gospel which holds the peripheries at its centre. While remaining the same in essence, the Church as the people of God matures through the ages through the discernment of the signs of the times in order to be the perfect image of this chosen people in the lasting unity of mission and reform.
- iii) *Evangelising community*: The community of disciples (lay and pastors) living in historical and cultural differences are the subjects of evangelisation. This missionary community, or equally well the Church which goes forth, goes beyond a clericalistic Church and is

⁶⁵ Diego M. Molina Molina, ‘El primer año del papa Francisco,’ *Proyección* 61 (2014): 145–160, 157.

the central ecclesiological paradigm of Francis. For such a community, mission means taking the initiative to serve, accompanying the suffering of humanity, and celebrating God's lasting presence within it (cf. EG 24).

iv) *The pastoral and servant way*: The connection between faith and life is crucial for Francis since he presents the mission of the Church and her relationship with God, which is totally ingrained in history. The roots of his pastoral mission involves 'how best to bring the Gospel message to different cultural contexts' (EG 133).⁶⁶ His theological-pastoral way includes both reflection and life of the believer while remaining faithful to the *depositum fidei* and open to the creativity of discernment.⁶⁷

The Pope's model of the Church is a servant Samaritan Church. In other words, service is the vocation of the missionary disciples of Christ. Moreover, all reform is also undertaken to create a servant Church, which better serves the needs of contemporary society. To be such a servant Church, she holds the Gospel as the nucleus and motivation for continual reform, the result of which being new ways of encountering persons in concrete situations with open doors and heart.⁶⁸

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⁶⁶ Santiago Madrigal Terrazas, *De pirámides y poliedros. Señas de identidad del pontificado de Francisco* (Santander: Sal Terrae, 2020), 283.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 285.

⁶⁸ Molina Molina, 'El primer año del papa Francisco,' 153–154.

CONVERSION AS THE PATH TO THE RECOVERY OF HUMANITY IN THE CONTEXT OF ST JOHN PAUL II'S THEOLOGY OF HOLINESS

MAGDA BUŠKOVÁ

ABSTRACT

The study focuses on Pope John Paul II's view of conversion as an essential aspect of holiness. It explores why he emphasises the personal conversion of a Christian to God, and in a broader context, how conversion relates to the recovery of humanity and human dignity. The reflection is based on the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, especially as presented in the documents *Gaudium et Spes* and *Lumen Gentium*. Conversion is viewed from the perspective of spiritual theology and the union between God and the human person and focuses on some related features from John Paul II's 'Trinitarian' group of encyclicals. The reflection also examines the importance of Christian conversion to God as an internal process of transformation in the human person in the context of both internal ruptures and external existential threats.

Keywords

John Paul II; Conversion; Holiness; Union with Christ; Mercy; Human Dignity

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It has been in the habit of recent popes, especially John Paul II and Francis, to draw attention to contemporary trends in society, where the pressure to perform is becoming ever greater, societal and cultural processes are constantly accelerating, and material matters are holding centre stage. Today, for Christians and non-Christians alike, and on both individual and societal levels, what is external and visible is generally preferred over the internal and the invisible. This preference often leads to a rupture within human beings as individuals and in society as a whole, a rupture which threatens humanity itself.

On top of all this come external threats such as the global health crisis. However, one of the principal tasks of Christianity is to remind human beings of their inner essence – that the problems faced by individuals, society, and the Church are not rooted in external structures. It is vital to remember the inner life, the heart, where human beings receive the love of God. The Church should address itself to structural problems but must focus on what is in the heart and search for solutions to protect and develop the humanity of human beings and in so doing protect and develop their relationship with God.

The popes respond to these trends by exhorting Christians to focus on the inner life and to seek a change in the heart. In this context, there is an emphasis on Christian conversion, which is an integral part of St John Paul II's theology of holiness.¹ Although there is a timeless element of conversion, John Paul II reflects on the current situation of the individual and of the ecclesial environment:

Conversion is the most concrete expression of the working of love and of the presence of mercy in the human world. The true and proper meaning of mercy does not consist only in looking, however penetratingly and compassionately, at moral, physical or material evil: mercy is manifested in its true and proper aspect when it restores to value, promotes and draws good from all the forms of evil existing in the world and in man (DM 6).²

Why does John Paul II emphasise the personal conversion of a Christian to God? In a broader context, how does conversion relate to the recovery of humanity and human dignity?

As the beginning of the Christian journey, baptism is the believer's response to the appeal of Jesus: "The right time has come", [Jesus] said, "and the Kingdom of God is near! Turn away from your sins and believe the Good News!" (Mark 1:15). The primary conversion is necessary as 'in the baptism of faith [believers] truly become sons of God and sharers in the divine nature. In this way they are really made holy ...

¹ This reflection on conversion is closely linked to my previous research on John Paul II's theology of holiness presented in the defended licentiate work, *The Theology of Holiness According to St John Paul II in the Encyclicals of His Pontificate* (Prague: Charles University, 2021, unpublished).

² John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia*, 30 November 1980, accessed 10 January 2021, <https://bit.ly/2UHeF9h>.

for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church' (*Lumen Gentium* 14, 40).

This study will explore three aspects of conversion: (a) the significant role conversion plays in St John Paul II's theology of holiness; (b) the concept of a 'second conversion'⁵ or 'permanent conversion',⁴ and the commitment of a Christian to continue on the path of holiness in the Church; (c) conversion as viewed particularly through the perspective of the encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* (DM).

Regarding methodology, the study takes the approach of spiritual theology with a focus on 'the union of man with God in Christ'.⁵ This focus on conversion as an aspect of holiness, which in turn is interpreted as 'union with Christ' (LG 50), is the golden thread of the study.

John Paul II reflects on conversion and the context of conversion in his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* but also offers significant reflections in the encyclicals *Redemptor Hominis* (RH)⁶ and *Dominum et Vivificantem* (DV).⁷ The three encyclicals complete the Pope's Trinitarian group of encyclicals.⁸ The Italian theologian Luciano Meddi considers it essential to reflect on the subject of conversion in the documents of the Magisterium. He takes the view that 'a global reading of the most important conciliar and post-conciliar documents helps us to understand that the theme of conversion shares a Trinitarian nature'.⁹

⁵ The Catechism reminds us that 'Christ's call to conversion continues to resound in the lives of Christians. This second conversion is an uninterrupted task for the whole Church who, "clasping sinners to her bosom, (is) at once holy and always in need of purification, (and) follows constantly the path of penance and renewal" (LG 8)' 'Catechism of the Catholic Church,' n.d., para. 1428, accessed 10 January 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P49.HTM.

⁴ The term 'permanent conversion' can be found, for example, in the work of Luciano Meddi, 'The Spirituality of Conversion,' *The Person and the Challenges* 6, no. 2 (2016): 227, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15633/pch.1904>, and Roland Lacroix, 'Conversion – The Act, the Process and Accompaniment,' *The Person and the Challenges* 6, no. 2 (2016): 262, doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15633/pch.1905>.

⁵ Pavel Kohut, *Co je spirituální teologie?* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2007), 34, (my translation).

⁶ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*, 4 March 1979, accessed 10 January 2021, <https://bit.ly/3drWvz5>.

⁷ John Paul II, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, 18 May 1986, accessed 10 January 2021, <https://bit.ly/3x8wIDR>.

⁸ See Nigel Zimmermann, 'John Paul II and the Significance of the Trinity for Human Dignity: "Ipsa autem iam hic in terris adest",' *Australian eJournal of Theology* 20, no. 2 (August 2015), 108–121, here 114, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://bit.ly/3w5V3sG>.

⁹ Meddi, 'The Spirituality of Conversion,' 230–231. Meddi also comments: 'Magisterial reflections often refer to the subject of spirituality as a way of conversion, as

Although the encyclicals represent the collective work of the Magisterium, it is the Pope's personal view that we read in the encyclicals: it is his signature at the bottom.

1. Conversion and its Perspectives

An emphasis on inner personal conversion is a traditional perspective of the Church's teaching, both among the Church Fathers and in medieval theology. It is a classic motif and one that is sometimes forgotten today. This chapter will approach conversion from the perspective of biblical theology, in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and in a number of selected authors showing facets of conversion.

A biblical perspective on the word 'conversion' covers various stances and understandings. It proposes 'conversion' (Greek *μετανοια*; Latin *conversio*) as representing an internal change: 'the biblical *metanoia*; primarily any sort of religious or moral transformation, especially the radical venture of entrusting oneself to God and his gracious guidance by a radical and fundamental religious act'.¹⁰ For the entry 'conversion' the *Lexham Bible Dictionary* uses the expression 'ἐπιστρέφω, *epistrepheō*, change of mind', which 'in Judaism, refers to initiation into adherence to the Torah, especially by circumcision. In Christianity, [it] refers to initiation into the Church of Christ, especially by baptism. In both, conversion refers to a turning from old ways to the practices of a new faith.'¹¹ The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* notes some inconsistency in the use of the English word 'conversion' in translations and proposes using the Hebrew word שׁוּב (*shûb*) and the Greek ἐπιστρέφειν (*epistrephein*), both of which translate as 'to turn'.¹² It refers to the need to consider not only 'particular words but an examination of the varying imagery for conversion',¹³ which leads to consideration of various examples of conversion. In Mark 1:15 and Acts 20:21, conversion 'consists of an exercise of repentance and faith, which Christ and Paul link together

a Trinitarian reference and as a development of different dimensions inside the person.' Meddi, 'The Spirituality of Conversion,' 238.

¹⁰ Karl Rahner, *Dictionary of Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 97.

¹¹ John D. Barry (Editor) *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*; (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2016), accessed 10 March 2021, <https://www.logos.com/product/36564/lexham-bible-dictionary>.

¹² David Noel Freedman (Editor-in-Chief), *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Volume I A-C (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1131.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 1131.

as summing up between them the moral demand of the gospel'.¹⁴ Such an understanding can serve as a unifying starting point for our topic and provide a summary of the biblical view of conversion: 'repentance means a change of mind and heart towards God: faith means belief of His word and trust in His Christ; conversion covers both'.¹⁵ Limbeck adds a comment regarding Jesus' words in the Gospel of Mark, 'Repent and believe the gospel' (Mark 1:15 NJB),¹⁶ after which Jesus changes his appeal from repentance to following Him.¹⁷ This shift towards an understanding of conversion not only as repentance but as following Jesus offers a key contribution to this study and its perspective on the continual character of conversion.

The Second Vatican Council brought refreshment to the Church and offered new approaches, such as the significant involvement of the laity in the life and mission of the Church and an emphasis on the call to holiness for all Christians. In the context of primary conversion, baptism is the gateway to the path of holiness and the prospect of eternal life. The call to be a holy people begins with baptism (LG 40); it is 'the baptismal call to holiness'.¹⁸ The concept of a second conversion concerns the need to live an authentic life according to the Gospel and to answer the call of the Second Vatican Council to continue living a life of holiness (LG 39–42). Before this Council, the Church largely associated holiness with the religious and the clergy, although not to the exclusion of the laity. However, the Council shifted the context of holiness to include the laity to a more elevated degree: holiness can be attained in all vocations; the vocations may differ, but 'holiness is one' (LG 41). Direct references to conversion can be found in several places, such as the constitutions *Lumen Gentium* (LG 11, 35, 46) and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC 9), and, in the context of the mission of the Church, in the decree *Ad Gentes* (AD 13, 40). It is necessary to determine the character of conversion, however. Rush, who reflects on the conciliar and post-conciliar ecclesial dimension of conversion, states that the Second Vatican Council 'called for conversion on all levels of ecclesial

¹⁴ Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1962), 251.

¹⁵ Douglas, *The New Bible Dictionary*, 251.

¹⁶ *New Jerusalem Bible*, n.d., accessed 1 June 2021, <https://bit.ly/3qyP3Hu>.

¹⁷ Meinard Limbeck, *Stuttgarter Kleiner Kommentar, Neues Testament, 21 Bde. in 22 Tl. –Bdn., Bd.2, Markus–Evangelium*, (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984), 29.

¹⁸ Brian P. Flanagan, 'The Universal Call to Holiness and Laity in the Church,' *Toronto Journal of Theology* 52, no. 2 (2016): 219–252, 219.

life: personal, collective, institutional, and structural'.¹⁹ Here, Rush confirms the Council's high call for the conversion of individuals although he believes that 'setting up any sharp dichotomy between any of these levels—for example, between the spiritual renewal of individuals in the Church, and organizational, structural reform of the institutional Church – is a false dichotomy.'²⁰

The interpretation of what conversion means also depends on the approach taken by a particular theological view and research context. As Lacroix emphasises, 'work on conversion calls not only to specify the vocabulary, but also to clarify the concept of conversion in its various facets'.²¹ The past decade has seen a number of articles published on the theme of conversion as reflected in this study.²² The valuable contributions, such as that from Ormond Rush, reflect on the ecclesial and personal character of conversion as presented by the Second Vatican Council.²⁵ Frývaldský describes the progression from the personal to the ecclesial, exploring the 'issue of Christian identification with the Church' in the context of J. Ratzinger's description of moving 'from the private "self" to the ecclesial "self"'. The emphasis here is on a detachment from oneself in favour of an inner attachment to Christ, which is realised in the identification with the Church.²⁴

From the point of view of spiritual theology, although Meddi focuses more on the catechetical approach, he deals with 'the spiritual dimension of conversion'.²⁵ Grygiel suggests that 'every human being requires a change of life, that is, a conversion to the truth that begins to unveil itself in the gift'.²⁶ Meddi also highlights this unmerited character of

¹⁹ Ormond Rush, 'Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II: Renewing "The Face of the Church" to reflect "the Genuine Face of God",' *Theological Studies* 74, no. 4 (2014): 788, doi: 10.1177/004056391307400401.

²⁰ Rush, 'Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II,' 788.

²¹ Lacroix, 'Conversion,' 262.

²² For example, Rush, 'Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II,' 785–805; Meddi, 'The Spirituality of Conversion,' 227–259; Lacroix, 'Conversion,' 261–265.

²⁵ Rush, 'Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II,' 785–805.

²⁴ Pavel Frývaldský, "'Bez církve mizí Kristus v minulosti, bez Krista se stává církev pouhou organizací." Vztah Krista a církve v díle Josepha Ratzingera – Benedikta XVI.,' *AUC Theologica* 2, no. 1 (2012), 87–111, here 99–101, doi: <https://doi.org/10.14712/23563398.2015.49>, (my translation).

²⁵ Meddi, 'The Spirituality of Conversion,' 227–259, 228.

²⁶ Stanislaw Grygiel, *Discovering the Human Person. In Conversation with John Paul II* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2014), 109.

conversion, drawing on John Paul II's *Redemptoris Missio*,²⁷ which states that conversion is 'a gift of God, a work of the Blessed Trinity' (RM 46).²⁸

Lacroix, who deals with the theme of conversion from the perspective of catechesis, emphasises its ecclesial character and suggests that 'permanent conversion' is 'the preferred method of "remaining in faith"'.²⁹ In this respect, Lacroix reminds us that the essence of conversion concerns the internal, the invisible, just as the writer to the Hebrews insists that, 'to have faith is to be sure of the things we hope for, to be certain of the things we cannot see' (Heb 11:1).³⁰

Regarding conversion as a method, spiritual theology views it as providing a clearer understanding of what is primarily invisible but nonetheless desirable for union with God. Conversion is essentially a way for a Christian to approach life and tackle spiritual obstacles;³¹ it refers to 'the struggle of Christian life. This is the struggle of conversion directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us'.³² The emphasis on the call of Jesus leads to another dimension or expression of conversion highlighted by Lacroix, namely, 'a conversion that lasts, that unfolds in Christian life itself seen as a vocation'.³³

It appears, however, that personal conversion as an aspect of holiness, as described by John Paul II, receives relatively less attention from many authors and that the topic is not fully covered. This study, therefore, aims to provide a contribution to the discussion and, in so doing, to redress the balance in some small way.

²⁷ John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, 7 December 1990, accessed 10 January 2021, <https://bit.ly/3w65P1S>.

²⁸ Meddi, 'The Spirituality of Conversion,' 232.

²⁹ Lacroix, 'Conversion,' 263.

³⁰ Unless stated otherwise, Bible quotations are from the Catholic Good News Bible: *Catholic Good News Bible with Deuterocanonical Books/Apocrypha* (London: The Bible Societies/Collins, 2005).

³¹ See also, 'Catechism of the Catholic Church,' n.d., para. 1426, accessed 10 January 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P48.HTM.

³² 'Catechism of the Catholic Church,' n.d., para. 1426, accessed 10 January 2021, https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P48.HTM.

³³ Lacroix, 'Conversion,' 264.

2. Conversion as an Aspect of St John Paul II's Theology of Holiness

In his theological writings, especially in the Trinitarian group of encyclicals, John Paul II views conversion⁵⁴ as an essential aspect of holiness. He is clearly seeking to draw our attention to something extraordinary. At the beginning of his pontificate, the new Pope announced that his primary task was to ‘complete the implementation of the Second Vatican Council’.⁵⁵ Extracts from the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes* and the dogmatic constitution *Lumen Gentium* are often quoted in the Trinitarian encyclicals. There are two strands to the Pope’s interpretation of the Council teaching. The first is the idea of holiness, particularly ‘the universal call to holiness’,⁵⁶ which was one of the key emphases of his pontificate. In his theology of holiness, he develops the theme of this universal call, highlighting the statement of the Council Fathers that, ‘by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man’ (GS 22), and further developing the concept of holiness as *union with Christ* in the Church (cf. RH 13). A clear understanding of the call to holiness can be found in the Pope’s post-synodal apostolic letter *Christifideles Laici*, especially in the paragraph 16, where he urges that ‘all Christians take up again the way of gospel renewal, welcoming in a spirit of generosity the invitation expressed by the apostle Peter “to be holy in all conduct” (1 Pt 1:15)’.⁵⁷ The second strand of his teaching on holiness, to which conversion is integral, can be identified as his focus on the fact that people know themselves fully only in ‘the light of Christ’ (GS 10, cf. GS 22).

⁵⁴ Although this study focuses on personal conversion, it is worth noting that John Paul II also reflects on ‘the need for interior conversion’ in the context of ecumenical dialogue and of sins, where ‘not only personal sins must be forgiven and left behind, but also social sins, which is to say the sinful “structures” themselves which have contributed and can still contribute to division and to the reinforcing of division’ John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint*, 25 May 1995, para. 34, accessed 1 June 2021, <https://bit.ly/3h5QWbz>.

⁵⁵ George Weigel, *Witness to Hope. The Biography of John Paul II* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2001), 267–268.

