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RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND BURNOUT

BERNADETT KOVÁCS, BEÁTA NAGY

Abstract. Our article presents the results of a survey wherein we examined whether the monastic nurses, who are unequivocally religious people, are as burned out during their helping service as the non-religious nurses. Our conclusion is based on the results of two questionnaires, the Post-Critical Belief Scale (PCBS) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The sample included female nurses who have been working beside sick-bed for at least 5 years (N=94).

We examined the impact of factors such as age and piety on burnout. To our surprise, statistical results showed that the rate of burnout was not directly proportional to the number of years spent at work. Age as a dependent variable explained burnout only to a minimal extent. After that we examined the effect of piety on burnout. However, it cannot be described with one number, it is intangible, therefore we based our survey on three aspects. These aspects of piety were used to examine the followings: the extent of self-estimated piety, going to church, and the Post-Critical Belief Scale. The measured values based on these aspects show linear connection, reciprocal ratio with the burnout. To follow from this, we can say that religious belief is a protective factor as opposed to the burnout in our sample.

The results indicated that burnout is the lowest in the community of the monastic nurses. Burnout of those nurses who work in ecclesiastical institutions is higher than that of monastic nurses and the rate of burnout is the highest among the nurses who work in state-owned hospitals.

Consequently, religious belief has a crucial role in the avoidance of burnout.

Keywords: religious belief, burnout, helping syndrome

Introduction

Mária Kopp and Árpád Skrabski's nationwide survey in 2002¹ deals with the coherence of piety and mental health.

According to the survey, the practice of religion and the importance of religion are connected to age, gender, and financial state. There could be seen some connection between the better physical and mental health and the practice of religion in the case of the examined variables.

Those who practice their religion more often, smoke 43% less cigarettes a day compared to the national average; they spent 42% less days on sick-

¹ KOPP M., SKRABSKI Á., "Vallásosság és lelki egészség", in *Távlatok*, 2003, 1.

leave last year; their ability to work decreased to a smaller extent. They reported significantly higher rates on the well-being questionnaires by the World Health Organization (WHO), they are less depressed, and hostile. They are more co-operative, it is less typical of them to cope with things in a harmful, emotional way, they rather choose the problem-solving way of conflict management. They told about significantly more social support on behalf of their parents and colleagues. Piety is an important indicator of psychic health. Several tests prove the role of piety, and the role of belonging to a religious community in health care.²

Faith, religion, and healing have interlocked tightly in the history of mankind; today it also includes the dimension of spirituality when the WHO defines the quality of life.

It seems that Kopp-Skrabski's data support, and even post into bigger perspectives, the results of our small volume survey on the connection between burnout and piety.

The aim of the present study is to bring attention to the public and social context beyond the individual's psychic health-care, and to remind us that not only Psychology, but religion and the science of Theology may also contribute to the development of the spiritually healthy personality in its own specific manner.

It is well-known that burnout occurs more often among those who are in helping professions (health care workers, educators) than in any other fields. I saw evidence of this many years ago in Pécs when I became acquainted with the Franciscan Monastic Nurses who had been working in different departments of the town's hospitals. The nurses indicated that when the sick and their families are stressed or in crisis they often turn to religious people expecting help from them. It led me to wonder where their strength comes from day-by-day through years for this activity that is both physically and psychically tiring. Is there anything extra in their lives that helps them? Are they not exhausted of this work, do they not get apathetic because of their profession? Their answer to my question was: "they are usually tired by the end of their shift, but they are not apathetic. This is what they undertook, this is what they sacrificed their lives to do, they do it gladly, with love. They have a source, namely the connection with the Transcendent."

In our survey, we enquired whether it can be proven with the means of Psychology, or research that religion is a real positive factor in the helping service. For the sake of comparison, we interviewed less- and non-religious nurses as well about the topic of burnout.

² KOPP, SKRABSKI.

Comparison with similar researches

The dear reader may expect that we compare the main results of inland and external surveys which are connected to the field under inspection, as usual, set them against each other and interpret the similarities and differences with our own results. However, we have not found such unique comparison of the burnout and piety (that we do in our survey) in any published case-studies.

Both fields of study about burnout and its connection were examined in tandem to present a novel, unique comparison.

The field of burnout has been examined by a great number of researchers, but the Post-Critical Belief Scale³ is worth mentioning because of the novelty of this survey. We also used this questionnaire to study the different aspects of piety.

With the leadership of Dirk Hutsebaut, who worked out the questionnaire, there have been many surveys and researches at the Catholic University of Leuven. These surveys remained in the field of piety, and they tried to investigate in what attitudes the people's piety is manifested.

Hutsebaut et al.⁴ created a scale that measures the subtle differences in religious attitudes, taking into account the development of piety as an important aspect. Their work is based on the theoretical framework of Wulff⁵, Fowler⁶, and Ricoeur⁷.

Katalin Horváth-Szabó⁸ adapted and measured the validity of Hutsebaut's scale and began the research of the different aspects of piety in Hungary.

Anikó Kézdy's surveys⁹ with the study of piety of young adults also contributed to this area of research.

³ D. HUTSEBAUT, "Post-Critical Belief scales, Exploration of a possible developmental process", in *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 2000, 13 (2), 19–28.

⁴ HUTSEBAUT, "Post-Critical Belief scales, Exploration", 19–28.

⁵ D. WULFF, *Psychology of religion*, New York, 1991, 1997.

⁶ J.W. FOWLER, *Stages of faith: the psychology of human development and quest for meaning*, San Francisco, 1981.

⁷ P. RICOEUR, *Freud and Philosophy: An essay on interpretation*, New Haven, 1965.

⁸ HORVÁTH-SZABÓ K., "Hazai vizsgálatok a Kritika utáni vallásosság skálával", in *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle*, LVIII 2003 (1), 130–131, 134, 146.

HORVÁTH-SZABÓ K., "Az én és a vallás a posztmodern korban", in *Távlatok*, 2002 (56), 238–248.

⁹ KÉZDY A., "Krizisek és vallásosság, Serdülő- és ifjúkori fejlődési krízisek és a vallás szerepe a megküzdésben", in TÖZSÉR E. (ed.), *Hit és élet a felnőttkor küszöbén*, Budapest, 2006, 61–84.

KÉZDY A., "Vallási kérdések a pszichológiai tanácsadásban", in Tözsér E (ed.), *Az istenhit mint erőforrás*, Budapest, 2006, 171–185.

The interpretation of religion in the field of Psychology¹⁰ has also been discussed at length, specifically that religion and the service that follows from it are essential importance in the human life. In connection with this, Frankl¹¹ says, “what is important is self-transcendence: the searching for the sense of life that is beyond us. You can realize yourself to such extent as you transcend yourself: in the service of an issue, in the love of another person, things that the workers do in the helping service.”

Methods

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the connection between piety and the burnout. To be more precise, we would like to examine to what extent faith is a protective factor against burnout for the religious people in the nursing profession.

Hypothesis

1. Religion is a protective factor against burnout.
2. The rate of burnout is less among monastic nurses (the people on the highest level of piety), and greater among less religious nurses.

Procedures

- According to Hézszer¹² gender has a strong influence on being burnt out. For the purpose of this study we did not analyze this point of view separately, because our entire sample was composed of women.
- Our statistical analyses proved that the burning out as a dependent variable did not show significant connection with the age in our sample. We do not discuss it in detail here, since
- The most important result of the statistical surveys was that the burnout, as a dependent variable, did not show significant connection even with the number of years spent at work.

¹⁰ S. FREUD, *Egy illúzió jövője*, Budapest, 1991.

E. FROMM, *Pszichoanalízis és vallás*, Budapest, 1995.

C.G. JUNG, *Gondolatok a vallásról és a kereszténységről*, Budapest, 1996.

¹¹ V.E. FRANKL, *Orvosi lélekgondozás*, Budapest, 1997.

¹² G. HÉZSER, *Miért? Rendszerszemlélet és lelkipedagógiai gyakorlat*, Pasztorálpszichológiai tanulmányok, Budapest, 1996.

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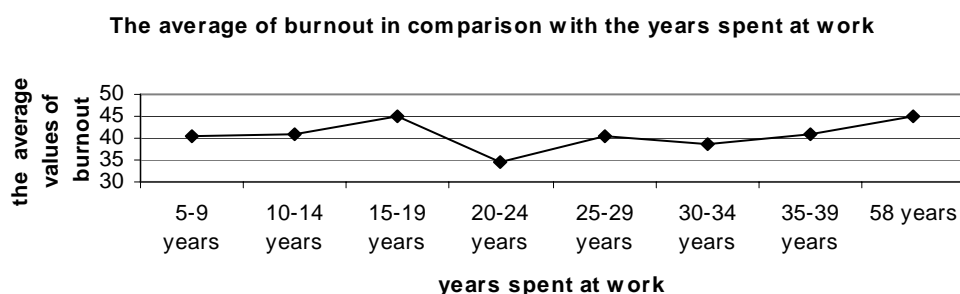


Figure 1. The average of burnout compared to the number of years spent at work

The data shows the connection between the number of years spent at work and the burnout. Interestingly, the extent of burning out is not increasing in a direct proportion to the number of years at work. Similar results were found after 10, 20, or 30 years. It refers to the fact that not only the number of years matters in the rate of burnout, but other variables (that is endangering and protective factors) must be examined such as faith and the factor of piety.

- However, piety has a role in burnout that we measured on the basis of three aspects.
- The rate of piety is inversely proportional to the burnout. The role of the monastic nurses is that it can include people representing the highest level of piety in the comparison.

We are aware of the fact that the survey is not spread out to such other, important factors as marital status, socio-cultural factors, etc, but these would have exceeded the frameworks of this present enquiry.

Sample

The sample included a total of 94 nurses:

1. Twelve monastic nurses from the Order of Franciscan Monastic Nurses /12 people/, who serve in different departments, at different hospitals in Pécs;
2. 24 nurses working in religious institutions (Máltai Szeretőkórház, Vác) and
3. 58 nurses working in state-owned hospitals (Jávorszky Ödön Városi Kórház, Vác).

While the three groups above gave us the opportunity to examine piety in three different places, the survey itself examined the sample as a whole.

The randomly selected included 94 women, all of whom the requirement of working beside hospital bed at least for 5 years. They also represented different hospital departments providing an extensive cross-sectional model regarding the nurses of each hospital from the point of view of burnout and piety.

The nurses represented a homogeneous group with regard to gender, qualification, financial situation, and socio-cultural circumstances. Their average age can also be regarded as the same as the average age of women from the three groups shows no statistically significant differences. While all of these variables are important as they relate to burn-out and piety, because of the homogeneity of the sample, they were not included on our comparative analysis.

Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymity was ensured by the use of sealed and numbered envelopes. These envelopes with the questionnaires were handed out by the nurse manager. One hundred forty questionnaires were distributed and 94 were returned.

Measures

One of the tools of the survey was the Post-Critical Belief Scale¹³. This is a Likert-type scale that contains 33 religious statements, in which the respondent expresses the rate of his/her assent with the given statement on a 1 to 7 point scale. The scale was created by Dirk Hutsebaut in 1996¹⁴. According to these, the people who correspond to Fowler's 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th stage of religious development can be classified into 4 possible categories¹⁵.

Several theories deal with the religious development of the personality. One of them for us to understand the Post-Critical Belief Scale is the review of the Stages of Faith by Fowler, which belongs to the 'Interactive – Constructive' theories. Several authors¹⁶ mention the fact that Fowler explicates in detail: as opposed to earlier beliefs, he does not regard faith as something complete that either exists or does not exist, but he believes that it is the result of a developmental process, so everyone may be on the move concerning faith.

The people who correspond to Fowler's 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th stage of religious development can be classified into 4 possible categories since these 4 developmental stages can substitute the developmental stages of faith in adulthood:

- the *mythic-oral faith* that appears as the *Orthodox stage of faith* in the interpretation.
- the *synthetic-traditional faith* which means the *outer critical attitude*,
- the *individualizing-reflecting faith* that equals to *relativism*,
- the *committed-hardening faith* that refers to the *second naivety stage of faith*.

¹³ HORVÁTH-SZABÓ, "Hazai vizsgálatok", 130–131, 134, 146.

¹⁴ D. HUTSEBAUT, "Post-Critical Belief: A new approach to the religious attitude problem", in *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 9, 48–66.

¹⁵ FOWLER.

¹⁶ F. SCHWEITZER, *Vallás és életút*, Budapest, 1999.

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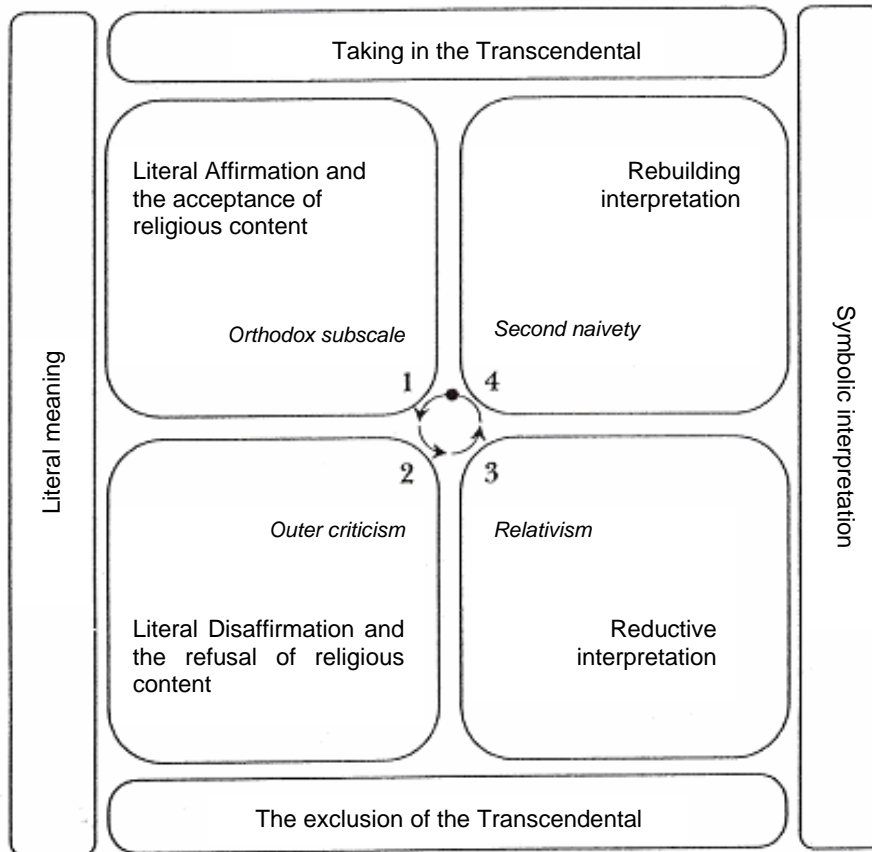


Figure 2. The Post-Critical Belief Scale in Wulff's model (Source: Wulff¹⁷)

Hutsebout, who created the Post-Critical Belief Scale, places Fowler's stages of faith along Wulff's two central dimensions. This way, we can observe the individual relations to religion in a frame of reference.