⁵⁶ See Vatican Council II, *Lumen Gentium*, paras. 39–42, 21 November 1964, <https://bit.ly/3dt7ojQ>.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, 30 December 1988, accessed 1 June 2021, <https://bit.ly/362Xy4c>. The Pope also emphasises here the Trinitarian character of the call to holiness for the laity: ‘the prime and fundamental vocation that the Father assigns to each of them in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit: the vocation to holiness, that is, the perfection of charity,’ para 16.

In the Trinitarian encyclicals, the word ‘conversion’ is often found in the expressions such as ‘true conversion’ (RH 16, DM 4, DV 42), ‘constant, ever more profound conversion’ (RH 20), and ‘authentic conversion’ (DV 45). In various contexts, it can be further identified that John Paul II speaks of conversion as having both a permanent and a continual character.

The Pope introduces his initial encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* as follows: ‘the Redeemer of Man, Jesus Christ, is the centre of the universe and history’ (RH 1).³⁸ These words set the tone for the encyclical, determine its character, and penetrate the whole document. Spinello, who makes a detailed analysis of all 14 encyclicals, states that ‘the Pope’s principal purpose in this encyclical is to embrace and deepen the Christocentrism of the Second Vatican Council and to explore the truth about the human person revealed by the Son’.³⁹ As an aspect of holiness interpreted as achieving union with Christ, the theme of conversion is situated into the mystery of Redemption. Conversion is viewed here both as an initial event expressed in baptism and as a permanent or continual process that affects the whole of life.⁴⁰

The anthropological character of John Paul II’s approach⁴¹ to holiness consists in his great love and care for human beings in the light of Christ’s redemption. Several points in *Redemptor Hominis* relate to the focus of this study on the permanent or ‘continual conversion’ (LG 35)

³⁸ From Nigel Zimmermann’s well-structured and well-arranged study on human dignity as interpreted by John Paul II we see the connection between conversion and human dignity in that both have a ‘continual’ aspect: ‘for John Paul II, human dignity is in need of a Christocentric guide because it is anything but a universally accepted concept. Rather, human dignity requires an ongoing attentiveness if it is to serve the good of the human person with any success.’ Nigel Zimmermann, ‘John Paul II and the Significance of the Trinity for Human Dignity,’ 110.

³⁹ Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 79.

⁴⁰ The outward expression of initial and ‘continual conversion’ (LG 35) is an integral part of a life of holiness. Furthermore, ‘the vocation to holiness is *intimately connected to mission* and to the responsibility entrusted to the lay faithful in the Church and in the world’ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, para. 17.

⁴¹ For the theology and anthropology of John Paul II see, for example, Ronald D. Lweller, *The Christian Personalism of Pope John Paul II* (Chicago, Ill.: Franciscan Herald Press, 1982); George H. Williams, *The Mind of John Paul II: Origins of His Thought and Action* (New York: Seabury Press, 1981); Deborah Savage, *The Subjective Dimension of Human Work. The Conversion of the Acting Person According to Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II and Bernard Lonergan* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008); John J. Coughlin, ‘Pope John Paul II and the Dignity of the Human Being,’ *Harv. J.L. & Pub. Pol’y* 27, no. 1 (2003–2004): 65–79, accessed 1 June 2021, https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/law_faculty_scholarship/494/.

of the Christian. One of these is the Christocentric emphasis: ‘Jesus Christ is the stable principle and fixed centre of the mission that God himself entrusted to man’ (RH 11). This statement is followed by a reference to the mission of the Church, by which John Paul II develops the ecclesial character of the mission but insists that ‘the conversion that is begun by the mission is a work of grace, in which man must fully find himself again’ (RH 12). Although conversion is set in an ecclesial and baptismal context, personal conversion, especially permanent conversion, is described as being reliant on God’s grace. In seeing conversion as an aspect of holiness consisting in the union of man with God, both the personal and the ecclesial are in view. There is an essential connection between conversion and fully finding oneself only in God, and here the Pope connects the teachings of *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dignitatis Humanae*⁴² (RH 12): ‘the Church therefore sees its fundamental task in enabling that union to be brought about and renewed continually’ (RH 13). The words ‘renewed continually’ can be considered synonymous with conversion. In relation to conciliar teaching, Rush speaks of ‘the spiritual renewal of individuals in the Church’.⁴⁵

Another aspect of personal conversion that John Paul II discusses is the importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist and Penance: ‘[Jesus] right to meet each one of us in that key moment in the soul’s life constituted by the moment of conversion and forgiveness’ (RH 20). The Eucharist is a traditional practice of the Church, so why is the Pope putting so much emphasis on permanent or continual personal conversion here? He believes that:

without this constant ever renewed endeavour for conversion, partaking of the Eucharist would lack its full redeeming effectiveness and there would be a loss or at least a weakening of the special readiness to offer God the spiritual sacrifice (cf. 1 Pet 2:5) in which our sharing in the priesthood of Christ is expressed in an essential and universal manner (RH 20).

⁴² Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae*, 7 December 1965, accessed 10 January 2021, <https://bit.ly/3y9bJRe>.

⁴⁵ Rush, ‘Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II,’ 788. Concerning ecclesial conversion, Rush mentions terms such as ‘renewal, purification, reform, restoration, change, updating, adaption, and development’ and he states that ‘of these “renewal” and “renew” (*renovatio* and *renovare*) are the most often used’. Rush, ‘Ecclesial Conversion After Vatican II,’ 787.

Conversion, therefore, enables Christians ‘to be ready’, day by day, to follow Christ, to give their lives to Christ and put him at the centre. This permanent readiness of the Christian is connected with the aspect of God’s love that is called mercy: ‘love is greater than sin, than weakness ... it is a love always ready to raise up and forgive... in man’s history, this revelation of love and mercy has taken a form and a name: that of Jesus Christ’ (RH 9). Christians are called to follow this loving dimension of the spiritual life and to do it consciously. If a person’s faith in Christ is not lived out consciously, this may be a sign that the person lacks real faith, deep faith, and authentic faith, which John Paul II sees as the visible fruit of conversion.

This is why everyday inner spiritual conversion is so essential. It is about following Christ as a disciple through daily conversion, being ready and able to love and to forgive, and preserving and developing faith and holiness (LG 40).⁴⁴ ‘True conversion’ (RH 16) has an inner and individual–personal character (RH 20), and the beginning and end is in Christ. Conversion as an unceasing, spiritual act is integral to holiness interpreted as union with Christ. Conversion could also be seen in words that Jesus might address to us: You follow me, imitate me, but do you really believe in me, in the depths of your heart?

3. Can Conversion Serve as a Path to the Recovery of Humanity and Human Dignity through Mercy?

In his encyclical *Dives in Misericordia*,⁴⁵ the Pope begins with an outline of the Old Testament view of conversion, where the context of conversion is the sins and infidelity of the people of God who repeatedly failed to keep the covenant (DM 4). There is an emphasis on the need for the relationship between God and human beings to be renewed: ‘whenever it became aware of its infidelity ... it appealed to mercy’

⁴⁴ On baptised followers of Christ, the constitution also states that, ‘by God’s gift, they must hold on to and complete in their lives this holiness they have received.’ *Lumen Gentium*, para. 40.

⁴⁵ This study does not aim to address the many rich and beautiful themes within the encyclical. Rather, the focus is on conversion, on which John Paul II places great emphasis, and on suggesting why he might have placed such an emphasis. The spiritual background of the encyclical was influenced by the spirituality of St Faustyna Kowalska (see Spinello, *The Encyclicals of John Paul II*, 80). It also integrates spiritual experience with Karol Wojtyła’s own father, and his spiritual father Cardinal Sapielha. Weigel, *Witness to Hope*, 386–387.

(DM 4). If God ‘finds repentance and true conversion’, divine grace comes to the people again: ‘[Mercy] signifies a special power of love, which prevails over the sin and infidelity of the chosen people’ (DM 4). The Pope focuses on the particular situations of people in need of healing through divine mercy, which is inseparable from conversion. Mercy is available for ‘individuals languishing in a state of guilt or enduring every kind of suffering and misfortune. Both physical evil and moral evil, namely sin, cause the sons and daughters of Israel to turn to the Lord and beseech His mercy’ (DM 4).

Conversion is presented as an authentic *change of mind* directly related to a relationship with the Lord. Conversion is, therefore, the renewal of that relationship, where ‘mercy is the content of intimacy with [the] Lord, the content of [a] dialogue with Him’ (DM 4). It can be inferred that repentance and conversion are key to uniting with God. Here we see the Pope’s strong anthropological interest in human beings, in their life situations, which he presents as an opportunity for finding a solution through conversion to God’s mercy.

Alongside mercy, other concepts of interest that are related to conversion include humanity as a state and quality of human being with a Christocentric character⁴⁶ and human dignity. John Paul II states that ‘mercy is an indispensable dimension of love; it is as it were love’s second name’ (DM 7). In a similar line of thinking, Kasper provides a valuable analysis of the concept of mercy, including an update for the twenty-first century.⁴⁷ One of his key reflections deals with the question, ‘how can we speak of a sympathetic – that is, a compassionate – God?’⁴⁸ He notes a kind of fatigue surrounding the word ‘mercy’, which is rarely used and understood in society.⁴⁹ However, as Kasper convincingly shows, even with regard to the tragedies and violence of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the word ‘mercy’ still keeps ‘the correspond-

⁴⁶ In this study, humanity is considered an individual state and quality of human being with its centre and character in Christ. Spinello provides a valuable insight into ‘the nature of the human person’ according to the view of John Paul II. Richard Spinello, *The Genius of John Paul II. The Great Pope’s Moral Wisdom* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 57–88.

⁴⁷ Walter Kasper, *Mercy. The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* (New York: Paulist Press, 2014), 16–19. For the terminology and the related development of thinking regarding mercy, see Kasper, *Mercy*, 1–40.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

ing views and attitudes' and is even more urgent.⁵⁰ The author points to the modern trend towards the use of words such as 'empathy' and 'compassion' to express what might formerly have been expressed by the word mercy and highlights their current importance in terms of people's ability to help one another in daily matters or extraordinary emergencies.⁵¹ He considers that 'one must understand the word *compassion* not only as compassionate behaviour. Rather, we must also hear in "compassion" the word "passion". This means discerning the cry for justice as well as making a passionate response to the appalling unjust relationships existing in our world'.⁵² It can be inferred that the concreteness of human distress is one of the essential components of the theme of conversion. However, Kasper also stresses that the theme of mercy 'concerns the message of God and his mercy, and only secondarily does it deal with the commandment for human behaviour that derives from it',⁵³ and here we find a connection with the approach taken by John Paul II.

The central theme of the encyclical, by which the Pope seeks to bring an understanding of conversion and mercy, is the well-known Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11–32). The parable speaks to the reality of various life situations and 'indirectly touches upon every breach of the covenant of love, every loss of grace, every sin' (DM 5). At the same time, it is a reflection that deeply touches on humanity itself and on human dignity (DM 5, 6). Human dignity is a vast topic which features strongly in theological discussions.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, I will seek to point out in this context why John Paul II emphasises the theme of conversion.

Humanity and human dignity were dealt with in great detail by the Second Vatican Council, particularly in the constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, which devotes a special chapter to Human Dignity (GS 12–22). As already noted, John Paul II set out to implement the teachings of the Council during his pontificate,⁵⁵ and humanity and human dignity

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1–5, 16.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 16–19.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 17.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 18–19.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Zimmermann, 'John Paul II and the Significance of the Trinity for Human Dignity.'

⁵⁵ As Karol Wojtyła he actively participated in the preparation of the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. He was a member of the sub-commission 'which had the task of studying the questions of the signs of the time' and of sub-commission no. V 'On the

are among his key topics. There is no direct quotation from *Gaudium et Spes* in the passage on the Parable of the Prodigal Son, but we do find the reference right at the beginning of the encyclical in connection with human dignity:

We read in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*: ‘Christ the new Adam... fully reveals man to himself and brings to light his lofty calling,’ and does it ‘in the very revelation of the mystery of the Father and of his love’ (GS 22). The words that I have quoted are clear testimony to the fact that man cannot be manifested in the full dignity of his nature without reference – not only on the level of concepts but also in an integrally existential way – to God. Man and man’s lofty calling are revealed in Christ through the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love (DM 1).

If humanism considers human dignity to be of the highest value, then John Paul II can be said to propound a Christian humanism in which *humanity* and *human dignity* can be fully found only in God, in Christ (RH 11, RH 13, DM 1, and elsewhere).⁵⁶ We find his understanding of humanity in, for example, his *Letter to Families*, which states that ‘the new [human] being is meant to express fully his humanity, to “find himself” as a person.’⁵⁷ The human being is, as we also read in the teaching of the Council, ‘the only creature on earth whom God willed for its own sake’.⁵⁸ The Pope closely associates genuine humanism with Christ (RH 10). Zimmermann observes that ‘the centrality of the Second Person of the Trinity [Jesus] is crucial to his project, and serves the articulation of a human dignity informed by the witness of Christ, who illustrates the height of human dignity in his teaching and his work.’⁵⁹

role of the Church’. Skalický, *Radost a naděje. Církev v dnešním světě* (Kostelní Vydří: Karmelitánské nakladatelství, 2000), 90, 205.

⁵⁶ In *Christifideles Laici*, the Pope reflects on the relationship between the call to holiness and dignity and stresses that ‘holiness is the greatest testimony of the dignity conferred on a disciple of Christ.’ John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici*, para 16. For more on the roots of John Paul II’s personalism and his concept of the human person, see the comprehensive contribution (analytical in terms of both methodology and content) by František Burda, *Obraz člověka ve filosofickém světě Karola Wojtyły*. The Czech book, with the translated title *The image of a man in the philosophical world of Karol Wojtyła*, contains a constructive summary in English. František Burda, *Obraz člověka ve filosofickém světě Karola Wojtyły* (Ústí nad Orlicí: Oftis, 2011), 305–317.

⁵⁷ John Paul II, *Letter to Families. Gratissimam Sane* (1994), para. 9, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://bit.ly/3js4QGB>.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* See also *Gaudium et Spes*, para. 24.

⁵⁹ Zimmermann, ‘John Paul II and the Significance of the Trinity,’ 110.

True humanism, through Revelation, ascribes to the human person the dignity inherent to its nature and its eschatological hope: ‘that dignity that springs from the relationship of the son with the father’ (DM 5). We realise the true nature of human beings by following Jesus and thereby finding fullness and dignity. Nietzsche, by contrast, insists that people become entirely human only when they reject God, who resists the full realisation of humanity.⁶⁰ He denies the fulness of man in faith and believes that ‘the Christian faith, from the beginning, is sacrifice: the sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of spirit; it is at the same time subjection, self-derision, and self-mutilation.’⁶¹ It is in the context of the critique of the Christian faith, the designation of suffering as a sign of this faith and of the conversion of Christians to the cross, in which Nietzsche finds no love, only sacrifice, and this is unacceptable for him.

John Paul II clearly situates conversion in the context of mercy: ‘conversion to God always consists in discovering His mercy’ (DM 13).⁶² This statement does not exclude the possibility of conversion having a passive spiritual character, in the sense of listening, like Mary (Luke 10:39), but clearly indicates its dynamic character, seen in active⁶³ meditation, discovering God in real-life situations, in prayer, or in following the example of the prodigal son. It may include making a firm decision to go to God the Father, admit to mistakes (DM 5), and receive the sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance (RH 7, RH 20, DM 13, DV 62).

Conversion brings an essential change. The ‘awareness of squandered sonship’ (DM 5) that we see in the prodigal son is recovered in Christ into full renewed dignity and the quality of life of the children of God: ‘I will be your father, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty’ (2 Cor 6:18). Such a promise can heal any kind of miserable situation, ‘whenever tragedy strikes’ (DM 4). Here we see how human suffering finds refuge and meaning in God’s love and mercy. A person’s suffering is not ‘denied’, as Nietzsche believes,⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. L. A. Magnus (New York: Carlton House, 1930), para. 46, Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1968), 506-507.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, para 46.

⁶² The Latin version uses the verb *retergere* (‘discover’).

⁶³ Zimmermann, ‘John Paul II and the Significance of the Trinity,’ 118. The author observes the active character of human being emphasised by John Paul II.

⁶⁴ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, para 46.

but treated. The key truth of the parable and of the mercy shown by the father to his son(s) is that ‘a fundamental good has been saved: the good of his son’s humanity’ (DM 6). This truth applies to other human situations and to any Christian. Mercy, then, renews and deepens union with Christ. Genuine conversion is not a one-off act, but ‘all the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount indicate the way of conversion and of reform of life’ (DM 14). Understood in this way, conversion leads through mercy to the recovery of the person’s dignity, and this recovery consists of ‘humanity... saved’ (DM 6) and ‘restored to value’ (DM 6). Such inner recovery enables the Christian to cooperate in mercy, the practice of which is a ‘gift’ and ‘task’ for every Christian and for the Church (DM 14).

4. Conversion as an Answer to ‘Existential Fear’ and Bad Times

Recent Popes have drawn our attention to the threats that arise from the accelerated development of society, especially in the spheres of technology, the economy, and the environment. John Paul II speaks of ‘sources of uneasiness’: despite significant technical and other progress, ‘in our world the feeling of being under threat is increasing. There is an increase of that existential fear’ (DM 11).⁶⁵ In *Dominum et Vivificantem* the Pope analyses the nature of the threats arising from human nature (DV 36), from evil (DV 37, 38), and from the world.⁶⁶ These threats are both external and internal. In the face of these threats, conversion becomes a way of constantly internalising one’s life in Christ and of seeking and finding in his countenance the loving ‘countenance of the “Father of mercies and God of all comfort” (2 Cor 1:3)’ (DM 1).

Conversion is necessarily associated with the conscience and with the various roles of the Holy Spirit. Drawing on the Gospel of John, the Pope presents the Holy Spirit as the ‘Spirit of truth’ (*Spiritus veritatis*) (DV 3, 5ff), the Spirit ‘Counselor’ (*Spiritus-Consolator*) (DV 3, 4, 5ff), and the Spirit ‘Paraclete’ (*Spiritus-Paraclitus*) (DV 3, 7ff).

⁶⁵ For example, Kasper also reflects on the threats of the 20th and 21st centuries and associates with them the challenge of reflecting on God’s mercy. Kasper, *Mercy*, 1–19.

⁶⁶ Zimmermann notes the Pope’s warning concerning threats and fears in the context of his encyclicals *Dives in Misericordia* and *Dominum et Vivificantem*. Zimmermann, ‘John Paul II and the Significance of the Trinity for Human Dignity,’ 115–116.

To face these threats, to continue to mature in holiness, and come to a deeper unity with Christ, Christians must become adhered to Christ and his love and work with their conscience. Here, the Holy Spirit acts as a guide (DV 6, 27), helping to form Christians spiritually, primarily through the conscience, reminding them of Christ's words and teachings, and assuring them of love and the hope of 'eternal life' (DV 41). John Paul II is seeking to show that conversion is essential if a Christian is to live existentially in fullness and truth, as 'the conversion of the human heart, which is an indispensable condition for the forgiveness of sins, is brought about by the influence of the Counselor' (DV 42). Considering these approaches of John Paul II to conversion, it can be inferred that living a life of continual conversion under the guidance of the Holy Spirit brings an essential value: the ability to distinguish between converting first to God and then to the world, and therefore to be able rightly to prioritise the internal over the external and material.

Through a continual process of conversion, the Christian can be able to face fear and internal and external threats through being supported by the love of God through the Holy Spirit, who provides the strength needed to struggle against⁶⁷ and face these threats (DV 58).

All of this is also expressed in the Pope's well-known motto: 'Do not be afraid. Open wide the doors to Christ.'⁶⁸ In the Gospel, Jesus often strengthens and encourages his disciples: 'Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid' (John 14:27). These existential fears and threats are still present and even accelerating and deepening under the current pressure of the coronavirus pandemic.⁶⁹ Pope Francis also does not leave aside threats to the environment, the cause of which is mainly human consumption behaviour, and devel-

⁶⁷ A link between conversion and spiritual struggle can be found in the Council's appeal to laity to 'express [the hope in their hearts] by a continual conversion and by wrestling "against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness" (Eph. 6:12)' (LG 55). The appeal applies to all Christians.

⁶⁸ John Paul II, *Homily of His Holiness John Paul II for the Inauguration of His Pontificate*, 22 October 1978, para. 5, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://bit.ly/3jyCLOB>.

⁶⁹ In the collection of his selected speeches, Pope Francis issues a call to conversion in order to face the current threats, especially the coronavirus pandemic. Pope Francis, *Why Are You Afraid? Have You No Faith? The World Facing the Pandemic* (Our Sunday Visitor Inc.U.S., 2021).

ops the theme of conversion in his second encyclical *Laudato si'*,⁷⁰ for example, John Paul II's strong appeal to 'ecological conversion' presented in his General Audience of 17 January 2001.⁷¹ John Paul II reflects this topic more in the context of the biblical perspective of human care of Earth, and Francis further shifts conversion onto a practical level, servicing each other while continuing the necessary internal transformation, thus placing a new emphasis on personal conversion. However, Francis also appeals that 'the ecological conversion needed to bring about lasting change is also a community conversion.'⁷² In a later exhortation related to holiness, he adds: 'At times, life presents great challenges. Through them, the Lord calls us anew to a conversion that can make his grace more evident in our lives, 'in order that we may share his holiness' (Heb 12:10). At other times, we need only find a more perfect way of doing what we are already doing.'⁷³

Conclusion

One of the principal goals of Christianity, especially in times of accelerated internal and external pressures and threats, is to awaken human beings to their inner essence by appealing to them to seek a path primarily in the heart. The personal conversion of the Christian to God is an essential aspect of St John Paul II's theology of holiness; his encyclicals support the Trinitarian dimension of conversion. In the theological discourse, there is a significant understanding of conversion as the preservation and development of faith and as an internal spiritual process. Here, the approach applied has been that of spiritual theology with a focus on the union of God with the human person.

The significant role played by conversion in John Paul II's theology of holiness concerns its relation to integrity and the need for holiness. The anthropological and Christocentric characters of conversion are central to this theology, which the Pope develops from the teaching of

⁷⁰ Francis, *Laudato si'*, 24 May 2015, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://bit.ly/3AdtGjy>.

⁷¹ John Paul II, *General Audience*, 17 January 2001, para. 4, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://bit.ly/2UJ64D2>; Francis, *Laudato si'*, 24 May 2015, para. 5, 216–221.

⁷² Francis, *Laudato si'*, para. 219.

⁷³ Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 19 March 2018, para. 17, accessed 10 March 2021, <https://bit.ly/3qCNC11>.

the Second Vatican Council, especially regarding the universal call to holiness and the full understanding of the human being in a Christological perspective.

John Paul II speaks of conversion as having both a permanent and a continual character, both of which are crucial to living a holy life and developing union with Christ. As such, the theme of conversion is situated into the mystery of Redemption. The personal and ecclesial characters of conversion are both reliant on God's grace.

A significant feature of conversion is a constant readiness to follow Christ, to love, to forgive, and in this respect, the sacraments of the Eucharist and of Penance are seen as essential to conversion and the conscious experiencing life with Christ. Conversion is not just a one-time affair but a lifelong process. Such conversion is often expressed as a *true conversion*.

John Paul II also discusses conversion through the perspective of mercy. Here the emphasis is on the need for renewal in the relationship between human beings and God: conversion is an authentic *change of mind* directly related to a relationship with the Lord. Mercy as the countenance of the Father renews and deepens union with Christ. Alongside mercy, other concepts of interest related to conversion include humanity, as a state and quality of human being with a Christocentric character, and human dignity. Conversion leads through mercy to the recovery of the person's dignity, and this recovery heals and renews humanity and human dignity.

In John Paul II's theology, conversion has a role to play in the daily spiritual struggle that takes place in the lives of those who follow Christ. Conversion is necessarily linked with the conscience and with the various roles of the Holy Spirit. John Paul II seeks to show that conversion is essential if a Christian is to live existentially in fullness and truth. Conversion brings an essential value: the ability to distinguish between converting first to God and then to the world and, therefore, the need to prioritise the internal over the external and material; it is the art of making the right decision guided by the Holy Spirit.

Ruptures and threats have their origin in human nature, in the world, and in evil. The continual process of conversion, being supported by God's love expressed as mercy through the Holy Spirit, helps a person face these fears and threats, both internal and external. Pope Francis offers a further challenge in calling Christians to concretise their conversion through service to others.

The approach to personal conversion to God explored in this paper will benefit from further research, especially regarding the Church's appeal to Christians to follow the path of holiness in their personal lives, in the Church, and in society.

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SACRAMENTAL REALISM OF CHESTERTON AND LEWIS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to present G. K. Chesterton's and C. S. Lewis's understanding of sacramental realism and its possible adoption in pre-evangelisation. It is demonstrated that G. K. Chesterton's works influenced C.S Lewis's conversion, his Christian literary thinking, and his apologetics. Both Chesterton and Lewis offered sacramental perceptions of the world, available through the baptism of imagination. In their works, imagination helps reason to expand and recognise the supernatural in the natural. Therefore, imagination is an essential part of their apologetics of Christianity, which still appeals to contemporary man. In this way, new imaginative apologetics can serve as a suitable preparation for the proclamation of the Gospel today.

Keywords

C. S. Lewis; G. K. Chesterton; Pre-evangelisation; New Apologetics; Symbol; Imagination

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Two Englishmen, two writers, two converts, two apologists who changed their times and influenced the view of Christianity among their contemporaries. Without exaggeration, G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis could be described in such a way. Their importance raises the question of whether and how they could address the contemporary proclamation of the Gospel – at least in the pre-evangelisation phase, when it is necessary to answer the criticism of Christianity in a clear but comprehensible way. This study examines Chesterton's influence on Lewis, their common sacramental vision of the world, and

the principles of their realism. The presentation of such a worldview in their writings appealed to many readers and encouraged other conversions. Therefore, this study shows that Chesterton and Lewis present a convincing form of realism – the so-called sacramental realism – which provides important principles for new apologetics of Christianity as preparation for evangelisation today.

1. Chesterton's Influence on Lewis

One can find the probably best-known direct reference of Lewis's tribute to Chesterton in his autobiography *Surprised by Joy* (1955): 'In reading Chesterton, as in reading MacDonald, I did not know what I was letting myself in for. A young man who wishes to remain a sound Atheist cannot be too careful of his reading.'¹

Lewis was fascinated by Chesterton's presentation of history, which broke his atheistic prejudices and started his religious conversion: 'Then I read Chesterton's *Everlasting Man* and for the first time saw the whole Christian outline of history set out in a form that seemed to me to make sense.'² In addition to this rational influence on his mind, Lewis found in Chesterton – 'the most sensible man alive' – much more:

It was here that I first read a volume of Chesterton's essays. I had never heard of him and had no idea of what he stood for; nor can I quite understand why he made such an immediate conquest of me. It might have been expected that my pessimism, my atheism, and my hatred of sentiment would have made him to me the least congenial of all authors. It would almost seem that Providence, or some 'second cause' of a very obscure kind, quite overrules our previous tastes when it decides to bring two minds together. Liking an author may be as involuntary and improbable as falling in love. I was by now a sufficiently experienced reader to distinguish liking from agreement. I did not need to accept what Chesterton said in order to enjoy it. His humor was of the kind which I like best – not 'jokes' imbedded in the page like currants in a cake, still less (what I cannot endure), a general tone of flippancy and jocularly, but the humor

¹ C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy. The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955), 191.

² Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 223.

which is not in any way separable from the argument but is rather (as Aristotle would say) the ‘bloom’ on dialectic itself. The sword glitters not because the swordsman set out to make it glitter but because he is fighting for his life and therefore moving it very quickly. For the critics who think Chesterton frivolous or ‘paradoxical’ I have to work hard to feel even pity; sympathy is out of the question. Moreover, strange as it may seem, I liked him for his goodness...⁵

These may be the only well-known words that Lewis spoke about Chesterton, but there are many more references to Chesterton in Lewis’s works. Thanks to a study by Iain T. Benson, one knows exactly which Chesterton’s books Lewis owned and where exactly he mentioned Chesterton: The list contains up to 23 citations.⁴ In addition, Benson stated that Lewis was able to talk to his students and friends about Chesterton’s works ‘with great interest and at length’ and that he ‘read most of Chesterton’s theological books.’⁵ As for the textual critique itself, Benson’s research confirms that Lewis was deeply moved and influenced by Chesterton.

The very list of documented quotations from Chesterton does not mean that Lewis did not refer to Chesterton more often and even indirectly without mentioning his name. On the contrary, it is clear that some of Lewis’s Christian worldview principles find their correspondence or even foundation in Chesterton. As Gisbert Kranz wrote: ‘Not only did Lewis express convictions and ideas which had been expressed by Chesterton; he sometimes expressed these ideas by the same similies, metaphors, and images, or in the same manner which Chesterton used in expressing them.’⁶

Surprisingly, one of Lewis’s best-known arguments for Christianity, his logical evidence of the deity of Jesus Christ, also called the ‘trilemma’, finds its origins in Chesterton. In his *Mere Christianity* (1952), Lewis argued that there were only three philosophical ways to approach the person of Jesus: ‘Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else

⁵ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 190–191.

⁴ See for the complete list: Iain T. Benson, ‘The Influence of the Writings of G. K. Chesterton on C. S. Lewis: The Textual Part,’ *The Chesterton Review* 17, no. 3–4 (1991): 357–367, doi: 10.5840/chesterton1991173/4100.

⁵ Benson, ‘The Influence of the Writings of G. K. Chesterton on C. S. Lewis,’ 358, 359.

⁶ Gisbert Kranz, ‘Affinities in Lewis and Chesterton,’ *The Chesterton Review* 17/3–4 (1991): 324, doi: 10.5840/chesterton1991173/497.

a madman or something worse... Now it seems to me obvious that He was neither a lunatic nor a fiend: and consequently, however strange or terrifying or unlikely it may seem, I have to accept the view that He was and is God.⁷ Similarly, in his *Everlasting Man* (1925), Chesterton wrote: ‘No atheist or blasphemer believes that the author of the Sermon on the Mount was a horrible half-witted imbecile that might be scrawling stars on the walls of a cell... Yet by all analogy we have really to put him there or else in the highest place of all.’⁸ The approach is different, but the logic of the argument is the same. Lewis focused on reason and rational choice, while Chesterton utilised emotional and picturesque vocabulary that appealed to common sense. But they both challenged misunderstandings about Jesus and about the basic personal decision his person carries.

This argument about Jesus is just one of the most striking similarities in Chesterton’s and Lewis’s thinking. Martin Moynihan offers many other common points: friendship between reason and faith, polemical style, putting their convictions into fictional stories, laughter, and the gift of prophecy.⁹ And one could go on. Still, the observation by Fischer and Derbesy is much more powerful: ‘We argue that Lewis received an understanding of the literary Christian’s task from G. K. Chesterton, whose profound influence on Lewis shaped the latter’s conception of how a Christian should write.’¹⁰

Such a statement deserves attention. By no means is it possible to deny Lewis’s originality and the contribution of his apologetics; still, this observation helps to understand that Lewis’s apologetics were, in principle, in accordance with Chesterton’s apologetics, which in turn were truly orthodox and dated back to early Christianity. If Fischer and Derbesy tell the truth about the influence of Chesterton’s literary craft and philosophical framing on Lewis, then one can happily place these

⁷ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York, NY-London-Auckland-Toronto-Pymble: HarperCollins Publishers, Adobe Acrobat eBook Reader, 2009), 52–53.

⁸ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The Collected Works. Volume II: St. Francis of Assisi, The Everlasting Man, St. Thomas Aquinas* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 335. See also: Benjamin Fischer, Philip C. Derbesy, ‘Literary Catholicity: An Alternate Reading of Influence in the Work of C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton,’ *Religion and the Arts* 19 (2015): 393–394, doi: 10.1163/15685292-01904004.

⁹ Martin Moynihan, ‘C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesterton,’ *The Chesterton Review* 17/3–4 (1991): 402–404, doi: 10.5840/chesterton1991173/4108.

¹⁰ Benjamin Fischer, Philip C. Derbesy, ‘Literary Catholicity,’ 392.

two writers amongst the orthodox apologists for Christianity because, as Chesterton himself said, he discovered nothing new but the old orthodoxy.¹¹ Lewis and Chesterton are just two voices of old principles and truths that need to be dusted off once in a while so that their sound can resonate anew with greater power. Therefore, we claim that their apologetics resound with the voice of ancient martyrs and advocates of Christianity and that it is precisely this magical combination of the old truth and the new form that can appeal to contemporary man. It can already be assumed that ‘the old truth’ is the Christian belief about objective reality, which, however, always points to a deeper transcendent reality. This is visible only through the recognition of a mystery that cannot be discovered by reason alone; something else must be used. This ‘something else’ already speaks of a new form that is typical for Chesterton and Lewis. Such a symbiosis of old content and new form in their work offers a type of realism that can be called sacramental realism.

2. Chesterton’s and Lewis’s Sacramentalism

One of the first truths that these masters of new apologetics taught us is a sacramental perception of the world. It is a view by which one looks at familiar things with astonishment, with a hint of an unknown mystery about the complex fullness of existence. At the same time, it never escapes from the reality of sensuality and concreteness no matter how painful, incomplete, and vague it is. To describe Chesterton’s and Lewis’s understanding of reality, Ian Boyd coined the term ‘sacramental mysticism’. Thus, he emphasised that ‘the exterior of material reality is a disguise for its inner spiritual splendour.’¹²

An example of such sacramental mysticism can be found in Chesterton’s novel *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare* (1908). Here, Chesterton played with reality as a disguise for inner spiritual splendour in the person of his main character, the mysterious Sunday. Those who see Sunday tremble: ‘That’s Sunday. He is perhaps five

¹¹ See Chesterton’s introduction to his *Orthodoxy*. In: *The Collected Works I: Heretics; Orthodoxy; The Blatchford Controversies* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 211–215. Hereafter *CW*, I.

¹² Ian Boyd, ‘Chesterton and C. S. Lewis,’ *The Chesterton Review* 17/3–4 (1991): 503, doi: 10.5840/chesterton1991173/495.

hundred miles off, but the fear of him is on all of them, like the finger of God.’¹⁵ However, they are scared only until they see his face:

And then the queer thing happened. I had seen his back from the street, as he sat in the balcony. Then I entered the hotel, and coming round the other side of him, saw his face in the sunlight. His face frightened me, as it did every one; but not because it was brutal, not because it was evil. On the contrary, it frightened me because it was so beautiful, because it was so good.¹⁴

Such a discovery offers the interpretation that Sunday is in reality God Himself. Thus, Chesterton depicts God allegorically as a person visible only from behind, disguised as Nature and unrecognizable because of the complex, incomprehensible passage of time. Such a mysterious person causes fear, but when people see His true face, the fear disappears.¹⁵ Still, it is the one and the same Sunday. Thus it turns out that for Chesterton, as well as for Lewis, this world is not only a ‘resemblance’, a ‘mask’ of eternal reality, but also its real presence – despite the fact that we do not perceive it that way and do not feel it. As Boyd emphasised, both writers leaned towards the original meaning of the word sacramental: ‘As Chesterton explained in his book about St. Thomas, when material things deceive, they deceive not by being ephemeral and transitory, but “by being far more real” than they appear to be.’¹⁶

Chesterton emphasised that the supernatural is truly present in this world, that it forms the basis of what is meant by ‘nature’, and that without it, all things lose their substance. As he wrote in his *Heretics* (1905): ‘Take away the supernatural, and what remains is the unnatural.’¹⁷ It is in this sense that he could paradoxically say about the supernatural reality: ‘The supernatural is natural, in the sense of normal.’¹⁸ Without

¹⁵ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The Collected Works VI: The Club of Queer Trades, The Napoleon of Notting Hill, The Man Who Was Thursday* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 587. Hereafter *CW*, VI.

¹⁴ *CW* VI, 621.

¹⁵ See Maisie Ward, *Gilbert Keith Chesterton* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1945), 195.

¹⁶ Ian Boyd, ‘Chesterton and C. S. Lewis,’ 304.

¹⁷ *CW* I, 88.

¹⁸ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *Il soprannaturale è naturale: Scritti per l'Italia*, a cura di Marco Antonellini (Genova–Milano: Casa Editrice Marietti, 2012), 110: ‘Il soprannaturale è naturale, nel senso di normale.’

supernatural reality, one cannot say what is natural or normal at all. Boyd confirmed that both writers were convinced about the sacramental presence of the supernatural in the natural so that man could know the true nature of the world.