Four of Fowler's developmental stages of faith can be substituted with the developmental stages of faith in adulthood. These are the following: the *mythic-oral faith* that Hutsebout describes as the *Orthodox* stage of faith (1), the *synthetic-traditional faith*, which means the *outer critical* attitude (2), the *individualizing-reflecting faith* that equals to *relativism* (3), and the *committed-hardening faith* that refers to the *second naivety* stage of faith (4).

¹⁷ WULFF, 635.

Hutsebout places Fowler's stages of faith along Wulff's 2 central dimensions. These are the literal and the symbolic interpretation, and the taking in or the exclusion of the Transcendental. This way, we can observe the individual relations to religion in a frame of reference. (See *Figure 2.*)

The Orthodox or, in its sharp form, fundamentalist religious attitude is characterized by the literal interpretation of religious statements and the acceptance of the religious reality, the Transcendence. It belongs to the 1st quarter in Wulff's model. The person who has outer critical attitude interprets the religious statements literally, as in the Orthodox subscale, but handles its content with quite strong criticism, and mostly refuses what is included in it. It belongs to the 2nd quarter in Wulff's schema. The relativistic religious attitude is typical of the reductive interpretation stage.

[...] It is opened towards the symbolic interpretation, but handles the content of religious statements with strong criticism, their refusal or acceptance depends on the content. It is opened towards complexity, but still refuses uncertainty (3rd quarter). The attitude that relates to religion with the second naivety expresses Ricoeur's rebuilt piety that is related to Allport's¹⁸ mature piety. The contradictions that are discovered in religion are dissolved in a comprehensive synthesis. He looks at life, his own existence and the world with admiration and astonishment. Wulff classifies this kind of piety into the 4th quarter.¹⁹

What do these data mean from our survey's perspective?

The faith of those people who are in the Orthodox stage, is family tradition rather than individual conviction.

The outer critical attitude points towards atheism.

The level of religious relativism includes the attraction towards other, new type of religions that are mythologizing or imitating scientism.

Those who belong to the second naivety are the ones who are convinced about their belief, they have mature faith. This faith can be Catholic, Protestant, or any other type of belief that the individual can accept as her own.

Practically, we can say that the development of faith is similar to a flexible spiral, and progressing from the stage of the first naivety with the strengthening of our critical thinking, and through an intellectual searching process, we can get to the stage of the second naivety that dissolves contradictions.²⁰

¹⁸ G.W. ALLPORT, *The individual and his religion: A psychological interpretation*, New York, 1950.

¹⁹ HORVÁTH-SZABÓ, "Hazai vizsgálatok", 130–131, 134, 146.

²⁰ HORVÁTH-SZABÓ, "Hazai vizsgálatok", 130–131, 134, 146.

In our survey, the *frequency of going to church* and the *judgement of own piety* are regarded as two important index-numbers beside the Post-Critical Belief Scale.

Another means of the survey is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), 1981. The questionnaire aims at revealing the rate of burnout. Its 22 thesis statements can be valued on a 7-degree scale.

Results

The total score of burnout within the sample shows a normal distribution, as it could be expected from statistical-mathematical point of view.

The burnout did not increase in direct ratio with the number of years spent at work, although, we would think it so. (See *Figure 1*.)

However, the burnout can be described by one number only, the piety of the individual cannot be classified the same way. For this reason, we examined the piety of the nurses in the sample from three aspects during the survey:

1. the estimated value of their own piety
2. the frequency of their going to church
3. the Post-Critical Belief Scale that shows the stage of the individual's religious development

The first aspect of piety is the self-estimated piety. The method belonging to this was a 7-degree scale, where the respondents indicated how religious they judge themselves to be.

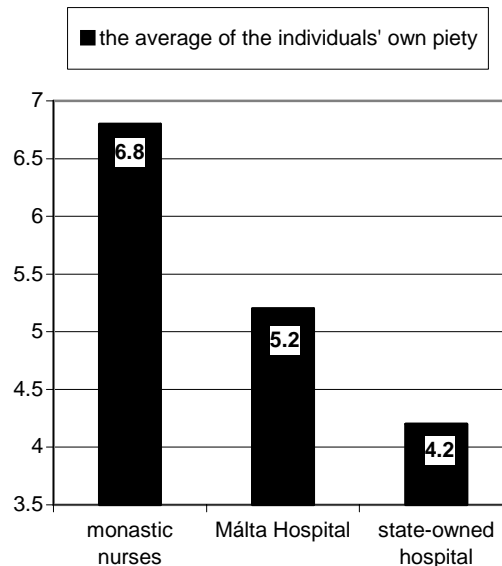


Figure 3. The average of the individuals' own piety

Own piety			
Workplace	Average	Deviation	N
Monastic nurses	6.75	0.45	12
Nurses at the Malta Hospital	5.17	1.49	24
Nurses at the state-owned hospital (Vác)	4.21	1.67	58
Total	4.78	1.74	94

Table 1: Own piety

We can see that this value is high in the case of monastic nurses: the average was 6.8, in the Malta Hospital it was lower, 5.2, and it was the lowest in the state-owned hospital, 4.2.

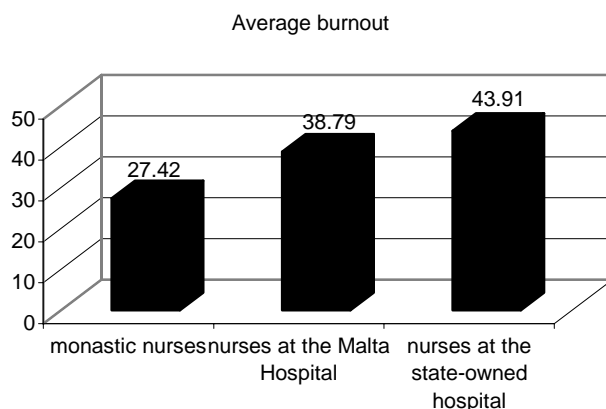


Figure 4. Average burnout

Teams at workplace	Average burnout	Deviation
monastic nurses	27.42	10.46
nurses at the Malta Hospital	38.79	15.03
nurses at the state-owned hospital	43.91	18.62
Total	40.5	17.65

Table 2: Average burnout

If we compare these data with the number of average burnout, we can observe unequivocal reciprocal correlation, specifically monastic nurses who placed themselves to the highest level of piety experience the least burnt out, while those who placed themselves to a lower level of piety, have a higher rate of burnout.