For both Chesterton and Lewis, Christ is the Sacrament of God, because He is the human temple in which God dwells. For both authors, this mystery of God's presence extends throughout history through the mystery of the Church, a Community of Believers who form the mystical body of Christ.¹⁹

Boyd saw that Lewis was in accordance with Chesterton in *The Allegory of Love* (1936), where he presented symbolism and sacramentalism as synonyms. Lewis said: "The attempt to read "that something else" [the unseen spiritual world] through its sensible imitations, to see the archetype in the copy, is what I mean by symbolism or sacramentalism."²⁰ In other words, Lewis reiterated that the reality of this world is a reflection of the mystery that we do not see face to face, but only as if from behind. This world is, however, penetrated by the supernatural, and this fact makes the world extraordinary and holy. As Boyd said, Lewis appropriated typical Chestertonian language and logic regarding the sacramental nature of people:

There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, – these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat... Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbour is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbour he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ vere latitat – the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden.²¹

The principal mutual agreement between Chesterton and Lewis about the sacramentality of the world was much greater than a slight disagreement about the possibilities of knowing God in it. While Chesterton was overflowing with a more optimistic attitude, with a joy that

¹⁹ Ian Boyd, 'Chesterton and C. S. Lewis,' 305.

²⁰ C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love. A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford-New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1958), 45.

²¹ C. S. Lewis, 'The Weight of Glory' (8 June 1942). Available online: <http://www.wheelersburg.net/Downloads/Lewis%20Glory.pdf>.

God can be known in and through created things, Lewis was more pessimistic about external reality and more drawn into the depths of the inner world where God can be found. As Boyd rightly pointed out, the difference in Chesterton's and Lewis's sacramental views was a reflection of the differences in their personalities. Chesterton was more of a Thomist and Lewis was an Augustinian.²² Moreover, Boyd perceived that the difference between them stemmed from their denominational worldview, which must be reflected inevitably in their understanding of the grace operating in the world: Chesterton was a Catholic and Lewis was an Anglican.²⁵ Boyd's conclusion was, however, optimistic when he said that 'the sacramental ideas that they share form a bridge between the two traditions.'²⁴

3. Realism in Chesterton and Lewis

Together with the principle of sacramentalism, ontological realism is naturally debated in tandem. Chesterton and Lewis could not discuss the presence of the supernatural in the natural if they were not convinced about the objective reality of things and about the possibility of knowing the truth through and in them. The deep-rooted realism of Chesterton and Lewis – in conjunction with their sacramentalism – offered an important epistemological consequence, which stood as the second pillar of their inspiring apologetics: that we can know the truth only by broadening our reason with imagination.

As can be seen throughout Chesterton's works, he criticised the kind of people who looked at the world only through logic and strictly limited reason. According to him, they lived in a world of fictional abstractions and not in reality and as such could not find the truth about life. Moreover, Chesterton was convinced that a person who wants to live everyday life only on the principles of logic and neglect common sense cannot be normal. As he wrote in *Orthodoxy*, man needs a balance between logic and mystery that transcends the world, and he calls this balance mysticism: 'Mysticism keeps men sane. As long as you have mystery you have health; when you destroy mystery you create

²² Ian Boyd, 'Chesterton and C. S. Lewis,' 308.

²⁵ Ian Boyd, 'Chesterton and C. S. Lewis,' 309–310.

²⁴ Ian Boyd, 'Chesterton and C. S. Lewis,' 311.

morbidity. The ordinary man has always been sane because the ordinary man has always been a mystic.²⁵

Such persistence in two worlds – the world of facts and the world to which these facts point – allows a mystic to have a completely different knowledge than a logician despite the apparent contradiction the mystic may encounter during the cognitive process. Because he is aware of the possibility of the mystery that transcends him, the mystic will not reject the a priori apparent contradiction: ‘He has always cared more for truth than for consistency. If he saw two truths that seemed to contradict each other, he would take the two truths and the contradiction along with them.’²⁶ The logician would reject the contradiction because it is illogical and inconsistent. Chesterton, however, convincingly argued that the fact that something is not logical does not inevitably mean that it is not true:

Logic and truth, as a matter of fact, have very little to do with each other. Logic is concerned merely with the fidelity and accuracy with which a certain process is performed, a process which can be performed with any materials, with any assumption.²⁷

Truth can be discovered by a different path than the path of logic: ‘Briefly, you can only find truth with logic if you have already found truth without it.’²⁸

But how can man find the truth? How does man change his own mindset so as to accept a claim about the wider reality? How can man accept the fact that logic is not everything? Chesterton suggested that it is possible only if one takes the process of reaching the truth seriously in everyday life – through common sense and by using imagination.

Most men would return to the old ways in faith and morals if they could broaden their minds enough to do so. It is narrowness that chiefly keeps them in the rut of negation. But this enlargement is easily misunderstood because the mind must be enlarged to see the simple things or even to see

²⁵ *CW I*, 230.

²⁶ *CW I*, 230.

²⁷ G. K. Chesterton, *In Defense of Sanity*. The Best Essays of G. K. Chesterton, selected by Dale Ahlquist, Joseph Pearce, and Aidan Mackey (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 89.

²⁸ Chesterton, *In Defense of Sanity*, 90.

the self-evident things. It needs a sort of stretch of imagination to see the obvious objects against the obvious background, and especially the big objects against the big background.²⁹

The call for expanded reason, so similar to the teachings of Pope Benedict XVI, represented for Chesterton a call for common sense, imagination, and intuition. Therefore, when Chesterton compared logicians and poets, he preferred the latter because of the broad and almost infinite horizons of their spirit: 'Poetry is sane because it floats easily in an infinite sea; reason seeks to cross the infinite sea, and so make it finite.'³⁰ The poet is free to use not only a narrowly defined reason but also other non-logical abilities like imagination, which enable him to encounter new possibilities of cognition, while the logician wants to comprehend everything with his logic: 'And it is his head that splits.'³¹

Much could be said about Chesterton's call for imagination, but it is enough to provide only one of his more philosophical quotes, where he explicitly stated how imagination is helpful to logic. In his commentary on Charles Dickens, Chesterton described the role of imagination as organising facts into meaningful order and as a bearer of truth:

A touch of fiction is almost always essential to the real conveying of fact, because fact, as experienced, has a fragmentariness which is bewildering at first hand and quite blinding at second hand. Facts have at least to be sorted into compartments and the proper head and tail given back to each.³²

It is precisely imagination that helps reason to see properly what can be seen and to classify the facts so that they make sense.

The same could be said about Lewis, who confirmed the significance of imagination along with reason while following Chesterton's logic to the letter. In the not-so-well-known essay, 'Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare' (1939), Lewis wrote about apologetics, which

²⁹ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The Collected Works III: The Catholic Church and Conversion, The Thing: Why I Am a Catholic, The Well and the Shallows, The Way of the Cross – and others* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 215.

³⁰ *CW I*, 220.

³¹ *CW I*, 220.

³² Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The Collected Works XV: Chesterton on Dickens* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 149.

is a reasoned defence in the first place. However, he argued that before reason can initiate its operation, there has to be some organ at work that presents and classifies the material as meaningful to reason. This role of supplying the facts and the role of their classification according to the degree of meaningfulness belongs to imagination.⁵³ Imagination is thus ‘the organ of meaning’ that takes priority over reason as ‘the organ of truth’.⁵⁴

Such a close connection between imagination and truth played a crucial role in Lewis’s own life and in his conversion to Christianity. As he wrote in the autobiography *Surprised by Joy*, the beginning of his path to the Christian faith was a ‘baptism’ of imagination. The process of accepting the world as a meaningful and holy place – where transcendence to eternity is possible – began with the rebirth of his imagination, not of his reason.⁵⁵ As we already know, Lewis was inspired on the path to Christianity by Chesterton and his *Everlasting Man*, by its Christian presentation of history, which confirmed that Lewis himself was in need of ‘the organ of meaning’ so as to classify and organise facts into a meaningful whole. *The Everlasting Man* influenced Lewis’s imagination much more than his reason.⁵⁶

Of course, there are no doubts about the irreplaceable role of imagination in the final acceptance of Christianity by Lewis in 1931. Lewis came to believe Christianity after a well known long night conversation with his friends and colleagues J. R. R. Tolkien (1892–1973) and Hugo Dyson (1896–1975). Lewis admired the power of pagan myths, which fascinated him, but he was not able to see the Gospel story in the same light. He understood Christianity more as a set of doctrines than as a story powerful enough to fascinate and delight. In a letter to his friend Arthur Greeves from October 18, 1931, Lewis wrote that he was not able to understand how the two-thousand-year-old story could have had an

⁵³ Michael Ward, ‘The Good Serves the Better and Both the Best: C. S. Lewis on Imagination and Reason in Apologetics,’ in *Imaginative Apologetics. Theology, Philosophy and the Catholic Tradition*, ed. Andrew Davison (London: SCM Press, 2011), 60–61.

⁵⁴ C. S. Lewis, ‘Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare,’ in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 265. See also Ward, ‘The Good Serves the Better,’ 61–62.

⁵⁵ Lewis, *Surprised by Joy*, 181. Also: Ward, ‘The Good Serves the Better,’ 65.

⁵⁶ Christopher Derrick, ‘Some Personal Angles on Chesterton and Lewis,’ in *G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis: The Riddle of Joy*, eds. Michael H. Macdonald, Andrew A. Tadie (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 5–6.

impact on any contemporary man.³⁷ His two friends, therefore, did not lead a frontal attack on Lewis's rational acceptance of Christianity but rather on the imaginative rebirth of his perception of Christianity as a true myth that can affect everyone because it is full of meaning and purpose.

Lewis's biographer, Alister McGrath, confirmed that Lewis's final conversion was about the meaning of Christianity, not about its truth.³⁸ It was Tolkien and his way of thinking about myths that opened Lewis's eyes and helped him to grasp fragments of truth in the stories people memorised and passed down from generation to generation. Thus, the old truth was being inhaled through various images and gave meaning to both the present and the future. McGrath wrote about the imaginative power of the myth according to Tolkien: 'Myths possess an innate capacity to expand the consciousness of their readers, allowing them to transcend themselves.'³⁹ After such guidance, Lewis was able to bring together everything he had understood, felt, and lived into a great and perhaps shocking, but meaningful conclusion: Christianity tells a true story, 'which makes sense of all the stories that humanity tells about itself.'⁴⁰ Tolkien helped Lewis discover the link between reason and imagination in Christianity.

Unsurprisingly, Chesterton offered the same conclusion in *The Everlasting Man*: 'The rivers of mythology and philosophy run parallel and do not mingle till they meet in the sea of Christendom.'⁴¹ Reason and imagination are two ways through which man seeks the truth, and what a surprise it must be when he finds something that appropriates both without any diminishment:

The Catholic faith is the reconciliation because it is the realisation both of mythology and philosophy. It is a story and in that sense one of a hundred stories; only it is a true story. It is a philosophy and in that sense one of a hundred philosophies; only it is a philosophy that is like life. But above

³⁷ C. S. Lewis, 'Letter to Arthur Greeves, 18 October 1931,' in *The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis I*, ed. Walter Hooper (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 976–977. See also: Alister McGrath, *C. S. Lewis – A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., ebook, 2013), 322–323.

³⁸ McGrath, *C. S. Lewis – A Life*, 324.

³⁹ McGrath, *C. S. Lewis – A Life*, 326.

⁴⁰ McGrath, *C. S. Lewis – A Life*, 326.

⁴¹ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The Collected Works II: St. Francis of Assisi, The Everlasting Man, St. Thomas Aquinas* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 243. Hereafter *CW II*.

all, it is a reconciliation because it is something that can only be called the philosophy of stories. That normal narrative instinct which produced all the fairy tales is something that is neglected by all the philosophies – except one. The Faith is the justification of that popular instinct; the finding of a philosophy for it or the analysis of the philosophy in it.⁴²

This quote about how Christianity fulfils the narrative instinct as well as the instinct for truth is the highlight of Chesterton's and Lewis's presentation of Christianity. Their vision of Christianity hit the centre of reality because it reconciled reason and imagination, philosophy, and mythology. Their realism was broader and deeper than the flattened realism of modernity, which limited man to a logical machine, as well as the distorted realism of postmodernism, which made man a part of a story without meaning. The sacramental realism of Chesterton and Lewis offered a complex but meaningful story that satisfies man's desire to live in the Truth forever. In the last part, we will present the meaning of such a vision of Christianity for practical application in pre-evangelisation.

4. New Apologetics as Pre-evangelisation

Chesterton and Lewis offered a presentation of Christianity that was rich and unique for their times because it did not neglect man's desire for miracles, for dynamism, for fairy tales, or for stories. These are the categories that influence art and culture even today. This fact is confirmed by the popularity of fantasy sagas (*The Lord of the Rings*, *The Game of Thrones*, *Harry Potter*, *The Witcher*, etc.) or superhero movies from Marvel and DC. The desire for a powerful story that offers values in the battle between good and evil forces is deeply rooted in man, and it reflects the inner longing for such a story that would at the same time be true.

Therefore, new apologetics is not faced with the question of whether Christianity should be presented with imaginative force. After the ongoing success of Chesterton, Lewis, and many other contemporary apologists who followed their example, it is clear that if apologetics is possible, it must be imaginative. This is the basic premise that corresponds with the situation in which one finds themselves today. Although

⁴² *CW II*, 378.

contemporary man still refers to what science has confirmed or refuted, he spends much more time in virtual reality, where his desire for meaning is hidden. The reason that guides contemporary man hopelessly longs for meaning. Today, one needs to be baptised precisely in the manner Lewis was baptised: to be able to comprehend that he does not yet see everything that is there to be seen; and then, after such a rebirth of imagination, to lead him to examine the meaningfulness and truth of the story he is living in.

That is why imagination is necessary; however, the question remains to what extent. We know that imagination helps reason to expand and open itself for infinity. It awakens wonder and curiosity; it offers a new perspective on old things, and it provides questions that one has not yet asked themselves. However, at some point, it may deceive and may lead reason to a path of false meaning. Therefore, baptised imagination must never let go of logic. Baptised imagination cannot be satisfied with offering simply a meaningful vision of reality; it needs to offer a vision that satisfies the instinct for truth as well.

Chesterton and Lewis offered a solution in their own way, which was described as ‘sacramental mysticism’. In general, a mystic means a person that lives in a place and time removed from our world, in a different reality that transcends the sensual everyday experience. Thus, it would seem that the mystical experience has something to do only with the other world and nothing with our world. That is not the case with Chesterton and Lewis. Mysticism uncovers the transcendent precisely in and through the ordinary. It does not mean distancing oneself from reality but an immersion into the real reality, which is the supernatural. The mystic never abandons this world. He is always present in it in a more profound way. That is why Chesterton defended poets and their ‘mystical imagination’ as sane and ‘business-like’.⁴⁵ Poets who have their imagination baptised – who have such a mystical imagination – will not run away from reason and logic; exactly the opposite, they will offer a portrait of reality that is both creative and true at the same time. Therefore, new apologetics should follow this pattern: it should be as vivid and eye-opening as the imagination permits while remaining rational and universal thanks to logic.

Finally, a new apologetics should utilise Chesterton’s and Lewis’s understanding of sacramentalism as ‘symbolism’ because their

⁴⁵ See *CWI*, 219.

sacramental vision includes both the philosophical-theological content of the eternal truth as well as a narrative form that actualises the meaning of truth for the contemporary man. The sacred symbol is much richer than the word of doctrine because it offers a reality that is deeper and even more attractive than the encyclopedic definition of truth. The symbol is able to awaken indifferent people, to engage them, to offer them a meaning that reignites their desire to know the truth hidden behind it. At the same time, the sacred symbol is not lost in imagery and imaginativeness because it adheres to God's truth, which is in truth Himself. The sacred symbol corresponds to the longing of the human heart, which desires to wander and discover. At the same time, the symbol does not simply remain at the level of wandering, but it holds on to the vision of its goal, of its home, where it finds the truth about itself. Such an understanding of sacramentalism is like life itself: it desires adventure as well to reach its destination.

The value of Chesterton's and Lewis's apologetics both in the past and in the present is indisputable. The extent to which the principles of their unique sacramental realism can offer new apologetics and how new apologetics can be practically developed from these principles remains to be answered. However, it is not the aim of this study to address the practical development of their apologetics. This study set for itself the task of laying the theoretical foundations on which further study can be built while researching practical applications.

Conclusion

This study offered a presentation of Chesterton's and Lewis's sacramental realism and its meaning for contemporary pre-evangelisation. It has demonstrated the extent to which Lewis was influenced by Chesterton and his work. Lewis's apologetics is thus fundamentally identical to Chesterton's, and both brought a fresh new perspective on the Christian tradition. Their works confirmed the sacramental perception of the world, where the supernatural is present in the natural. In order to perceive it, one needs the baptism of imagination, through which the meaning of reality is presented to reason. Imagination is thus an essential part of apologetics that can appeal to contemporary man. It is this new apologetics that can serve as a suitable preparation for the proclamation of the Gospel because it presents Christianity as a place where the two main instincts for a story and for the truth are intertwined.

The testimony of these two converts is the best model of pre-evangelisation: a story of sacramental realism in practice. The symbols, images, and vitality of Christianity did not leave Chesterton and Lewis alone until they realised that they had not yet seen everything meaningful in the world. Awakened, they began to look for what would satisfy human desires and instincts fully. Like St. Peter, who was drowning in the sea, they began to look for a new certainty upon which to build their lives. And they saw Jesus as a real person, not a doctrine. They entrusted their lives to Him since everything indicated that a story with Him at its centre would be true and meaningful. From that moment on, everything started to fit together, and they began to see His footprints and His symbols everywhere: the whole world made sense. Their apologetics is a testimony and personal guidance for those who are drowning like them. Chesterton and Lewis were not afraid to ask questions nor to receive them. Their apologetics are, therefore, more about listening than talking; more about fixing eyes upon the mystery than explaining the incomprehensible. This new apologetics is patient and does not persuade with force: it waits until one asks the question because, from the very beginning, it has been entrusted to be prepared to 'give the reason for the hope' that is in us (1 Pt 3: 15).

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FINDING FAITH BETWEEN THE SCIENCES: THE CASES OF ‘THE OUTER WORLDS’ AND ‘MASS EFFECT: ANDROMEDA’

FRANK G. BOSMAN

ABSTRACT

Science fiction, as a genre, has always been a place for religion, either as an inspirational source or as a part of the fictional universe. Religious themes in science fiction narratives, however, also invoke the question of the relationship, or the absence thereof, between religion and science. When the themes of religion and science are addressed in contemporary science fiction, they are regularly set in opposition, functioning in a larger discussion on the (in)comparability of religion and science in science fiction novels, games, and films. In the games *The Outer Worlds* and *Mass Effect Andromeda*, this discussion is raised positively. Involving terminology and notions related to deism, pantheism, and esoterism, both games claim that science and religion *can* co-exist with one another. Since digital games imbue the intra-textual readers (gamer) to take on the role as one of the characters of the game they are reading (avatar), the discussion shifts from a descriptive discourse to a normative one in which the player cannot but contribute to.

Keywords:

Religion; Science; Religion science debate; *The Outer Worlds*; *Mass Effect Andromeda*; Deism; Esoterism

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Science fiction, as a genre, has always been a place for religion, either as an inspirational source or as a part of the fictional universe.¹ Religious themes in science fiction narratives, however,

¹ Mike Alsford, *What if? Religious Themes in Science Fiction* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2000); Juli Gittinger, *Personhood in Science Fiction. Religious and Philosophical Considerations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); Steven Hrotic, *Religion in Science Fiction. The Evolution of an Idea and the Extinction of a Genre*

also invoke the question on the relationship, or the absence thereof, between religion and science. Some suggest that the genre sometimes functions as a ‘bridge’ between religion and science, while others insist that in science fiction, the theological standard is ‘totally atheistic’.² The reality is more complicated: the blatant atheistic animated sitcom *Rick & Morty* exists besides *Dr. Who*’s discussions on (fictional) religions on other planets.³

When the themes of religion and science are addressed in contemporary science fiction, they are not necessarily played off against each other. Nevertheless, they regularly are set in opposition, like in *Rick and Morty*, *The Outer Worlds* or *Andromeda*. This discussion of the (in) comparability of religion and science in science fiction novels, games, and films is, however, only part of a much larger (and longer) intellectual debate.⁴

In this article, I will present and discuss two cases of digital games within the genre of science fiction, in which the relationship between religion and science is explicitly addressed: *Mass Effect: Andromeda*, and *The Outer Worlds*. However, because of the video game medium’s unique properties, its necessary interactive nature, these games go beyond traditional media discussing and/or addressing the religion-science debate: *Andromeda* and *Outer Worlds* encourage, the second more than the first, the player to position him- or herself within this intellectual debate.

The question I want to answer in this article is two-folded: How do these two games sketch the relationship between religion and science

(London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Farah Mendlesohn, ‘Religion and Science Fiction’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction*, eds. Edward James and Farah Mendlesohn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 264–275; Paul Nahin, *Holy Sci-Fi! Where Science Fiction and Religion Intersect* (New York: Springer, 2014); James McGrath, *Theology and Science Fiction* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016).

² Freeman Dyson, ‘The two windows,’ in *How Large is God? Voices of Scientists and Theologians*, ed. John Templeton (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 1997), 47–68; James Ballard, ‘Fictions of every kind,’ *JGBallard.ca*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3xpho5k>.

³ Courtney Beresheim, ‘The fallacy of the many heads,’ in *Rick and Morty and Philosophy. In the Beginning was the Squinch*, eds. Lester Abesamis and Wayne Yuen (Chicago: Open Court Books, 2019); Andrew Crome and James McGrath, eds., *Religion and Doctor Who. Time and Relative Dimensions in Faith* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015).

⁴ John Haight, *Science and Religion. From Conflict to Conversation* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1995); Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science: The Gifford Lectures. 1989–1991*, Volume 1 (San Francisco: Harper, 1990); Ted Peters, ed., *Science and Theology. The New Consonance* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997).

in their narratives, and how do they position the player within that discussion? To answer these questions, I will use Barbour's typology of possible relationships between religion and science, as well as a game-immanent approach to the study of digital games, treating the latter – principally – as interactive texts that – as such – can be analysed using rhetorical, literary, and communication methodologies. After a brief introduction on these methodological preliminaries, I will present both games in-depth, concentrating on those scenes discussing the relationship between religion and science and focussing on the interactive-narratives elements in these scenes. After systematising my findings from both case studies, I will draw my conclusions.

1. Methodological Preliminaries

The subject of religion and digital games is a relatively new one amongst the various academic disciplines but has brought fundamental insights into the fields of religion studies, digital game studies, and theology.⁵ The actor-centred approaches focus on the experiences of other players, that is, not on those of the researcher him- or herself. The game-immanent approaches concentrate on the playing of the game itself by the researcher/scholar. These two approaches roughly coincide with the concepts of the text-immanent reader versus the reader in communication analysis.⁶ The uniqueness of the digital game medium is the possibility, if not necessity, of the convergence of the player both as the text-immanent reader of *and* as a character within the story (through the player's in-game representation and actor, the avatar).

This also sheds some important light on the reason why I have chosen digital games as case studies. As opposed to analogue narrative

⁵ Craig Detweiler, eds., *Halos and Avatars. Playing Video Games with God* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010); Rachel Wagner, *Godwired. Religion, Ritual, and Virtual Reality* (New York: Abingdon, 2012); William Bainbridge, *eGod. Faith versus Fantasy in Computer Gaming* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Kevin Schut, *Of Games and God. A Christian Exploration of Video Games* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2015); Heidi Campbell and Gregory Grieve, eds., *Playing with Religion in Digital Games* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2014); Vit Sisler, Kerstin Radde-Antweiler and Xenia Zeiler, eds., *Methods for Studying Video Games and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2018); Frank Bosman, *Gaming and the Divine. A New Systematic Theology of Video Games* (London: Routledge, 2019).

⁶ Archibald van Wieringen, 'Methodological Developments in Biblical Exegesis: Author – Text – Reader,' in *Analecta of the UCU*, Series: Theology 7 (2020), 27–46.

devices (books, movies, etc.), digital games force the player, both as the text-immanent reader *and* the game's protagonist, to take part in the discussion on religion and science. Because of the (immanent) player's control over certain aspects of the game's narrative and its unfolding (limited by the text-immanent author, of course), the question about the relationship of science and religion is not only witnessed by the (immanent) player as something that is 'happening' outside of his control but is something the player has to take part in in order to make the game's story progress.

As stated earlier, when discussing the relationship between religion and science, one cannot pass over Ian Barbour and his typology of that relationship.⁷ His typology is (still) highly influential within the debate (take, for example, his influence on Macmillan's *Encyclopaedia of Science and Religion*, in which his name appears 90 times). Let me give some more insight into this typology.

The first relation is that of conflict, in which Barbour contrasts scientific materialism with biblical literalism. Both are criticised for not respecting the boundaries of science proper: the first one reduces all knowledge and truth to empirical instances while the second one tries to defend faith and revelation (the Bible) against empirical assaults by excommunicating all knowledge that does not properly fit into a fundamentalist Biblical frame.

The second relation is that of mutual independence and autonomy, each within its own domain and with its own characteristic methods that can be justified by their own terms (cf. Gould's idea of the non-overlapping *magisteria*).⁸ The third relation is that of dialogue, in which both scientists and believers try to find some common ground, for example, the assertion that both originated from a Judeo-Christian tradition and history.

The fourth relation is that of integration, for which Barbour states three possibilities. (I) Natural theology: the belief in the existence of God is based entirely on human reason alone, rather than on (Biblical) revelation or (spiritual or religious) experience. (II) Theology of nature: religious understandings and convictions are influenced by the collective of human scientific discoveries. (III) Systematic synthesis:

⁷ Barbour, *Religion and Science*.

⁸ Stephen Gould, *Rock of Ages. Science and Religion in the Fullness of Life* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1999).

‘both science and religion contribute to a coherent world view elaborated in a comprehensive metaphysics’.⁹

2. Case I: Religion and Science in Mass Effect: Andromeda

After the much-acclaimed original *Mass Effect* trilogy, including its treatment of ethics and religion, the latest instalment of the series, *Mass Effect: Andromeda*, suffered from an avalanche of bad reviews, both by critics and consumers.¹⁰ *Andromeda* begins in 2185, when the collective government of the Milky Way sends a couple of massive colonisation ships to Andromeda to find a new and peaceful life. When Andromeda is not prepared to be colonised without a fight, the player is given control over one of two scouts – called ‘Pathfinders’ – Scott or Sara Ryder to protect the Milky Way Initiative. The player, as Ryder, takes command of the starship *Tempest* and will interact with several team and crewmates, among whom Suvi Anwar is an important one.¹¹ Anwar is an astrophysicist, molecular biologist, and the *Tempest*’s resident science officer.

Suvi is more than willing to venture into her passion for science *and* her religious beliefs.¹² When Ryder and Suvi are confronted with a dark energy cloud called ‘The Scourge’, she contemplates the nature of the universe itself: ‘Scans of the Scourge. All that dark energy, twisting

⁹ Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 28.

¹⁰ Heather Wald, ‘Games That Defined the Decade: Mass Effect 2 Had Strength in Storytelling by Not Being Afraid to Kill off Its Heroes,’ *Games Radar*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3cQsM2x>; GamesRadar_US, ‘The Top 7 Best New Franchises of this Generation,’ *Games Radar*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3gLpxu6>; Christ Melissinos and Patrick O’Rourke, *The Art of Video Games from Pac-Man to Mass Effect* (New York: Welcome Books, 2012); Joshua Irizarry and Ita Irizarry, ‘The Lord is my Shepard. Confronting Religion in the Mass Effect Trilogy,’ in *Online 5* (2015); Bosman, *Gaming and the Divine*, 84–87; Tobias Knoll, ‘Instant Karma. Moral Decision Making Systems in Digital Games,’ in *The Sacred & the Digital. Critical Depictions of Religions in Video Games*, ed. Frank Bosman (Basel: MDPI 2018); Matt Gerardi, ‘What Makes Mass Effect: Andromeda Such a Disappointment?’, *AV club*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3iWfhCh>. Justin Mahboubian–Jones, ‘Mass Effect: Andromeda Review. BioWare Shoots for the Stars but Finds itself Circling the moon,’ *Digital Spy*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3gLrVky>; Joe Juba, ‘Mass Effect: Andromeda. Adapting to Harsh Frontiers,’ *Game Infomer*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3vDGwUP>.

¹¹ I will refer to Ryder as ‘she’ and ‘her’, due to the fact that on my first playthrough of the game, I chose to select the female character.

¹² Tamoor Hussain, ‘How Mass Effect: Andromeda’s Characters Deal With Science, God (and Why That’s So Exciting),’ *Game Spot*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3vBsXFL>.

and turning on itself. It is splendid. (...) Heleus is incredible, isn't it? (...) Just all of it. So alien. A constant reminder of the divine intelligence behind all creation.' When Ryder enquires about Suvi's faith ('You mean... a god?'), she continues: 'Yes, I believe in a higher power. I know it's a little odd. But I am a scientist because science brings me closer to something greater than myself.' If Ryder expresses that she has the same feelings, Suvi opens up even more: 'It's wonderful to meet someone who understands. I've had to justify myself so often. As if having faith in the divine invalidated my work as a scientist. As if the sacred could be diminished by the search for truths.' Asked about the origins of her faith, Suvi replies to Ryder:

My parents were both scientists. My home was ruled by rationality. So when I became a teenager... Let's just say that while the other kids found batarian [alien race] music, I found God. [My work as a scientist] convinced me even more. Especially when I got into molecular biology, physics... The patterns I kept seeing, over and over again: they were like an artist's watermarks. God, to me, is an artist. An inventor. Not someone checking to see if I brushed my teeth.

Now it is time for some preliminary observations. Suvi Anwar's position fits, quite nicely, into Barbour's fourth model, that of the integration of science and religion. Even when unidentified 'others' think differently, and to whom Suvi has to justify her integration of the two constitutive parts of her life, for the Tempest's science officer, there is no principle discrepancy between science and religion in the first place. Suvi even argues that being a scientist brings her closer to the divine, to 'something greater than myself', a position that brings her into the realm of natural theology, that is – in this case, the theological idea that the 'demonstration or affirmation of the existence of God [can be done] on the basis of the regularity and complexity of the natural world'.¹⁵

Suvi identifies this divine entity successively as 'an artist', leaving his 'watermarks' all over the universe, and as 'an inventor'. The first image – God as an artist – is firmly rooted in Biblical and Christian thought.¹⁴ The second one, God as an inventor, has a slightly different

¹⁵ Alister McGrath, *Re-Imagining Nature. The Promise of a Christian Natural Theology* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2017), 19.

¹⁴ Clifton Edwards, *Creation's Beauty as Revelation. Towards a Creational Theology of Natural Beauty* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2014), 100–102.

ring to it. Its proper context is that of the idea of God as a divine artisan, craftsman, or – famously – watchmaker.¹⁵ Where the concept of God as an artist, however, stresses the personal involvement of the maker with his creation, the other concept suggests far more distance between the maker and the object made.¹⁶

The ‘patterns’ Suvi keeps seeing in the scientific work she does, associate, especially in the context of the rest of the conversation, with the idea of ‘intelligent design’, the ‘designer’ of which could or could not be identified as the God of the Christian tradition.¹⁷ Suvi’s version seems to be more of an agnostic type, merely stating the existence of a *prima causa* instead of proposing who or what the cause precisely is. Suvi dismisses the idea of a personal God, or at least the notion of God as an all-seeing and monitoring judge: ‘Not someone checking to see if I brushed my teeth.’

For her, the Grand Designer of the universe is an elusive force, an inspiration to venture deeper into its intricacies, an invitation to never stop wondering about the inner workings of the cosmos, but not a person with whom one can have, or want to have, a relationship.

3. Case II: Scientism and Philosophism in *The Outer Worlds*

The second case is taken from the much-praised game *The Outer Worlds*.¹⁸ The game features an alternative future in 2355 that diverged from our timeline, and the theme of anti-capitalism is flagrantly present throughout the game’s narrative.¹⁹ The colonists are all in the

¹⁵ Howard van Till, ‘Clockwork Universe,’ in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, ed. Wentzel Vrede van Huyssteen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 145; Alister McGrath, *Dawkins’ God. From the Selfish Gene to The God Delusion* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 98–107.

¹⁶ McGrath, *Re-Imagining Nature*, 272–275.

¹⁷ Mark Paxton, *Media Perspectives on Intelligent Design and Evolution* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 2.

¹⁸ Landon Wright, ‘The Outer Worlds Is a Spiritual Successor to Fallout: New Vegas, Says Obsidian,’ *GamingBolt*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3hiiZ6t>; Eric Sousa, ‘Outer Worlds. The Spiritual Successor to Classic Fallout Games,’ *The Torch*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/35WL8uR>; Adi Robertson, ‘The Outer Worlds Is a Cruel Twist on Role-Playing Games’ Lone Hero Stories,’ *The Verge*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3q9NqA6>.

¹⁹ Jacob Corbin, ‘The Outer Worlds Is a Vicious Parody of Capitalism, with a Very Accurate Twist,’ *Polygon*, accessed 22 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3qipJWp>; Julie Muncy, ‘The Outer Worlds. An Anticapitalist Game That’s Too Much Work,’ *Wired*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3q4qWAt>; Brittny Miller, ‘How the Outer Worlds Functions as a Critique of Capitalism,’ *CBR*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3cQN0Je>.

employment of the corporations, which, in a strikingly Marxist fashion, suppress the working class by harsh labour conditions and enough bureaucracy to extinguish any attempt to unite or revolt. The player finds himself in the role of ‘The Stranger’, a speechless avatar, revived from cryostasis on board of a lost colony-ship Hope. The player now has to find the ingredients to safely revive all other colonists on board, while attempting to finally break the spell of the corporations over the colonies.

3.1 Scientism: Maximillian DeSoto and the Order of Scientific Inquiry

The Stranger can find and recruit several crew or party members to follow the player around the world and assist him in battles, conversations, hacking, and the likes. One of them is Maximillian ‘Max’ DeSoto, the Vicar of Edgewater, residing in the church building of the Order of Scientific Inquiry (OSI). As a representative of the official, corporations-sanctioned official religion, the vicar sprinkles his speech with pseudo-mystical, but capitalism-supporting aphorisms like: ‘They who are not satisfied with their work, are satisfied with nothing’ or ‘Work fortifies the spirit, true exhaustion awaits idle hands’. Eventually, Max will ask the player to retrieve a mysterious journal by an author named M. Bakonu. The OSI has dubbed the book ‘heretical’ and forbids its possession or studying. After an adventure with a hermit and a drug-induced meditation session, it is up to the player to decide the ultimate fate of Max: ending up as a cheerful adventurer, a disillusioned spiritual counsellor, or the Presiding Bishop of the OSI.

Now, the Order of Scientific Inquiry is of the greatest interest. Since only two vocal adherents of the OSI can be found throughout the course of the game, one of them, a certain Constable Reyes, having little philosophical inclination, it is Vicar Max who is the primary source for its beliefs. The OSI, or ‘Scientism’, as Max explains, revolves around the theological idea of ‘The Plan’, also called ‘The Universal Equation’: ‘The OSI teaches that the Grand Architect set a perfect system in motion at the beginning of time. Contentment is found by accepting one’s role in that Grand Plan.’

This ‘Grand Architect’, responsible for the creation and initial start of ‘The Plan’, is not – as was the case with Suvi’s ‘artist’ from *Andromeda* – a personal God, but a formless concept. Max:

You don't talk to the Grand Architect. Once the universe was set in motion, it stepped back. It has no concern for us. (...) Is the Grand Architect a consciousness? A natural force? Did it create the Equation on purpose? The answers to these questions don't really matter. The Equation, The Plan, is all that matters. Contentment is found by accepting one's role in The Plan.

Scientism is not only the name of the in-game religion but also of a philosophical concept, in which the traditional epistemological boundaries of the natural sciences are expanded into the realm of metaphysics and moral normativity.²⁰ In an interview, game director Leonard Boyarsky told the journalist about the team's fascination with 'Laplace's Demon' and how it influenced the OSI's teachings.²¹

The demon is named after the French scholar Pierre-Simon de Laplace (1749-1827), who published, in 1814, his thoughts on the causal and deterministic nature of the universe.²² A 'demon', or perfect intellect, would be able to determine all causes and effects in the past, present, and future if given knowledge of all forces in motion and all positions of all items in the universe. Even though the concept met with quite some criticism over the course of the 20th century, Max's explanation of the Universal Equation sounds almost like it:²³

We will eventually decode The Plan and all its intricacies. Once we are able to deduce the properties of every particle in the universe and its trajectory, we will know everything. The future, the past, each person's place within The Plan, all will be laid out before us, removing struggle and bringing peace. No one will ever need question their path again. Some even believe this ultimate knowledge will unlock mankind's true potential, and we will all become akin to Grand Architect ourselves, after a fashion.

This kind of metaphysics leads to a determinist view on human freedom, although, according to Max, the system does indeed leave room

²⁰ Robinson, 'The Outer Worlds'; Mikael Stenmark, 'Scientism,' in *Encyclopedia of Science and Religion*, ed. J. Wentzel Vrede van Huyssteen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 785–785.

²¹ Justin Massongill, 'How Obsidian Brought Its New Sci-Fi Rpg the Outer Worlds to Life,' *Playstation*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/5gHpDg1>.