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The same connection can be seen when comparing the second measured aspect of piety, the church-going, with the rate of burnout. It is presented in the following figures:

The comparison of the self-estimated average of the practice of religion and piety

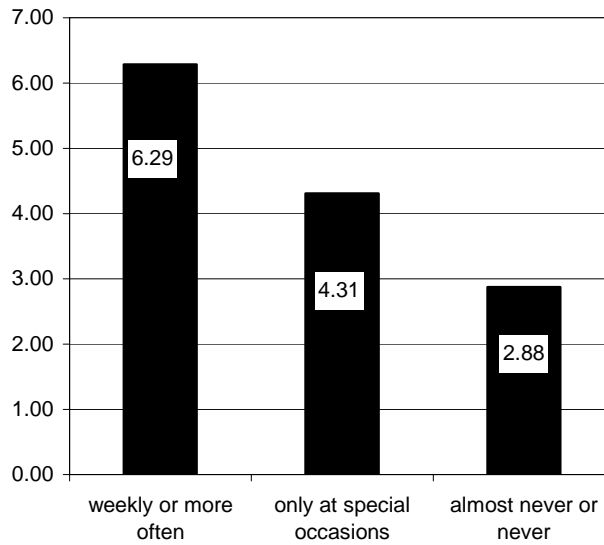


Figure 5. The comparison of the self-estimated average of the practice of religion and piety

Going to church	Average	N	Deviation
weekly or more often	6.28	28	0.93
only at special occasions	4.31	58	1.48
almost never or never	2.87	8	1.95
Total	4.77	94	1.74

Table 3: The frequency of church-going

Those who go to church weekly or more often scored the highest values, 6 or 7. Their average score is 6.29.

Those who go to church only at special occasions mainly scored 4 or 5 but naturally all scores from 1 to 7 occurred, so the average score is 4.31.

Those who almost never or never go to church still considered themselves religious to the value of 2 or 3. The average score here is 2.88.

Thus there is a linear dependence between the score of self-estimated piety and the frequency of church-going.

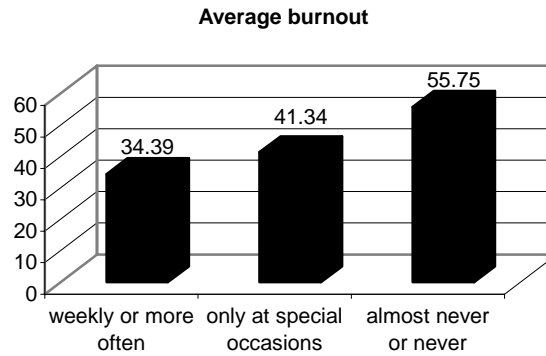


Figure 6. Average burnout

Frequency of church-going	Average burnout	Deviation
weekly or more often	34.39	15.80
only at special occasions	41.34	17.96
almost never or never	55.75	11.27
Total	40.50	17.65

Table 4: The connection between church-going and the burnout

As Figure 6. shows, those who go to church weekly or more often have the lowest average burnout score. Those who go to church only at special occasions also have lower scores than those who almost never or never go to church.

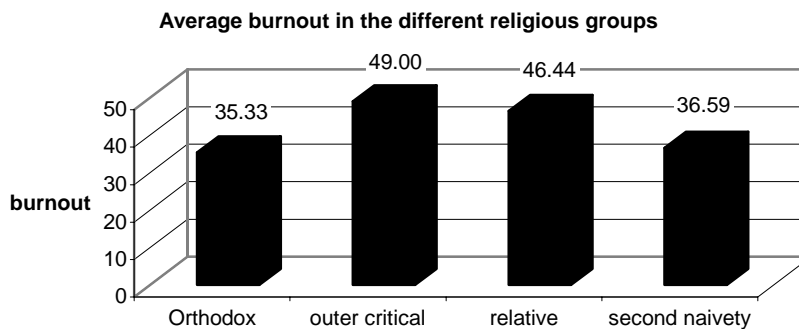


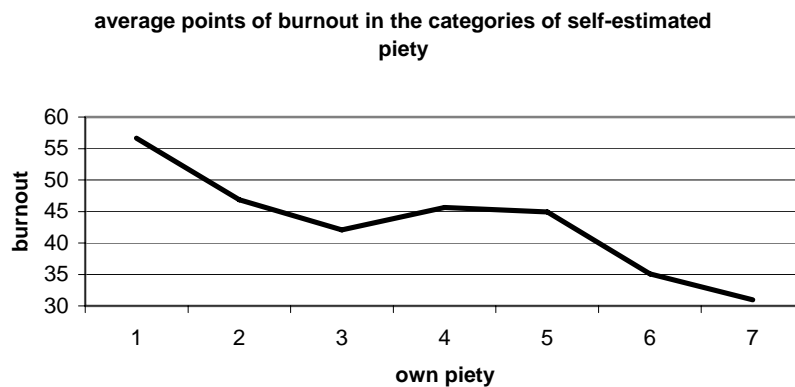
Figure 7. Average burnout in the different religious groups

If we compare the burnout averages of the people belonging to the different stages of faith development, the result will be that the Orthodox faith, and the one being in the stage of the second naivety show a defender role against burnout. The value of burnout is the highest among those who have

outer critical attitude, which means the level of critical attitude towards religious questions.

Finally, let us have a look at the following figure where the conclusion of the whole survey can be seen. As one of the aspects of piety, namely the self-estimated piety, show linear connection, in this case reciprocal ratio, with the burnout, it is also true for the other two aspects that religion is a protective factor against burnout. It can be observed that the rate of burnout regarding those who placed themselves to the highest level of self-estimated piety is the lowest.

Linear connection can be established between the self-estimated rate of piety and the burnout.



- the average burnout rate of those who classified themselves to be in the 1st religious group: **56.67**
- the average burnout rate of those who classified themselves to be in the 2nd religious group: **46.88**
- the average burnout rate of those who classified themselves to be in the 3rd religious group: **42.10**
- the average burnout rate of those who classified themselves to be in the 4th religious group: **45.63**
- the average burnout rate of those who classified themselves to be in the 5th religious group: **44.92**
- the average burnout rate of those who classified themselves to be in the 6th religious group: **35.07**
- the average burnout rate of those who classified themselves to be in the 7th religious group: **30.95**
- the average burnout rate of the monastic nurses who, with one exception, classified themselves to be in the 7th religious group: 27.42

Figure 8. The average points of burnout in the categories of self-estimated piety

In summary the survey confirmed our hypothesis. Our analysis of data indicates that religious belief is important in the avoidance of burnout. The results provided some answers to the *second hypothesis* as well. Specifically the rate of burnout is the lowest among those who belong to a monastic community when compared to secular nurses who work in religious institutions, and it is far more lower than the burnout-rate of the nurses working in state-owned hospitals.

Conclusions

Religious practices as factors serving psychic health

The Jewish-Christian culture created not only the interiorized concept of sin that is built upon conscience, but the practice and institutional system of its dissolution, the justification by faith. The practice of indulgence and the ceremonies also convey therapeutic effect, and the therapeutic value of the personal connection between the minister and the believer is obvious as well.