²² Friedel Weinert, *The Demons of Science. What They Can and Cannot Tell Us about Our World* (New York: Springer, 2016), 65–116.

²³ Richard Green, *The Thwarting of Laplace's Demon. Arguments against the Mechanistic World-View* (London: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

for some flexibility even if, later on, that is corrected by the system, and then often in a very hand-handed manner. Max:

The Plan is not one rigid path, there are a variety of multitudes contained within it. Our paths have variance, but we'll end up adhering to it whether we like it or not. Some choices make the path smoother, some rougher. You can even go outside the lines, but the further outside you go... It's like an unbreakable elastic band – it will only stretch so far before it snaps back. The further it is stretched, the more violent the eventual correction.

During the game, it becomes clear that the OSI and its Scientism is the exclusive corporate-approved religion in the colony: it strengthens the social status quo in which all – workers and managers, poor and rich – have their own, unchanging place in a greater Plan. Resistance against one's place – the labourers' struggle for better working conditions, higher wages, and a more egalitarian attitude towards social migration – is futile, pointless, and even heretical. Scientism, in the context of *The Outer Worlds*, equals capitalism in its worst form.

3.2 Philosophism: Graham Bryant and the Iconoclasts

In this context, the heretical nature of the journal that Max so passionately sought after also becomes clearer. Max identifies the 'journal' as having been written by an 'M. Bakonu, one of the founders of the Philosophist school of thought'. While game director Boyarsky identified Theosophism as the inspiration for Philosophism, he remains silent on the inspiration for Bakonu. Game journalist Daniele D'Orefice, however, claims it to be the Russian anarchist and revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876).²⁴ He was fiercely anti-capitalist, a strong critic of Marxism, which he thought had an inherent tendency to produce dictatorship, and was an even stronger opposer of religion, considered by him as being sustained by indoctrination and conformism.²⁵

It is obvious that the OSI wanted to prevent the writings of such an anarchist and socialist thinker from falling into the hands of otherwise obedient and submissive labourers. Interestingly enough, in *The*

²⁴ Daniele D'Orefice, 'The Outer Worlds. Le Migliori missioni del gioco Obsidian,' *Every-eye*, accessed 23 May 2021, <https://bit.ly/3zAZfDC>.

²⁵ Paul McLaughlin, *Mikhail Bakunin. The Philosophical Basis of His Theory of Anarchism* (New York: Algora Publishers, 2002).

Outer Worlds, there is a group of people that follows the way of Bakonu (Bakunin). A group of the self-proclaimed ‘Iconoclasts’ and ‘Philosophists’ fiercely opposed the greedy ways of the corporations running the colony. Their inspirational leader, Graham Bryant, explains:

The Eternal is in us all! The OSI would have you believe that your place in society – indeed, in the universe! – is pre-ordained. A man who works in the mines of Hephaestus, coating his lungs in mercury dust; naught but a few bits a night – this fate is set in stone? When he dies young, coughing up black blood – his part in the Grand Plan? No, I say! Greatness is in everyone, not just those so fortunate as to have been born into prosperity! (...) The Iconoclasts are free folk. We live under our rules, motivated by our own beliefs, all petals on the same flower of enlightenment. Meanwhile, the Board strangles the will of its workers. It is the penultimate exercise of a poisoned society, where people are enslaved by a corporate ladder. We seek to replace their way of life with ours. Philosophism is key to unlocking their shackles.

When the player meets Graham for the first time, and if the player has chosen Max as one of two party members to come with him, the two scholars are very keen to embark on a theological-philosophical discussion on the nature of the universe. Graham starts with saying:

Were there a truth to the Grand Plan in the first place, I – and Bakonu – might agree. But what we see as divine purpose is just one facet of the universe figuring itself out. To quote: ‘As a child looking at the leg of an elephant, unable to view it whole, we mistake the tiny scope of our understanding as the unfathomably large purpose of the universe.’

Graham disqualifies the OSI’s concept of ‘the Grand Plan’ using a kind of intertextual reference to John Hick’s use of the Indian parable of the elephant and the blind man.²⁶ Hick, the father of religious pluralism, uses this parable to illustrate that no creature, even not an idealised one like Lapidé’s demon, can have full knowledge of the universe. Graham seems to use parallel ideas to argue that all creatures are part of the ‘consciousness of the cosmos’. Graham again:

²⁶ John Hick, *A Christian Theology of Religions. The Rainbow of Faiths* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 49.

Ah... the Eternal. We are all part of the consciousness of the cosmos. Each of us plays a tiny role in the universe's continual journey towards understanding itself. You and I... and the rapt, and the mantisworms [two violent alien animal species, fgb]... divinity is in us all, and the Eternal is that divinity.

The idea of the existence of cosmic consciousness, of which all living things are part, trying to understand itself, is a pantheistic topos found in a variety of hermetic-esoteric circles and other holistic circles, like that of David Bohm's holomovement.²⁷ The idea of pantheism does not necessarily exclude the idea of a personal God, but it usually does since the total sum of existence is equated with the divine itself.²⁸ This is one of the few points where Scientism and Philosophism touch: they both reject the idea of a personal God. Answering The Stranger's question as to whether Graham believes in a creator, he replies:

Not in the sense of a single entity, fashioning the universe as a whittler fashions a flute. The universe comes into being over time. Organically. Naturally, and without purpose. In that sense, I suppose, you could say that, in the interest of finding its purpose, the universe itself created all living things.

The major difference between the OSI's teachings and those of Bakonu and Graham seems to be their respective visions on the unfolding of the universe. While Philosophism teaches the spontaneous, chaotic, anarchist unfolding of *itself*, Max defends the idea that this unfolding is strictly deterministic, dictated *to* the universe along the lines of an unknown plan by an unseen architect. The chaotic ontology of Philosophism inspires the Iconoclasts – the name of which implies rebellion against the creation of images of the divine – to rebel against, not only the deterministic interpretation of the universe by the OSI, but also against the OSI approved social and political status quo that is

²⁷ Shivana Pateras, *Divine Love. Awakening Unity Consciousness* (s.l.: Balbao press, 2019); David Bohm, *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (London: Routledge, 1980); Renée Weber, 'Reflections on David Bohm's Holomovement. A Physicist's Model of Cosmos and Consciousness,' in *Metaphors or Consciousness*, ed. Ronald Valle and Rolf von Eckartsberg (New York: Plenum Press, 1989), 124–125.

²⁸ Nancy Frankenberry, 'Pantheism,' in *Encyclopaedia of Science and Religion*, ed. J. Wentzel Vrede van Huyssteen (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 645–646.

detrimental to the happiness and damaging to the development of the common worker.²⁹

4. Finding Religion between the Science. A Comparison

From this presentation of the two case studies, I can synthesise some important features of both narratives concerning religion and science.

In the two case studies, we have been able to identify three individuals who represent, one way or the other, a convergence of the domains of religion and science: Suvi Anwar in *Andromeda* and Graham Bryant and Maximilian DeSoto in *The Outer Worlds*. But before we can decide where on Barbour's matrix they fit and what their particular traits are, we have to address their respective qualification as 'religion' and 'science'. The statement that Suvi's position in the game's narrative is located at the intersection of the religious and scientific realms is beyond the need of further argumentation, but what about Scientism/the OSI and Philosophism?

I would argue that both organisations have both religious and scientific traits, at least rhetorically, since both fictive systems make use of a combination of religious and scientific vocabulary. Words and phrases like 'metaphysics', 'contemplation', 'heretical texts', the terms 'bishop' and 'vicar' used by the OSI, and the 'eternal' of the Iconoclasts, all evoke a distinct religious context, just like 'Grand Architect', 'decoding the Grand Plan', 'study', the name of the Iconoclast movement, and 'the key' to unlock 'the mathematically perfect Universal Equation' do for the scientific context. Other notions like 'truth seeking' and 'enlightenment', used by both Scientists and Philosophists, belong to both contexts – science and religion – if not with different meanings.

For Suvi Anwar, the interrelationship between religion and science has a strong individual dimension. For her, and her alone, the belief in a divine artist and the hunger for scientific knowledge are mutually beneficial. Her enthusiasm is individual, particular, almost of an aesthetic kind. For Max and even more for Graham, their theo-philosophical systems are very much concerned with the wider world. Both

²⁹ Willemien Otten, 'The Tension between Word and Image in Christianity,' in *Iconoclasm and Iconoclash. Struggle for Religious Identity*, eds. Willem van Asset, Paul van Geest, Daniele Müller, and Theo Saleminck (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 33–48.

Scientism and Philosophism are linked in *The Outer Worlds* with the socio-economic status quo or with the struggle against it.

The OSI and its determinist belief in ‘The Plan’, in which all humans have their unchanging and logical place, is linked to the establishment, the corporations, the rich and powerful who benefit from the status quo, while the anarchist Philosophists with their belief in an organically developing, ever-changing universe, strive for the betterment of the working class, the possibility of social migration, and the dignity of all people. In this context, is it interesting to note that Mikhail Bakunin, the hero of Philosophism, was both a stringent fighter for labourers’ rights and a firm critic of (institutionalised) religion.⁵⁰ Bakunin in his *God and State* states: ‘The idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, both in theory and practice.’⁵¹

Graham believes his Philosophism is, on the contrary, helping the labourers to free themselves from the corporations’ clutches, while Max argues that ‘The Plan’ is actually beneficial to all humans, including the working class, since it helps everyone to find, maintain, and appreciate their own perfect place in the larger machinery of the universe.

What does this mean for the player-character of the two games? If the player, as Ryder, chooses to interact with Suvi between missions, the dialogue on faith emerges in *Andromeda*. And only during that brief period of time is the issue raised, debated slightly, and then waved away, never again to return throughout the entire rest of the (large!) game. The player, through his in-game representation Ryder, is only listening to Suvi’s extrapolations on her views on the relationship between science and religion. The player’s influence on this debate is restricted to some short dialogue options – either affirming Suvi’s vision or challenging it. Neither for Ryder nor for the player, does the question play any significant role in the unfolding of the rest of the game and the game’s narrative specifically.

In *The Outer Worlds*, this is different. In this game, the struggle between the OSI and the Iconoclasts is a big part of the game’s narrative,

⁵⁰ Mark Leier, *Bakunin. The Creative Passion. A Biography* (New York: Seven stories press, 2006), 191.

⁵¹ Mikhail Bakunin, ‘From God and State,’ in *The Communist Manifesto and Other Revolutionary Writings. Marx, Marat, Paine, Mao. Gandhi, and Others*, ed. Bob Blaisdell (New York: Dover Publications. 2005), 189.

and the related struggle between classes even bigger: it belongs to the core of the story. Even more, the player is charged with choosing his or her own path through the game. The game usually allows the player to solve any given problem in at least two different ways. Shooting through hordes of enemies is always an option, but also is sneaking in through a backdoor. The player can persuade people to cooperate, but lying and threatening are also possibilities.

In *The Outer Worlds*, the OSI and the Iconoclasts are two factions holding opposite metaphysics and worldviews, from which the player has to choose, and in doing so altering the ending of the game by either siding with the corporations and confirming the OSI's determinism, or with the Iconoclasts' Philosopher-inspired liberation of the common worker. Choosing between these two social groups is also making a choice between opposite views on metaphysics, cosmology, and ethics. Even the very ending of the game is – in fact – the same kind of choice.

Conclusion

Now, how do these two games sketch the relationship between religion and science in their narratives? As far as Barbour's matrix is concerned, all the discussed cases – Suvi Anwar, Max DeSoto and Graham Bryant – fit quite nicely into the integration model, and even more precisely, into the sub-model of natural theology in which 'it is claimed that the existence of God can be inferred from the evidences of design in nature, or which scene had made us more aware' of.³² Barbour recalls the Newtonian world being deemed to be 'the perfect clock', and its designer to be 'the deistic God', both terms found – quite literally – in the two games.³⁵

Consequently, the philosophies of Suvi, Max, and Graham produce anything but a personal God, with whom one can have an intimate relation, far removed from the God of monotheistic religions. Besides, these deistic philosophies usually fail, as Barbour argues, in convincing people to join: 'few if any persons have actually acquired their religious beliefs by such arguments'.³⁴

³² Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 23.

³⁵ *Idem*, 24.

³⁴ *Idem*, 26.

Deism, or Barbour's version of the concept of natural theology, seems like a perfect fit for these futuristic narratives, especially when trying to combine the realms of science and religion. This deism can have a more transcendent option, including the possibility of a transcendent reality or a more immanent one, excluding any transcendent reality whatsoever. Anwar's deism and DeSoto's Scientism are more like the first variety – including the possibility, though unlikely, of a personal deity, such as the creator or the Grand Architect – while that of Bryant is clearly of the latter sort. A universe figuring itself out excludes a transcendent realm.

Both kinds of deisms are fitting to contemporary, futuristic narratives such as *Andromeda* and *The Outer Worlds*. The reason for this suitability is that deism allows the realms of religion and science to be dealt with within one empirical paradigm, which is the dominant one, not only in the field of the empirical sciences but also in the humanities, including philosophy and theology.³⁵ This context makes deism the self-explanatory umbrella under which both religion and science can peacefully co-exist. Theologically speaking, five conclusions can be drawn:

- (1) Deism and (certain forms of) hermetic esoterism are re-appropriated by modern-day games as genuine and acceptable forms of religious belief, even though – or maybe exactly because – these kinds of theological concepts are frowned upon within institutionalised Christian dogmatics.
- (2) Science and religion – may it be in its post-institutionalised forms – are by no means intrinsically opposed to one another: in the narrative universes of both games, *Mass Effect Andromeda* and *The Outer Worlds*, efforts are made to overcome such a 'simplified' dualism, or to illustrate that both domains – religion and science – share a kind of common vocabulary, which could be interpreted as indicative of their common origin, that is, humankind trying to understand the world and itself.
- (3) Neither science nor religion are morally or practically neutral; that is, both domains have real repercussions on the everyday life of common citizens. This may be apparent in the case of religion – few

³⁵ John Anderson, *Studies in Empirical Philosophy* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 2005); Johannes van der Ven, *God Reinvented? A Theological Search in Texts and Tables* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 19–22.

people will deny that religion produces or demands a normative interpretation of reality – but, according to especially *The Outer Worlds*, science suffers the same also does demand a normative interpretation of reality. ‘Science’ or scientists may self-identify as seeking and finding the objective truths of reality; philosophers and theologians have frequently argued against this idea of a *voraussetzungslose Wissenschaft* (‘science without a priori preferences’).

- (4) *The Outer Worlds* formulates (the possibility of) a kind of crypto-liberation theology, in which Marxist criticism and Christianity co-exist to form a permanent and fundamental dissonant voice in the (virtual) public domain. The discussion between Scientism and Philosophism shows that both religion and science have the ability to lift people up from their marginalised positions but also to keep them captive in their underprivileged circumstances.
- (5) Both games address the relationship between religion and science, including the difficulties within that relationship, and stimulate the player to contemplate (in the case of *Andromeda*) or even experiment with and/or position oneself (in the case of *The Outer Worlds*) within that relationship. The broader benefit of this treatment of the religion-science relationship, that is, *outside* the realm of digital gaming, is to be found in the stimulation of critical thinking on that relationship in the context of real life.

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REVIEWS & NEWS

Claudio Antonio Testi, *La Logica di Tommaso d'Aquino: Dimostrazione, induzione e metafisica*, Bologna: Edizioni Studio Domenicano, 2018, 255 p., ISBN: 8870949737.

NICCOLÒ TURI

Il volume di Claudio Antonio Testi costituisce l'esposizione a tutt'oggi, almeno in Italia, più completa della logica non formalizzata (cioè non espressa in formule matematiche e logiche come, ad esempio, in sistemi formali assiomatizzati: si veda i *Principia Mathematica* di Alfred North Whitehead e Bertrand Russell del 1910-1913) di Tommaso d'Aquino. *In primis* nel trattato vi si tratta con rigorosa limpidezza delle principali strutture logiche fondamentali che costituiscono la logica tommasiana: le "Categorie", le "Definizioni" e i "Predicabili"; quindi l'"Enunciato", il "Sillogismo", la "Dimostrazione" e l'"Induzione". In questa nostra recensione ci soffermeremo principalmente sul problema dell'induzione che è la principale "struttura" della logica tommasiana, che l'autore ritiene si specifichi nei suoi livelli problematici: psicologici, logici e metafisici.

La risoluzione al problema psicologico dell'induzione da Tommaso d'Aquino consiste, secondo Testi, nell'esaminare brevemente facoltà conoscitive: i cinque sensi esterni corporei e del "senso comune", poi dei sensi interni: memoria, fantasia o immaginazione, e la "cogitativa", che è facoltà sensibile (l'"aestimativa" negli animali) che coglie da molti diversi ricordi un qualcosa di comune, il *phantasma* ("il fantasma") e questo atto del cogliere è denominato *experimentum*: nella cogitativa vi è poi l'istintività di difesa: fuga o attacco di fronte ad un nemico, e quello di riproduzione; per cui non vi è conoscenza non solo sensibile, ma anche intellettuale, che non sia legata più o meno ad istintività ed emotività. Riflettendo sui *phantasmata* e sugli *experimentum* (Callia-uomo, Aristotele-uomo, ecc.) l'intelletto attivo astrae il concetto di "uomo" (*simplex apprehensio*) e rivolgendosi l'intelletto nuovamente sui dati empirici (*conversio ad phantasmata*) formula i giudizi: "Callia è un uomo", "Aristotele è un uomo". Pertanto l'"esperimento" è il processo che costituisce una percezione organizzata, mentre i *phantasmata* sono i dati empirici da cui parte il processo astrattivo: l'"esperimento" per arrivare al concetto; l'"induzione" arriva, poi, a determinare una proposizione universali, e dai vari principi si strutturano i principi e le dimostrazioni sillogistiche. L'*experimentum* dei singolari e l'astrazione dell'universale costituiscono il soggetto e il predicato delle asserzioni di soggetto singolare dal quale l'induzione formulerà la proposizione universale; ma esperimento, astrazioni e induzione sono processi distinti.

Riguardo al problema logico dell'induzione, per Claudio Testi, la soluzione di Tommaso consiste nel mostrare che tutte le definizioni di una specie

è sempre generica (incompleta) rispetto agli individui, per cui, nel caso di uniformità della natura, cioè che ciò che certi eventi sono accaduti in passato riaccadono nel futuro (ad esempio, il sole sorgerà domani perché sempre in passato è risorto dopo il suo tramonto del giorno prima); e pertanto, rispetto agli individui, per cui, anche nel caso di non uniformità della natura, è sempre possibile modificare ulteriormente questa definizione universale in base alla conoscenza dei nuovi singolari. Questa teorizzazione tomista è quindi valida sia per le teorizzazioni chi sostiene l'uniformità della natura, come, ad esempio, Francesco Bacone nel XVII secolo o John Stuart Mill nel XIX secolo ed altri; ma anche per le teorizzazioni di chi la nega l'uniformità della natura, come David Hume nel XVII secolo, confutata da Karl Popper nel secolo scorso.

Secondo Tommaso il nostro pensiero procede dal confuso, cioè prima animale razionale poi uomo; e quindi la conoscenza umana è così debole da non arrivare mai a conoscere l'essenza di una cosa di una cosa, anche di enti che si direbbe semplici come una formica, una mosca o un'ape (cf. *Commento al Credo*, n.7, in *Fede e opere: testi mistici e ascetici*, Città Nuova, Roma 1981, s. 25-26, o vedere *Credo e Commento al Simboli degli Apostoli*, Edizione Studi Domenicani, Bologna 2012, s. 20-21). Il procedimento induttivo, afferma l'autore, è un riadeguare sempre più la conoscenza degli enti singolari appresi via via dall'esperienza ai nuovi enti conosciuti; tutto ciò è conforme alla nozione realista di "verità", intesa come una continua e mai completa conformazione del soggetto cosciente alla "infinità" della realtà conosciuta.

Infine per Claudio Antonio Testi il problema ontologico-metafisico dell'induzione viene risolto da Tommaso in modo rigoroso ed originale: mediante la teorizzazione tommasiana dell'induzione fondata sulla metafisica dell'atto d'essere (*l'actum essendi*) tomistico che rimanda all'essere Dio, *l'Ipsum esse subsistens*, come hanno ampiamente messo in luce principalmente Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson e Cornelio Fabro. Testi intende di confutare, come già prima aveva in qualche modo anticipato tale critica di Leibniz e di altri, la teoria formalista che rifiuta la distinzione essenza-atto di essere che pretende di conoscere completamente l'essenza di una cosa, cosa palesemente falsa, ad esempio nel fare esperienza conoscitiva dell'errore e nel mutare della esperienza nostra degli oggetti conosciuti.

L'autore rimanda a un prossimo volume formalizzato, che perfezionerà i risultati già pubblicati nel volume di Luigi Berselli e Claudio Antonio Testi, *Dimostrazione e Induzione in Tommaso d'Aquino* (ETC, Modena 2005), in cui vi era una prima formalizzazione logica matematica di alcune delle teorizzazioni della logica di Tommaso d'Aquino, qui raccolte. Il volume, poi, come afferma l'autore, può essere letto in vari livelli: a) come un manuale introduttivo: in quanto scritto in modo lineare e divulgativa; b) come uno studio esegetico: dato la grande quantità di riferimenti testuali e bibliografici.

Pertanto quella di Claudio Antonio Testi è una ricerca innovativa, come sopra già abbiamo detto, riguardo alla risoluzione del problema induttiva nella

metafisica dell'atto essere di Tommaso d'Aquino. In sintesi, il volume è un'ottima trattazione introduttiva della logica tommasiana. La logica tommasiana fondata sull'ontologia metafisica che conduce alla teologia razionale dell'*Ipsum Esse Subsistens* che si apre, poi, alla teologia della Rivelazione o scienza della fede che presuppone la dottrina di ascendenza boeziana della subalternazione delle scienze, di cui ha trattato bene, Marie-Domenique Chenu in *La teologia come scienza nel XIII*, Jaca Book, Milano 1985 (ed. orig., Vrin Paris 1957).

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Charles E. Curran, *Sixty Years of Moral Theology: Readings in Moral Theology no. 20*, New York: Paulist Press, 2020, 255 s., ISBN 978-0-8091-0665-3.

ONDŘEJ HAVELKA

Kniha amerického katolického morálního teologa Charlese E. Curran-a s názvem *Sixty Years of Moral Theology* je dvacátým dílem série souhrnně pojmenované *Readings in Moral Theology*; kterou vydává newyorský Paulist Press. Monografie – jak sám název napovídá – shrnuje autorovo publikační dílo v rozsahu téměř šesti desítek let práce v oblasti katolické morální teologie, kterým ovlivnil, ba přímo formoval, několik generací zejména amerických křesťanských myslitelů nejen v oblasti teologické etiky. Curran je ve svých šestaosmdesáti letech stále aktivním profesorem morální teologie a katolickým knězem. Již při svém studiu v Římě se autor svými názory pohyboval na hraně katolického učení v oblasti morální teologie, konkrétně sexuální etiky. Do širšího povědomí vstoupil svou kritickou reakcí na encykliku *Humanae vitae*. Autor se zasazoval o přehodnocení katolického vztahu k předmanželskému sexu, homosexuálnímu soužití, oplodnění *in vitro*, antikoncepci, apod., protože byl nakonec vyloučen z dalšího působení na katolických univerzitách. V současné době působí na Southern Methodist University.

Curran rozložil kompozici knihy do tří obsáhlých oddílů: (1) II. vatikánský koncil a důsledky pro morální teologii, (2) *Humanae vitae* a důsledky pro morální teologii a (3) následující léta autorova teologicko-etického myšlení. Autor předesílá, že během svých studií v Římě byl silně ovlivněn prací morálního teologa Bernarda Häringa, jehož přístup jej doslova nadchl a nasměroval k další cestě morální teologií. Häringův vliv na Curranovo dílo je v monografii patrný.

První část monografie, nazvaná „Vatican II. and its Aftermath“, rozvíjí myšlenku, jak by měl duch II. vatikánského koncilu tvořivě proměnit přístup k morální teologii, přestože koncil konkrétní vyjádření k oblasti morální teologie neposkytl, nicméně známé koncilní *aggiornamento* se podle autora má (mělo) promítnout i do této teologické disciplíny. Text první části knihy byl autorem poprvé publikován v roce 1966. Autor se přes mnohá váhání rozhodl ponechat text beze změn.

Curran v reakci na poselství koncilu postuluje, že morální teologie musí mimo jiné také reagovat na aktuální potřeby a výzvy doby a nespokojit se pouze opakováním soudů reagujících na požadavky jiných historických období. Připomíná, že se nemění jádro nauky, ale spíše forma, jakou je norma komunikována. Křesťanský život má podle autora charakterizovat růst, a jak v prvních letech po koncilu shledával, předkoncilní manuály morální teologie byly vzhledem k dynamice doby nedostatečné. Morální teologie v letech bezprostředně

po koncilu potřebovala podle autora posun od prostého sdělení normy k vysvětlení normy s důrazem na její přijetí v křesťanově svědomí spolu s hlubším porozuměním v zaměření k lásce Boží; ostatně Ježíšovu etiku Curran nazývá etikou lásky. Nadále nemá jít jen o to, pojmenovat určitý hřích křesťana, jako by to byl izolovaný čin, ale naopak pojmenovat celkovou orientaci křesťana, která k tomuto hříchu postupným vzdalováním se dobru vedla. Jádro argumentace je mimo jiné věnováno katolickému pojetí svědomí. Autor konstruktivně kritizuje předkoncilní manuály morální teologie a nabízí hlubší filozoficko-antropologickou perspektivu v kontextu lépe a pečlivěji racionálně zdůvodněné osobní zodpovědnosti (s. 38), v čemž zjevně navazuje na myšlení Bernarda Häringa.

Přestože je první oddíl knihy napsán poutavě, příjemnou a čtivou angličtinou, s velkým osobním zaujetím a jistou dobovou novostí, je spíše nahlédnutím pokoncilního vývoje disciplíny a pro dnešního čtenáře nenabízí více, než opakování toho, jak je morální teologie dnes vyučována. Sonda do prvních pokoncilních let však může čtenáři poskytnout některé dobové detaily celkově spíše známého obrazu. Expozice vývoje morálně-teologického myšlení je jednoznačně jediným zdůvodněním znovuvydání již mnohokrát publikovaného, nicméně obsáhlá pasáž věnovaná výkonu svědomí je stále aktuální a výborně zpracovaná, zejména potom rozpracování lidské vymezenosti při výkonu svědomí (s. 51). Přesto se zdá být promarněnou šancí, že autor své starší texty nově nezhodnotil a nenabídl přesah.

Druhá ucelená část monografie, nazvaná *Humanae vitae and its Aftermath* se zabývá reakcí na encykliku *Humanae vitae* papeže Pavla VI. Bouřlivé reakce na magisteriální text (nejen) v USA, zejména v oblasti katolického přístupu k umělé antikoncepci, jsou obecně známé. Curran spolu s dalšími americkými katolickými teology nabízí hlubší teologicko-etickou reflexi onoho – v USA tehdy spíše neočekávaného – potvrzení zákazu užívání umělé antikoncepce. Svou argumentaci v textu, který vyšel bezprostředně po vydání encykliky, vystavěl autor na – podle jeho soudu – nedostačujícím deontologickém přístupu encykliky ke komplexní problematice manželství vystavěném na přirozeném zákoně, kdy volá po nahlédnutí širšího kontextu manželského života a jeho rozličných dober. Autor čtenáři přiznává svůj odmítavý postoj, dále však nabízí různé teologicko-etické přístupy pro komplexnější orientaci čtenáře v problematice. Autor nevnucuje, spíše argumentuje a nevyhýbá se rezultování v otevřených otázkách.

Curran nevolá po kontrastu v podobě ryze teleologického uchopení argumentace, spíše nabízí barvy do obrazu, který mu připadá černobílý a málo reflektující realitu hříchu a vykoupení, příliš jednostranně spočívající na přirozeném zákoně. Jeho komplexní etické posouzení problematiky dobrovolnosti užití umělé antikoncepce pro katolické křesťany nepostrádá deontologická východiska, rezultuje však spíše – přestože nevyřčeně – v etice ctnosti při autentické zodpovědné věrnosti svědomí jednajícího bez zkratek v podobě nedotažené deontologie nebo naopak nedostatečné teleologie. Druhý oddíl monografie lze číst jako konkrétní aplikaci prvního oddílu. Autor ve svých

textech vydávaných napříč desetiletími prokazuje koherenci svého myšlení a nemalou inspiraci ve snaze dobrat se nejlepšího možného závěru nezávisle na vnějších okolnostech.

V následující části, vydané prvně v roce 1969, se autor kriticky zamýšlí nad metodologií encykliky (s. 67), táže se na místo přirozeného zákona v celkovém porozumění křesťanské etice a následně na samotný koncept přirozeného zákona. Postuluje, že samotný přístup na základě přirozeného zákona nemůže postihnout celkovou realitu křesťanské perspektivy a pro etické závěry samotné nestačí. Dále autor vysvětluje, proč se rozhodl pro veřejné – nikoli pouze soukromé – vyjádření nesouhlasu s jistými aspekty encykliky *Humanae vitae*.

V kompozici monografie následuje v rámci druhého oddílu pojednání o křesťanské etice mezilidských vztahů. Tato část textu byla poprvé vydána v roce 1988, a tedy nepřekvapí, že dnes nepřináší nic nového, ba naopak by kapitole prospěla aktualizace a současný komentář. Pasáží vyzývající k posunu etického těžiště od přirozenosti k osobě by prospělo vysvětlit, jaké teologické pojetí osoby autor míní (substanciální Božtiovské, vyváženě relacionální, výrazně relacionální nebo dokonce aktualistické?), neboť ono pojetí samo o sobě etické těžiště velmi významně posouvá.

Třetí oddíl monografie, nazvaný „The Ensuing Years“, se zabývá vývojem morální teologie v USA v desetiletích po II. vatikánském koncilu. Curran se hned v úvodu oddílu hlásí k evropským autorům, jako byli Bernard Häring, Josef Fuchs nebo Louis Jansenes, kteří měli na onen vývoj zásadní vliv (s. 137). Podle Curranových slov Spojeným státům v desetiletích po koncilu velká jména v morální teologii scházela.

Autor dále upozorňuje na nesoulad postoje amerických katolických biskupů vs. oficiálního katolického učení v oblasti sexuální etiky. Opět ovšem schází představení současné situace, neboť text pochází z roku 1987 a není nijak aktualizován. Přinejmenším epilog v podobě současného stavu souladu či nesouladu by této kapitole v knize vydané v roce 2020 prospěl.

V další části třetího oddílu knihy se Curran stručně zabývá základními přístupy k morální teologii, zamýšlí se nad jejich klady i nedostatky a argumentuje ve prospěch vztahově-zodpovědného etického modelu, který stojí na lásce k Bohu, lásce k bližnímu a sobě samému. Hřích autor nespatřuje primárně v přestoupení Božího zákona, ale v narušení láskyplného vztahu k Bohu, bližnímu nebo i sobě samému. Následuje poměrně obsáhlá kapitola, ve které autor chválí současného papeže Františka a vyjmenovává obecně známé skutečnosti, které považuje za stěžejní přínosy jeho pontifikátu. Závěrečné kapitoly jsou sice novějšími autorovými texty (2018), nicméně nemění celkové pojetí monografie jako zopakování již publikovaného, což se ovšem přiznává již v názvu *Sixty Years of Moral Theology*; a tedy čtenář musí toto pojetí očekávat.

Knihla však přesah a nový přínos ve svém celku přináší: Je to životní příběh katolického morálního teologa, který s mimořádným osobním zájmem a zaujetím hledal (a stále hledá) pravdu a své učení o významu svědomí v morálním životě katolického křesťana podložil vlastním příkladem, kdy musel volit mezi

směrem předloženým magisteriem a směrem, ke kterému dospěl na základě pečlivého rozhodnutí ve svém svědomí. Pokud by pravdu odhalenou svým svědomím upozadil ve prospěch opačného přístupu autority, vše, co píše v obsáhlé první části, by popřel a to se nestalo. Zdařilá monografie s nespornou výpovědní hodnotou (spíše ve svém celku než v jednotlivostech) v souvislosti s životem autora připomíná teologicko-etický princip epikie, nezávisle na tom, zda se čtenář s autorovým postojem ztotožní či nikoli.

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**David Vopřada, *Tertulián: O modlitbě*, Praha:
Krystal OP, 2020, 107 s., ISBN: 978-80-7575-076-1.**

K A R E L S L Á D E K

V edici Patristika u nakladatelství Krystal OP vyšel osmý svazek s názvem *O modlitbě* od do nedávna kontroverzního autora Tertuliána. Pravděpodobně jde o jednu z prvních reflexí na téma modlitby otčenáš v latině, která byla sepsána v rámci vzdělávání katechumenů. Jakožto spirituální teolog jsem si nemohl knihu nechat ujít. Kniha vyšla s úvodní studií a poznámkami od našeho předního patrologa a teologa Davida Vopřady a v brilantním překladu z latiny od Pavla Koronthály a Davida Vopřady.

Pod taktovkou docenta na KTF UK Davida Vopřady nakladatelství Krystal OP již v této řadě vydalo knihy: *Svatý Augustin. Vánoční promluvy* (2015) a *Svatý Augustin. Promluvy o modlitbě Páně* (2019), *Svatý Ambrož a tajemství Krista* (2015) a *Kněžství v prvních staletích Krista I.* (2018) a *II.* (2018). Jde o stěžejní témata, ke kterým má David Vopřada blízko: vztah ke Kristu, kněžství a modlitba. Vhledem k akademickému působení překladatele a autora úvodní studie má kniha všechny náležitosti, podle kterých se dnes hodnotí vědecká činnost a publikace: má dva významné recenzenty (doc. Vít Hušek a dr. Radek Tichý), úvodní kritickou studii náležitě rozsahu (56 stran), zdařilý poznámkový aparát, anglický abstrakt a velmi solidně zpracované přílohy (zkratky, rejstříky, seznam literatury).

Pokud budete držet knihu v ruce, začnete nejprve číst Tertuliánovo pojednání o modlitbě, které je stylisticky precizní a rozsahově střídité, což je běžné pro latinu (překlad je zde na 21 stranách z celkového počtu 107 stran knihy). Když se recenzent rozmýšlel, jakých bodů se chce dotknout při reflexích nad Tertuliánovým textem, zjistil, že vše v podstatě již náležitě okomentoval David Vopřada ve své úvodní studii. Vopřada nejen rozebral současné pohledy na Tertuliánův život a dílo, zejména spis *O modlitbě*, ale vřadil ho do tematických souvislostí, jak byla prožívána modlitba prvních křesťanů. Ve vlastním výkladu se snažil i o aktualizace s poukázáním na souvislosti Tertuliánových výroků s dnešními debatami o modlitbě, například o úpravách překladu modlitby otčenáš. Tímto přístupem Vopřada vzal recenzentovi vítr z plachet. V recenzi tedy vyjdou z témat, která již sám autor úvodní studie otevřel.

V rámci struktury úvodní studie se k Tertuliánově výkladu modlitby Vopřada třikrát vrací s novými analytickými poznámkami (při seznámení s dílem, výkladu, v dodatečných poznámkách), což může být náročnější pro čtenáře, který se snaží uchopit předkládané informace v jejich syntéze. V první části se Vopřada dotýká diskusí, které o Tertuliánovi panují mezi patrology. Ti často revidují zažitá schémata a tradiční obrazy o křesťanských autorech minulosti na základě svých hypotéz, které se snaží vyčíst mezi řádky pramenů. Nechtějí

být zatíženi pozdějšími interpretacemi a tradovanými obrazy, jelikož se domnívají, že mohou mít ideové až ideologické zabarvení. V případě Tertuliana se to dotýká především dvou momentů jeho života: zda byl, nebo nebyl knězem; zda se odklonil od katolické církve k montanistům a později založil vlastní sektu „tertulianistů“. Smířlivý pohled na Tertuliana favorizuje mínění, že byl křesťanským laikem, který se nikdy nerozloučil s katolickou církví, jenom kritizoval konkrétní hierarchy za jejich pokleslou morálku. David Vopřada je v tomto ohledu spíše tradicionalista, jelikož se domnívá, že vzhledem k Tertulianově stupňujícímu se rigorismu v askezi, postu a enkratickým tendencím, přestoupil k montanistům: „V pozdějším období, kdy se Tertulian přidal ke skupině montanistů, začal obhajovat prodlužování tohoto postu až do večera“ (s. 31) a „V pozdějším montanistickém období začal Tertulian silně zdůrazňovat vztah mezi sexuální čistotou a modlitbou“ (s. 60). Vopřada správně uvádí, že vztah mezi sexualitou a duchovním životem byl u církevních otců živý, například i u Jeronýma, Augustina a Ambrože, přičemž manželství bylo považováno za dobré z důvodu plození dětí. Je třeba si přiznat, že enkratické tendence byly přítomny u jisté skupiny křesťanů již od počátku, a to někdy s rysy traumaticky-neurotického vztahu k vlastní sexualitě s až fobickým vztahem k ženám. Přehnaná askeze související s dualismem duše a těla (v platónově inspiraci) byla praxí i komunit uvnitř života církve. Jisté je, že odvolávat se na Tertuliana v pozdějším období nebylo bez rizika, proto se spojující linka na jeho dílo u pozdějších autorů uvádí většinou anonymně. Je samozřejmě otázkou, kdo a proč by měl zájem Tertuliana pošpinit, znevěrohodnit a udělat z něho téměř obraťující příklad. Pokud by přišla na mysl možnost, že se tak stalo ze strany jím kritizovaných biskupů, na jejichž farizejské nešvary v morálním životě poukazyval, aby tím hierarchové zachránili svůj obraz, jsme na rovině čiré spekulace.