The penitential liturgies represent the community dimension of repentance. If we want to express it in a modern way, we can say that this penitential dialogue takes place in such atmosphere where the both parties feel as if it was a ministerial counseling. The discussion, the style and content of which is 'ministerial-healer', makes the entirely honest self-knowledge and self-acceptance possible on the one hand, and it also makes the acknowledgement of sins before God and the absolution feasible on the other hand. If this conversation takes place in small groups, it bears the signs of group-dynamics as well. It can be sent into a parallel with the effects of the 'free interaction'. It is conceivable that "such groups can be really useful when developing the self-knowledge of its participants and when discovering and expressing their inner world. [...] The acknowledgement of sins in front of the community, 'publicly', is also possible[...] some people do not rule out revealing their souls completely, may it be their good or sinful past."²¹ The sense of guilt lies heavy on people, so they try to dissolve it somehow. "The way of therapeutic methods is called catharsis [...] The aim is the same in all the methods: to cease the pressure by the disclosure of events which are connected to the sense of guilt, making others be aware of them. Sharing it with other people is one of the key elements of getting rid of the sense of guilt. The cathartic effect of the sacramental acknowledgement of sins is undeniable."²² For a Christian Catholic person, like a monk, the regular meeting and confession, that is the *self-reflection* and the acknowledgement of sins as an opportunity for catharsis, that has just been described, contribute to the maintenance of the balance of physical-mental health. Hereby we are able to renew our psychic energy. *Consequently, the participation in the practices of religious belief is able to give us some kind of immunity against the burnout.*

The monastic orders ensure their members that they will not be left alone with their activity since they live in a community, and at the same time they

²¹ BENKŐ A., SZENTMÁRTONI M., *Testvéreink szolgálatában*, Budapest, 2002.

²² BENKŐ A., "A valláspszichológiától a vallásosság pszichológiájáig", in *Magyar Pszichológiai Szemle*, LVIII. (1): 19–49.

allow autonomy and freedom for them. In case of problems, the communities grant the safety of outer help, crisis-intervention, as the monks also need constant renewal that is materialized through prayers, regular reflection, spiritual guidance, and confession that has already been mentioned. The prayer is an extremely important part of a monk's, and of course, a deeply religious, committed person's life.

Moreover prayers can help people against the burnout, acting as a protective factor. Emőke Bagdy's thoughts in connection with the prayer are summarized in the following sentences. Through the prayer such organizational processes emerge that serve our physical health and spiritual well-being. Many times it is like a spiritual healing. Advancing from the uppermost conscious level of consciousness towards the corporal functioning, we can find positive effects on all the levels of regulation. We may know it from experience that if we make a spiritual problem or tension understood, it already heads in the direction of solution. The harmful thing is which remains unconscious, because we do not pronounce it. What we phrase, pronounce, formulate, becomes conscious. "What we say, gets into time, that is by means of the time of speaking, it is already able to become past – even after a week it gets so far from us in time that we may get over it. [...] So that things get arranged, we need to say them in an entirely honest way. [...] To admit, tell, share things with God gives us the biggest relief that we can feel personally, day by day, in the relief after prayers."²³

The level of emotional conscience is the second place, where we can see the effect of prayers. The suffering and different other feelings get deduced towards the body, the organic functioning. As our feelings are not conscious on their own, we are able to have command of them. We must try to listen inwards, to collect our thoughts by concentration, and to take the feelings to a conscious level. This is exactly what we do while praying. At this time, the brain can send healing, dissolving, liberating effects to the domain of the body, to the organs.

The prayer also dissolves inwards, downwards, in the direction of our body, it liberates, heals, arranges, rebuilds what is destroyed by torment, sets those things in their place that are taken apart by pain and worry, and while doing this, the body follows the messages of the emotional conscience with subservience. The visualization, the imaginative activity, the picturesque thinking create changes in the body directly. [...] In this state of mind, the immune system regains strength, moreover, the so-

²³ BAGDY E., "Az ima ereje", in *Reformátusok Lapja*, 2003. ápr.

called pain-reducing ‘happy-hormones’ of the body are produced in a greater extent also.²⁴

On the third, corporal level, the faulty programs are restored by the new, conscious orders. “The more regular the connection is by means of prayers, and the more expectation of faith-trust-hope upwards, in the direction of God and towards turning to good we have in us, the more secure the change, the rearrangement that takes place thus, automatically in our body is downwards.”²⁵ The positive effect of prayers that appears as a renewal, as a factor of filling with strength in the case of people working in helping services is undeniable.

Religion itself creates a *healthier lifestyle* even on its own, since it requires discipline and self-control. This all help the person to keep the *Sunday for relaxation*, for example, which ensures a balanced way of life for him by saving him from complete distress.

It was Moses who already ordered that the seventh day be the time of commemoration and sanctification – not to anger us, but to serve us. [...] Let you be a blue- or white-collar worker for six days a week, the 8-hour honourable workday will take away the reserves of your psychic energy only, while working on the seventh day will consume your stock. However, in the long-run, it will result in the growing old, deterioration or cracking up of your body.²⁶

Thus, the defenderness of this commandment on people is unquestionable. The human being – as a part of the cosmos – must find the given rhythm that is created into his biology. Everyone, individually, must find the type of his order, in accordance with his mental constitution, not to ‘fall out of it’ prematurely. This means that the daily routine, the hygienic practices of the weekdays help people to live a balanced, healthy way of life. Hereby, they have a maintaining, defending role rather than being barriers. This applies to eating, relaxation, the balance between working, recreation, and spiritual filling up, the appropriate rate of solitude and social life.

All these aspects that may be the characteristics of a religious person’s life have a significant role in the *health-preserving attitude*, and thus, *on the whole, we can say that the religious belief has a protective role against the burnout and other physical-mental, psychosomatic illnesses from several angles.*

It seems that people should be taught mental-hygienic practices nowadays.

²⁴ BAGDY.

²⁵ BAGDY.

²⁶ GYÖKÖSSY E., *Életápolás*, Budapest, 1991.

Summation

We examined only a small number of factors in our survey, such components as marital, financial, and social situation. So we cannot say that the burnout has been examined in its entirety. What we can conclude from this investigation is that faith, the practical, religious life, and the higher level of the development of faith are unequivocally protective factors against burnout in our sample, as the data also showed it to us in advance.

The hypothesis that was worded in our investigation, namely that religion is a protective factor against burnout, and that the rate of burnout is lower in the case of monks than in the case of less-religious people, could be seen in the results of the survey.

However we would like to emphasize the following: Mental-hygienic practices may seem to be barriers in many cases, however, they have a preserving, defending role. We can see them coming true especially in the case of monks, but all the people have the opportunity of doing them. Such practices may be:

- practices bearing a therapeutic-cathartic effect
- spiritual conversation, spiritual guidance as the opportunity of self-knowledge and self-acceptance, supervision
- the supportive power of community
- the prayer as protective factor against burnout
- structured daily routine, the mental-hygienic prevention of weekdays
- religion alone can also create a healthier lifestyle since it requires discipline and self-control; the preservation of Sunday as the day of relaxation also serves the maintenance of physical-spiritual balance

The monastic nurses were not examined as a separate group of people, but they were present in our sample as people living with supposedly higher level of piety. Mental-hygienic practices are parts of their lives, and the supportive power of their community also belongs to that. Even if we think that the community serves as a relatively protected environment for monastic nurses, the same amount of defense can be provided to secular people by their families. Therefore the community provides considerable protection against burnout, but what they acknowledged individually was not the highlighting of their community's support, but what we cited from them in the *Introduction*: they do not know the feeling of getting tired of something, because they have a source – this is their relation to the Transcendent, the Love.

The method of self-report of course may give way to response biases that must be taken into account. The respondents' wish to suit the general picture people have of monastery nurses and the small sample size may have distorted

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our results. However our experience shows that they responded independently of the expectations and according to their real feelings of burnout. Nevertheless nowadays religious people can also express their feelings about fatigue.

In the future, we plan to expand the sample of investigation, to extend the survey to the monitoring of nurses working in other state-owned and ecclesiastical institutions.

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Appendices

Post-Critical Belief Questionnaire²⁷

Dirk Hutsebaut, professor of Psychology of Religion, at the Catholic University of Leuven, is conducting an international research on the attitudes of believers and non-believers. Specifically he is searching for the connection between them and other general attitudes or distinctive features. Hungarian investigations have also been started in this topic. As a part of this investigation, please answer the questions below. Your responses are anonymous.

1. Age: years old 2. Male Female
3. What is your religion?
- Catholic
 - Reformed
 - Evangelical
 - Belonging to another Christian community
 - Agnostic
 - Faithless
 - Other, please specify:
4. Do you go to church?
- once a week or more often
 - only at special occasions
 - almost never or never
5. In the following scale, please, circle how religious you are:
- not at all completely
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

²⁷ HUTSEBAUT, “Post-Critical Belief scales, Exploration”, 19–28.

Dear Fellow Worker,

You will read some statements in the following questionnaire that are connected to the way people relate to faith and religion. Please, indicate your opinion by circling one of the 7 numbers that expresses the degree of your assent. So, if you agree with a completely, circle '7', if not completely, or less, circle the appropriate value. If you disagree, please circle '1'.

Read the questionnaire carefully and fill it in. You do not have to think over the questions, the first impression is what matters.

Thank you for your assistance in this research.

1	The Bible contains deep truth that can be discovered by personal searching only.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2	If you want to understand those stories in the Bible that contain miracles, you have to place them into their own historical context.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3	You can live a meaningful life only if you are a believer.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4	God is fixed first, last and all the time, so He is immutable.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5	Faith is a nice dream rather, which seems to be an illusion when you encounter the toughness of life.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6	The Bible is a 'timetable' for the searching of God, not a historical record.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7	However, it is against modern thinking, I still believe that Virgin Mary was really a virgin before and after Jesus was born.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8	Too many people were pressurized in the name of God so that one can be a believer.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9	All the statements about God are defined by the age, when it was worded.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10	The Bible has an important message, even if it was written in a historical situation that was completely different from ours.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11	It is only the religions with long tradition which can ensure that we can get to God.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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12	Since Jesus is a guiding principle for me mainly, my faith in Jesus would not be influenced if it turned out that He never existed as a real historical person.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13	Religion is a commitment without absolute certainty.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14	Religion is the only thing that gives meaning to life in every respect.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15	The way people experience their relation to God depends on some kind of social connection all the time.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16	The authenticity of Bible stories is not relevant from the point of view of my faith in God.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17	There can be only one correct answer to all the religious questions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18	God is only a name that we give to the Unexplainable.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19	Statements about the Absolute, like the doctrines, will always remain relative, since they were stated by people living in a certain moment.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20	The world of Bible stories is so far from us that its importance is of very low significance for us.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21	Only clerics can answer important religious questions.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22	Scientific explanations about the people and the world made the religious explanations redundant.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23	God grows together with the history of mankind, so He can change.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24	I am aware of the fact that my ideological approach is only one among the many others.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25	I think that Bible stories must be understood literally, the way they were put down.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26	In spite of the many injustices that Christianity committed against a lot of people, I regard Christ's message to be valuable.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27	After all, faith is not more than a security-net in contrast to human anxiety.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28	The secular and religious approaches regarding the attitude to life are equally valuable answers to the important questions of life.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

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29	You must be an outsider to understand religion completely.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30	The faith is the manifestation of a weak personality.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31	The 'sense of life' does not exist, there are trends that give sense to them simply, which are different for everyone.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
32	Religious belief is the means of getting power very often, and this is what makes it dubious.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
33	Although, I do not agree with many things that happened in the past, in the name of Christianity, I still say that I am a Christian.	1 2 3 4 5 6 7

CHRISTENTUM – EIN ANACHRONISMUS? ODER: ZUR FREIHEIT DER THEOLOGIE¹

BERNHARD UHDE

Zusammenfassung. Christentum erscheint in der Kritik oftmals als „veraltet“ und „anachronistisch“, also als „mittelalterlich“. Dieser Vorwurf übersieht, daß das Christentum in seiner eigenen theologischen Entwicklung alle Prinzipien der die abendländische Wissenschaftsgeschichte bestimmenden Ersten Philosophie aufgenommen und verwahrt hat, mithin auch die Prinzipien des Neueren und Modernen Denkens. Wie dies Neuere Denken sich selbst freigesetzt und die Selbstbestimmung des Menschen als Freiheit begriffen hat, so hat auch das Christentum eben jenen Gedanken der menschlichen Freiheit in seiner Theologie begriffen und ist damit nicht „hinter der Zeit“.

Schlagworte: Christentum, Erste Philosophie, Theologie, Vergegenwärtigung, Selbstvergegenwärtigung, Inkarnation

Die „wahre Welt“ – eine Idee,
die zu Nichts mehr nützt ist,
nicht einmal mehr verpflichtend, –
eine unnütz, eine überflüssig
gewordene Idee,
folglich eine widerlegte Idee:
schaffen wir sie ab!²

Christentum in der Neuzeit, gar in der Moderne – ein Anachronismus? Ist dies Christentum in seiner Religiosität, Theologie und Erscheinungsform, man denke an die Liturgie und Riten, nicht mittelalterlich? Ist dies nicht der Tenor ungezählter kritischer Journale, ungezählter intellektueller Köpfe? Hat nicht Wolfhart Pannenberg bereits die Herausforderung trefflich formuliert:

Das Christentum ist in unserer Welt nicht mehr selbstverständlich. Viele empfinden die christlichen Kirchen heute als Relikte einer sonst versunkenen Vergangenheit. Hat sich die Moderne vom Christentum gelöst, oder ist das christliche Erbe in verborgener Weise immer noch konstitutiv für die

¹ Überarbeitete Fassung eines Vortrags bei der „Theological Conference“ der Fakultät für Römisch-Katholische Theologie anlässlich ihres zehnjährigen Bestehens an der Universität Klausenburg/Rumänien am 11. November 2006.

² Friedrich NIETZSCHE, „Götzen-Dämmerung (Wie die ‚wahre Welt‘ endlich zur Fabel wurde)“, in *Nietzsche Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 6. Abt. 3. Bd., Berlin, 1969, 75.

anscheinend so gänzlich säkulare Lebensform der sogenannten westlichen Welt [...] Wäre die Neuzeit als eine Art Aufstand gegen ihre christliche Vorgeschichte zu beurteilen, dann wäre es kaum vollziehbar, auf dem Boden der neuzeitlichen Lebenswelt aufrichtig ein Christ zu sein [...]³

Und gewiß ist, daß Nietzsche für das Christentum und dessen Theologie „die Herausforderung schlechthin“⁴ ist, Nietzsche, der dem Christentum vorhält:

Die Welt scheiden in eine ‚wahre‘ und eine ‚scheinbare‘, sei es in der Art des Christentums, sei es in der Art Kant’s (eines h i n t e r l i s t i g e n Christen zu guterletzt) ist nur eine Suggestion der *décadence*, – ein Symptom n i e d e r g e h e n d e n Lebens [...]⁵;

diese Scheidung nehme ihren Ursprung insbesondere bei Platon, denn

Im grossen Verhängnis des Christentums ist Plato jene ‚Ideal‘ genannte Zweideutigkeit und Fascination, die den edleren Naturen des Altherthums es möglich machte, sich selbst misszuverstehen und die B r ü c k e zu betreten, die zum ‚Kreuz‘ führte [...] Und wie viel Plato ist noch im Begriff ‚Kirche‘, in Bau, System, Praxis der Kirche!⁶