Jak bylo zmíněno, rozbor modlitby a představení debat o adresátech spisu, záměru a struktury výkladu otčenáše, charakteru spisu Vopřada jakožto znalec patristiky rozšířil o téma modlitby prvních křesťanů s informacemi o čase pro modlitbu (minimálně třikrát denně), postoji při modlitbě (stání, klečení mimo Velikonoce a neděle, s kritikou sezení po modlitbě jako u pohanských kultů), mytí rukou (spíše hygienické než rituální důvody jako u pohanských a židovských zvyklostí), dnes diskutabilní zahalování hlavy u žen (jinak pokouší i samotné anděly), políbení pokoje po modlitbě, hlídce neboli den postu do třetí hodiny odpolední a liturgické modlitbě. Je třeba zdůraznit, že v obsahu textu vyniká Vopřadova erudice jako patrologa a teologa zároveň. Vopřada má nesporně literární nadání srozumitelnou a příjemně čtivou formou předložit inspirující informace pro každodenní modlitební praxi i současných křesťanů.

Poté se Vopřada věnuje Tertulianově vlastnímu výkladu modlitby otčenáš. Zde se dotýká témat spirituální teologie, teologické etiky a dogmatické teologie. Jakožto vyzrálý teolog vyzdvihuje ty aspekty Tertulianova výkladu, které zdůrazňují potřebu zniternit modlitbu s důrazem na „modlitbu ve skrytosti“, která bude ve vnějších gestech prosta okázalosti a teatrálnosti.

Z vnitřních hnutí se má podle Tertuliána věřící před modlitbou vystříhat emocí, které rozdmýchávají spory mezi bratry, především hněvu. Tertulián jde ještě dále a považuje za nutné před modlitbou být svobodný od všech afektivních vášní, jak poznamenává Vopřada: „Tertulián je podobně jako stoikové přesvědčen, že osvobození od hříchu s sebou nese i osvobození od afektů... I v tomto případě je osvobození od afektů jako podmínka účinné modlitby požadováno kvůli připodobnění se Bohu (s. 53). Jistě lze tento postoj přijmout jako evangelijní výzvu k odpuštění a usmíření s bratřími před bohoslužbou a podle pavlovských doporučení odpustit každý večer. Je však otázkou, nakolik je v tomto přístupu více spirituality stoiků a antických filosofů usilujících ve své religiozitě o návrat k nehybné jednotě počátku (v současnosti možná v souvislosti se zájmem mnohých křesťanů o zen buddhismus), než o inspiaci biblickým obrazem Boha, který není do sebe uzavřená spokojená entita. Díky tomu, že se Bůh zjevení vztahuje a až do krajnosti vydává člověku po způsobu vnímání člověka, tak člověk tento vztah prožívá v rámci svých emocí. Je samozřejmě důležité stále očišťovat mysl od projekcí vlastních emotivních přání do Boha, nicméně reakcí nemůže být poznávání Boha v modlitbě bez lidských emocí, mezi které patří i hněv spravedlivých, prorocké napomenutí, a především projevy soucitu, lásky a milosrdenství. Lásku Boha může člověk prožívat emocionálně jako milost a požehnání, pokud usiluje o duchovní růst a je otevřen odpuštění, ale stejnou lásku Boha může emocionálně prožívat jako hněv, neklid, pokud žije ve stavu hříchu. Jde stále o ten samý projev vztahu lásky Boha v duchovním prožívání, i když je prožíván odlišně na rovině emocí.

Úvodní studie pokračuje výkladem Tertuliánova výkladu modlitby otčenáš. Uvedme alespoň dva zajímavé momenty z Vopřadova úvodu. První se dotýká doslovného překladu „dimitte nobis debita nostra, remittimus nos quoque debitoribus nostris“ neboli „odpusť nám naše dluhy, i my totiž odpouštíme našim dlužníkům“. Dnešní předklad, kde místo „dluhů“ uvádíme „viny“ a místo „dlužníků“ v modlitbě zmiňujeme „viníky“, je obsahově správný, jak ostatně vysvětluje Vopřada, nicméně oprávněně varuje před nebezpečným chápáním Boha jako účetního: „Bůh tak bude pojmán jako pouhý účetní evidující závazky provinilců či soudce, jehož je téměř nemožné obměkčit“ (s. 48). Na druhou stranu chápání viny jakožto dluhu, respektive dluhu lásky k bližnímu a k Bohu, může pomoci pochopit příčinu vlastního hříchu a v jistých případech tak zamezit skrupulantství z příliš sebestředné kontroly každého jednání, zda je, či není každá myšlenka, slovo i čin hříchem, aniž by se penitent podíval na kořen jednání, respektive zda myšlenka, slovo a čin vyrůstá z touhy milovat bližního a Boha – a nemá právě zde onen „dluh“.

Druhá aktualizací reflexe se dotýká pokračující části otčenáše: „ne nos inducas in temptationem, sed devehé nos a malo“ doslova „neuveď nás v pokušení, ale odveď nás od zlého“, někdy dokonce Tertuliánem překládané jako „erue nos a maligno“ čili „vytrhni nás od Zlého“ (s. 39). Vopřada správně připomíná současné změny v italském a francouzském překladu otčenáše, který „neuveď nás v pokušení“ upravuje na přesnější „nedopusť, ať podlehneme

pokoušení“. Vopřadův výklad jde tímto směrem, přičemž konstatuje: „Myšlenka, že by člověka mohl do pokoušení uvádět ‚Pán‘, je pro něj (Tertuliána) absurdní, protože Bůh zná víru každého člověka, a proto ji nepotřebuje zkoušet; a vzhledem k tomu, že Boží vůle je spása člověka, není ani možné, aby Bůh chtěl tuto víru ‚vyvrátit‘“ (s. 50). S Vopřadovým konstatováním nelze než souhlasit s dodatkem, že v současnosti někteří systematictí teologové a kněží v pastoraci při doprovázení operují s tím, že by Bůh mohl člověka zkoušet po vzoru starozákonní knihy Jób, respektive Bůh by aktivně umožnil, aby člověk byl pokoušen pokušelem pro zocelení víry. Zápas o pravdivý obraz Boha a o pravdivé pojetí dynamiky vztahu Boha a člověka je stále v centru teologie a pastorace.

Po epilogu k výkladu Tertuliánova výkladu otčenáš Vopřada ještě dodává další tři poznámky. Konstatuje, že nemáme doklady, zda byla modlitba otčenáš od počátku součástí liturgie. Z dogmatického pohledu je potom novost modlitby v jejím zaměření na Krista a, jak Vopřada uvádí, bezproblémové praxi modlitby ke Kristu. Vrací se ještě k Tertuliánově rigorismu v sexuální oblasti, který u něho vedl až ke konstatování v díle *Výzvy k čistotě*: „Podívejme se tedy na naši zkušenost: o kolik lépe se muž cítí, když je náhodou bez své ženy!“ (s. 60). Je zřejmé, že manželství Tertuliána prošlo vyhořením i v intimní oblasti, takže toto trauma řešil silnějším příklonem k duchovnímu životu. Škoda, že Tertulián nevolil nějakou formu terapie evidentní manželské a asi i své sexuální krize, než že by toto své trauma dával dokonce pošetile za příklad.

Po úvodní studii následuje vlastní Tertuliánův text. Opět musím vyzdvihnout pečlivý poznámkový aparát pod čarou a zkratky biblických knih na boku. Typografie je přehledná a bez problémů se čtenář vizuálně orientuje. Jak jsem již uvedl, doporučuji čtenáři, aby při otevření knihy začal četbou vlastního Tertuliánova textu a nechal ho na sebe působit v jeho původnosti. Až následně aby se obrátil k úvodní studii.

Proto nyní svoji recenzi ukončím s přáním, aby z dílny Davida Vopřady spatřily světlo světa další podobné studie a překlady, které nám čtenářům umožní více poznat tuto velmi plodnou etapu dějin křesťanského myšlení.

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**Barbora Šmejdová, *Rozumové argumenty a pohádkové světy: Jazyk apologetiky podle C. S. Lewise*,
Praha: Karolinum, 2020, 99 s., ISBN: 978-80-246-4712-8.**

JOSEF MIKULÁŠEK

Kniha *Rozumové argumenty a pohádkové světy* představuje pro české teologické prostředí další střípek v mozaice analýzy díla jednoho z nejznámějších novověkých apologetů, původem irského literáta C. S. Lewise (1898–1963). Další střípek proto, že v českém prostředí se již setkáme například s dílem P. Hoška¹ či M. Hájka,² kteří se snaží přiblížit nám postavu C. S. Lewise. Avšak kniha české teoložky Barbory Šmejdové, působící na pražské Katolické teologické fakultě UK, přináší v našem prostředí dosud nepopsaný aspekt lewisovských studií: zaměřuje se na způsob Lewisovy práce s jazykem v jeho apologetických dílech. V knize proto není možné čekat popis *obsahu* samotné apologetiky tohoto světoznámého autora, který společně s J. R. R. Tolkienem a G. K. Chestertonem tvoří „trojlístek“ anglických laických apologetů a velkých literátů 1. poloviny 20. století. Naopak, záměrem knihy je analyzovat metodu, s níž Lewis přistupuje k užívání jazyka ve své apologetické práci.

Celé dílo, útlé počtem stran, avšak hutné svým obsahem, je rozčleněno do pěti částí, kterým předchází úvod pojatý jako tázání se po potřebě jazyka apologetiky pro naši současnou dobu počátku 21. století. Byť se zde nesetkáváme přímo s tímto pojmem, autorka se zde zamýšlí nad stavem „slabého rozumu“ postmoderní situace člověka a možností racionálního a „nadějeplného“ (1 Pt 3,15) vypovídání křesťanské apologetiky. Závěr knihy je naopak krátkým autorčiným resumé, navozujícím otázku prolnutí osobní svatosti a poslání apologety v přesvědčivosti jeho mise.

První kapitola knihy je pojata na způsob stručného biografického okénka, prostřednictvím něž se čtenář seznamuje se základními životopisnými údaji C. S. Lewise. Snad dva důležité podněty vyvstávají z této kapitoly knihy. Zaprvé „sběratelská“ metoda Lewisovy apologetické práce, jíž se dle autorky Lewis inspiruje u středověkého způsobu myšlení a práce (s. 18). Tato metoda, která není *synkretismem* nýbrž *eklekticismem*, je cestou Lewisovi umožňující velmi svobodný pohyb ve vlnové délce lidské imaginace a kombinace racionálních, uměleckých, jazykových a estetických přístupů. Tento fakt nás může vést dále k promýšlení toho, nakolik můžeme mluvit o „normativní“ podobě jazyka křesťanské apologetiky a o jejích proměnách v dějinných etapách lidstva. Druhou skutečností, která v průběhu této kapitoly vyvstává, je podobný styl apologetiky, který nalezneme u několika dalších anglických autorů přelomu

¹ Pavel Hošek, *C. S. Lewis: mýtus, imaginace a pravda* (Praha: Návrat domů, 2004).

² Matěj Hájek, *Pojetí imaginace u Owena Barfielda a C. S. Lewise* (Praha: Dingir, 2014).

19. a 20. století (Newman, Chesterton, Tolkien) s jejich důrazem na symboliku a schopnost imaginace, který se značně odlišuje od kontinentální apologetiky doby před jedním stoletím svým důrazem na širokou škálu kognitivních kapacit lidských subjektů.

Ve druhé kapitole se autorka zabývá teorií poznání u C. S. Lewise. Setkáme se zde se stanovením vztahu mezi *analogia entis* a *analogia fidei*, přičemž se snaží na základě vlastní interpretace Lewise klást důraz na christologický primát vypovídání o realitě. Při četbě této kapitoly může čtenáři vyvstat paralela s pojetím Božího zjevení, jak se s ním setkáváme u A. Dullese, totiž konkrétně v jeho modelu *symbolické mediace*, tj. otevření nového horizontu reality prostřednictvím Vtělení Božího Syna.⁵ Tento fakt je dále zdůrazněn autorkou v pojednání o *looking at* a *looking along* dané reality: ryze pozitivistické myšlení, které se snaží postihnout pouze povrchní „logiku“ skutečnosti, je pravým opakem fenomenologického přístupu, zde popsaného jako *looking along*. Zde je implicitně vložena zásadní problematika, týkající se apologetické práce: jak „převést“ člověka z pozice vnějšího nezaujatého pozorovatele k tomu, kdo prožívá vlastní život jako „ontologickou komplicitu“ s realitou symbolicky vnímanou? Lewis se takto napojuje na tradici anglického myšlení reprezentovanou např. J. H. Newmanem a jeho důrazem na *illative sense* jako místa „produkce“ nové vize reality.

Třetí kapitola soustředí pozornost na vlastní Lewisovu teologii jazyka. Autorka zde analyzuje funkci metaforického a mýtického vypovídání u Lewise. Toto zkoumání nás přivádí k otázce po původním významu jazykového vypovídání, které se nachází v nábožensko-kosmologické oblasti. V tomto způsobu vypovídání nejsou „věci“ součástí přirozeného řádu ale spíše „znaky/znamením“ *vztahů* mezi různými dimenzemi reality. Nejen Lewisův žánr fantasy má právě tuto moc spočívající v řádu symbolického vyprávění (s. 48). Autorka tak dospívá k poslání apologety v dnešní době: být „překladačeli“ (a také předkladačeli) původních významů slov, u nichž došlo k radikálnímu posunu jejich významu v průběhu dějin. Jak Šmejdová ilustruje na příkladech pojmů „pokání“, „tvor“, „dogma“ či „oběť“, tato slova ztratila svoji vypovídací hodnotu „hlubokých symbolů“ popisujících situaci stvořeného lidstva tváří v tvář svému Stvořiteli.⁴ V závěru kapitoly (s. 61–62) proto autorka zdůrazňuje důležitost „kvalitativního“ vypovídání o Bohu a realitě prostřednictvím adjektiv (milující/odpouštějící Otec) namísto ryze substancialistického teologického jazyka (Bůh Otec).

Následující kapitola, titulovaná „Rozměry křesťanské imaginace“ (s. 63 a n.), představuje shrnutí a systematické představení dosud řečeného prostřednictvím pojednání o tématu imaginace a jeho podobě v křesťanské apologetice. Po prvotním rozlišení mezi adjektivem *imaginární* a *imaginativní* se zde

⁵ Avery Dulles, *Models or revelation* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1985).

⁴ Edward Farley, *Deep Symbols: Their Postmodern Effacement and Reclamation* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1996).

autorka přesvědčivě snaží ukázat, že fenomén imaginace je obecnou konstantou každé lidské existence, sloužící k porozumění vlastní identitě: „kým jsem já; v tady a teď mého života a dějin světa?“ Role imaginace obecně i její konkrétní křesťanská podoba jsou naprosto klíčové pro tvoření *významu* (*meaning*) vlastního života; tj. vědomí vlastní jedinečnosti v dějinách lidstva, pevné vědomí vlastní identity a „mysluplnosti“ světa, jehož jsme součástí. Úkolem křesťanské imaginace je proto prostřednictvím symbolického popisu reality vytvořit prostor setkání mezi lidským jedincem a Ježíšem Kristem, aby mohlo v životě člověka dojít k tomu, co autorka popisuje jako „mimésis“ Ježíše Krista: tento *Jediný* generuje pluralitu *jedinečných* skrze jejich přitakání Ježíšově výzvě: „Následuj mě.“⁵

V páté kapitole nabízí autorka přehled důsledků Lewisovy analýzy pro podobu současné apologetiky křesťanství. Zde je vhodné uvědomit si fakt, že Lewisovo období tvorby koreluje s obratem k jazyku, ke kterému dochází celkově v západním myšlení od prvních desetiletí 20. století s rozvojem strukturalismu a sémiotiky. Právě srovnání těchto dvou linií a Lewisovy práce s jazykem by mohlo být zajímavým tématem k dalšímu rozvinutí. Nicméně v této kapitole se setkáváme se zhodnocením posunu křesťanské apologetiky od úporného boje s racionalismem právě do oblasti jazyka, který se v průběhu vymaňuje z reduktivně pozitivistického pojetí a který se také (což současně autorka klade jako jedno z prioritních témat současné apologetiky křesťanské) po významech slov a po jejich používání lidmi. Zde se ukazuje novým způsobem „pole“, ve kterém se může apologetická práce cítit jako doma: práce žurnalistická, populárně-naučná či beletristická; tj. právě taková oblast lidské tvořivosti, kterou představoval svou osobností a dílem C. S. Lewis.

Ke zhodnocení knihy nutno podotknout, že od čtenáře vyžaduje velkou soustředěnost pro porozumění jednotlivým lingvistickým konceptům a úrovním práce C. S. Lewise, jehož metodu se snaží B. Šmejdová představit. Tento fakt je přítomný zejména v popisu hodnocení zapojení rozumu/víry/intuice/imaginace v průběhu jednotlivých oddílů knihy. Také by bylo možné očekávat hlubší diskusi s platonským dualismem, implicitně přítomným v Lewisově díle, který je i zde v některých pasážích textu cítit. Z formálního hlediska snad může mrzet, že v poznámkovém aparátu se nesetkáme s českým překladem citací Lewisových děl, což pro některé může komplikovat čitelnost textu.

Tyto skutečnosti však nic nezmenšují na přínosu tohoto díla nejen pro české prostředí, pro čtenáře i znalce díla C. S. Lewise, stejně jako pro každého zainteresovaného křesťana, který sám hledá, jaký jazyk zvolit pro být všední rozhovory a debaty o křesťanské víře s těmi, kdo hledají v Kristu naději pro vlastní život.

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⁵ Christoph Theobald, *Le christianisme comme style. Une manière de faire de la théologie en postmodernité* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2007).

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