So begreift Nietzsche das Christentum als eine abgetane Gestalt des Überkommenen, dessen Entlarvung folglich die „Schamröthe Plato’s“⁷ hervorruft; eine abgetane Gestalt, deren Subjekt „Gott“ tot ist, von Menschen und menschlicher Selbstbestimmung getötet, wie der „tolle Mensch“ ausruft:

Hören wir noch Nichts von dem Lärm der Todtengräber, welche Gott begraben? Riechen wir noch Nichts von der göttlichen Verwesung? – auch Götter verwesen! Gott ist todt! Gott bleibt todt! Und wir haben ihn getödtet! Wie trösten wir uns, die Mörder aller Mörder? [...] Man erzählt noch, dass der tolle Mensch des selbigen Tages in verschiedene Kirchen eingedrungen sei und darin sein Requiem *aeternam deo* angestimmt habe. Hinausgeführt und zur Rede gesetzt, habe er immer nur diess entgegnet: ‚Was sind denn diese Kirchen noch, wenn sie nicht die Gräber und die Grabmäler Gottes sind?‘⁸

³ Wolfhart PANNENBERG, „Die christliche Legitimität der Neuzeit. Gedanken zu einem Buch von Hans Blumenberg“, in *Gottesgedanke und menschliche Freiheit*, Göttingen, 1972, 114.

⁴ Magnus STRIET, *Das Ich im Sturz der Realität. Philosophisch-theologische Studien zu einer Theorie des Subjekts in Auseinandersetzung mit der Spätphilosophie Friedrich Nietzsches*, Regensburg, 1998, 20.

⁵ NIETZSCHE *Götzen-Dämmerung*, 73.

⁶ NIETZSCHE, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, 150.

⁷ NIETZSCHE, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, 75.

⁸ Friedrich NIETZSCHE, „Die fröhliche Wissenschaft“, in *Nietzsche Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe* 5. Abt. 2. Bd., Berlin, 1973, 159f.

Was bleibt? Sind die Kirchen Grabmäler Gottes? Oder kann das Christentum sich doch mit der Neuzeit, ja gar der Moderne abendländischen Denkens versöhnen, kann es den Schein des Anachronismus ablegen? Und wenn, wie? Eben dies ist zu zeigen im Blick auf die Epochen dieses abendländischen Denkens, die daher zu betrachten sind.

I.

Wird also das Christentum aber in Verbindung mit einer abgetanen Gestalt abendländischer Tradition verbunden, so ist eben diese Tradition zunächst zu prüfen. Diese Prüfung der abendländischen Geistesgeschichte entspricht einer Prüfung der Geschichte jener abendländischen Philosophie, die als Erste Philosophie die Wissenschaftsgeschichte des Abendlandes bis hin zur Moderne maßgeblich bestimmt hat.

Diese Wissenschaftsgeschichte kann in drei Epochen eingeteilt werden⁹, die sich durch ihre Prinzipien unterscheiden, kann doch diese Art von Philosophie¹⁰ als Geschichte der Metaphysik begriffen¹¹ und in drei Epochen gemäß der Folge ihrer Prinzipien unterschieden werden¹²:

In der Tat – das Denken der Alten Philosophie war totalisierend; schon deshalb, weil es einem Alles zugetan war, dessen Einheit ihm im Blick auf sein Anwesen oder aber auf sein Gegeben-sein oder aber auf sein Gesetzt-sein aufging. Daraus entsprangen eben jene Prinzipien, welche das Denken der jeweiligen Epoche prägten [...] ¹³

Diese Prinzipien begründen das gesamte jeweilige Wissen einer Epoche absolut sicher gemäß kommunikativer menschlicher Einsicht, sollen vollkommen einheitlich sein – jede Doppelung müsste ja ihrerseits ein Prinzip haben – und erweisen ihre Sicherheit, indem jeder Widerlegungsversuch den Inhalt des Prinzips voraussetzen und sich damit selbst ad absurdum führen muß.

⁹ Diese Einteilung ist nicht die einzig mögliche, um nur an Heideggers Aufnahme dieser Geschichte als einer einheitlichen Geschichte der Seinsvergessenheit zu erinnern.

¹⁰ ARISTOTELES, *Metaphysik*, 983 b 20.

¹¹ Dazu wegweisend Heribert BOEDER, *Topologie der Metaphysik*, Freiburg, 1980.

¹² Dazu auch in verwandtem Zusammenhang Bernhard UHDE, „Moderne in Europa – Tradition in Asien? Zum Verhältnis von Tradition und Moderne in europäischer und asiatischer Geisteswelt“, in Judith SCHLEHE, Boike REHBEIN (Hrsg.), *Religion und Modernität von Traditionen in Asien. Neokonfigurationen von Götter-, Geister- und Menschenwelten*, Berlin, 2008, 19ff., besonders 21ff.

¹³ Heribert BOEDER, *Die Installationen der Submoderne. Zur Tektonik der heutigen Philosophie*, Würzburg, 2006, IX.

Die verbindende Fragestellung dieser Epochen dieser Wissenschaftsgeschichte kann mit der Frage „Was können wir [sicher] wissen?“ im Sinne eines kommunikativen sicheren Wissens gekennzeichnet werden, einer Frage, die sich „im Feld der Philosophie“ entfalten läßt:

1. Was kann ich wissen?
2. Was soll ich tun?
3. Was darf ich hoffen?
4. Was ist der Mensch?

Die erste Frage beantwortet die Metaphysik, die zweite die Moral, die dritte die Religion und die vierte die Anthropologie. Im Grunde könnte man aber alles dieses zur Anthropologie rechnen, weil sich die ersten drei Fragen auf die letzte beziehen.¹⁴

Kant formuliert diese Fragen im Singular – „Was [...] ich [...]“ – in Aufnahme der Neueren Philosophie und der Sicherheit der Erkenntnis, die durch die Selbstgewissheit des Individuums prinzipiell gesichert ist. Die Kommunikabilität dieses Wissen – „Was [...] wir [...]“ – beruht auf der Möglichkeit des allgemeinen menschlichen Verstandesurteils, das nicht in die Vereinzelung tritt.

Das Ringen um ein solches sicheres kommunikables Wissen begleitet die Geschichte jener Philosophie seit alters her. Hatte Parmenides gezeigt, daß die Unterscheidung von Wahrheit und Unwahrheit als erste Wahrheit begriffen werden muß¹⁵, woraus hervorgeht, daß selbst der Einspruch gegen dies sichere Wissen, will er Wahrheit behaupten, diese Unterscheidung voraussetzen muß und damit die Sicherheit dieser Unterscheidung bezeugt, so wird in der Sophistik, zumal durch Gorgias, dies angegriffen: in seinem thesenhaft erhaltenen Traktat „Über das Nichtseiende“¹⁶ behauptet er gegen Parmenides die Ununterschiedenheit von Sein und Nichtsein, indem ja beide Gegenstand menschlichen Urteilens seien und damit im Urteil bestehend¹⁷, und weiter, „daß nichts sei; wenn aber doch etwas ist, daß es unerkennbar sei; wenn es aber sowohl ist und erkennbar ist, daß es andern nicht gezeigt werden könne“¹⁸. Diesen Dreischritt arbeiten Sokrates, Platon und Aristoteles auf: Sokrates zeigt, daß etwas im Sinne einer sicheren Wahrheit ist, wenn auch nicht mitteilbar –

¹⁴ Immanuel KANT, Logik IX 25; vgl. DERS., *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* B832–B833.

¹⁵ PARMENIDES B 8 („Die Unterscheidung bezüglich dessen liegt in folgendem: Es ist oder es ist nicht“). Vgl. dazu Thomas JÜRGASCH, *Der dreieinige Gott als Prinzip praktischen Wissens. Betrachtungen zur Philosophie der Praxis des Augustinus und des Boethius*, Unveröff. Diss. Freiburg, 2009, 39ff.

¹⁶ PSEUDO-ARISTOTELES, *De Melisso, Xenophane, Gorgia*, 979a 12ff.

¹⁷ JÜRGASCH, 59f.

¹⁸ PSEUDO-ARISTOTELES, 979a 12ff.

das Daimonion; Platon, daß etwas ist im Sinne einer sicheren Wahrheit und erkennbar – die Ideen; Aristoteles, daß etwas ist im Sinne einer sicheren Wahrheit und dies der Notwendigkeit nach – die Prinzipien.

So vollendet sich die erste Epoche dieser Wissenschaftsgeschichte, gekennzeichnet durch die Alte Epoche dieser Art von Philosophie, in der Begründung der Sicherheit dieses Wissens in Prinzipien, deren Sicherstes der „Satz vom zu vermeidenden Widerspruch“ ist: „Daß nämlich dasselbe demselben gemäß desselben gleichzeitig zukommen und nicht zukommen kann, ist unmöglich.“¹⁹ Anders ausgedrückt: es ist unmöglich, einem Subjekt zu gleicher Zeit und in gleicher Hinsicht einander widersprechende Prädikate zuzuordnen.²⁰ Dieser Satz gilt als vollkommen sicher, weil der Widerlegungsversuch, der den ganzen Satz als Subjekt für falsch erklären will, nicht gleichzeitig und in gleicher Hinsicht den Satz für richtig hält: eben diese Unmöglichkeit ist der Inhalt des Prinzips selbst. Erstes der Prinzipien aber ist die Reflexion des Denkens.²¹ Zweifach gesichert zeigt sich das Wissen selbst aber als Zweiheit, als in „Doppelung“²² begründet. Läßt es so zwar eine Anwesenheit, ein „Anwesen“²³ zu, weil es nicht als vollkommen einheitlich begründet erscheint und daher das Denken selbst die Möglichkeit des Anwesens beim Prinzip erreicht, so mangelt es ihm an der Einheitlichkeit.

II.

Die zweite Epoche dieser Wissenschaftsgeschichte wird durch die Kritik am Prinzip der alten Epoche eröffnet. Plotin sieht²⁴: Das Prinzip der alten Epoche ist nicht vollkommen einheitlich, denn genau betrachtet untersucht es eine Zuordnungsproblematik, also minimal eine Zweiheit von Subjekt und Prädikat oder aber die Kontradiktion der beiden einander widersprechenden Prädikate. In jedem Fall aber wird eine Einheit vorausgesetzt: die des Subjekts und die jedes der Prädikate. Diese Einheit ist selbst ohne Prädikat absolut einfach und einheitlich, daher „jenseits“ aller Doppelung der Reflexion und

¹⁹ ARISTOTELES, 1005 b 19f.

²⁰ Aus dieser Weise sicheren Denkens geht aber eine das abendländische Denken lange beherrschende Tradition hervor: das Denken in Gegensätzen als bipolare Logik. Insofern kann „Wahres“ nur gegen „Falsches“ gestellt werden, nicht aber gegen „Anderes“; „Griechen“ behaupten sich gegen „Barbaren“, „Freie (Griechen)“ gegen „Unfreie (Perser)“ etc.

²¹ ARISTOTELES, 1072 b 13f.

²² PLOTIN, *Enneade* III, 8,9,1ff. Dazu AUGUSTINUS, *De ordine* II, 47.

²³ BOEDER.

²⁴ Vgl. insbesondere PLOTIN, *Enneade* III, 8,9,1–25.

allen zuordnenden Denkens als notwendige Voraussetzung allen Denkens zu begreifen. Diese Einheit wäre dem Menschen unzugänglich und unbekannt, da „jenseitig“, hätte sie sich nicht selbst in menschliches Bewusstsein im Gedanken der Notwendigkeit ihrer Voraussetzung für alles Denken gesenkt. Damit eröffnet Plotin für das Mittelalter, gekennzeichnet durch die Mittlere Epoche dieser Art von Philosophie, mit der Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit der Voraussetzung von Einheit gegenüber aller erscheinender Vielheit jene Epoche, die für die Wissensbestimmung des Christentums maßgeblich wird. Plotin sieht in der Notwendigkeit dieser Voraussetzung jenes Prinzip, das „jenseits“ aller Doppelungen und Reflexionsformen zwar vollkommene Einheit, gerade deshalb aber dem menschlichen Denken unzugänglich ist und keine Anwesenheit zuläßt, ist doch diese Einheit ohne Prädikate.²⁵ Schon die Kenntnis von der Notwendigkeit der Voraussetzung jener Einheit muß daher eine gegebene sein, ein „Gegeben-sein“²⁶, indem sich diese Einheit widerspruchsfrei – weil frei von jeder Notwendigkeit²⁷ – abgeschieden und hervortretend gibt.²⁸

So wird mit dem Prinzip der „jenseitigen Einheit“ nicht nur ein sicheres Wissen begründet, sondern – im Selbstverständnis – auch ein sicheres Wissen vom Heil des Menschen, wie es die christliche Theologie kündigt: die Einsicht des Plotin bereitet der *scientia divina sive theologia* den Boden, macht sie doch das Christentum als Denkmöglichkeit einsehbar.²⁹ Die Nähe von Philosophie und Theologie in der zweiten Epoche der abendländischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte wird somit gekennzeichnet und verständlich. Hieraus ergibt sich aber auch, daß sich das Christentum als die logische Vollendung aller Religionen und Kulturen begreift, die ihrerseits als „Vorbereitung“ des Christentums genommen werden.³⁰ So wird das antike Schema „Wahr“ – „Falsch“ abgelöst durch das Schema „Vorbereitung“ – „Vollendung“, eine Vollendung, die nur eine einzige wahre Religion erkennen läßt, während die anderen keine „falschen“, sondern im eigentlichen Sinne gar keine Religionen sind.³¹

²⁵ PLOTIN, *Enneade* VI, 8,13,47.

²⁶ BOEDER.

²⁷ PLOTIN, *Enneade* VI, 8,9,10f.

²⁸ PLOTIN, *Enneade* V, 2,1,1ff.

²⁹ Dazu Bernhard UHDE, „Religionen als Denkmöglichkeiten. Skizzen zur Logik der Weltreligionen“, in *Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Philosophie und Ethik*, 1/2009, Hannover, 2009, 10f.

³⁰ So bereits bei KLEMENS VON ALEXANDRIEN; dazu Salvatore R.C. LILLA, *Clement of Alexandria. A Study in Christian Platonism and Gnosticism*, Oxford, 1971.

³¹ Dieses „mittelalterliche“ Denkschema entspricht in mancher Hinsicht auch islamischem Denken; vgl. dazu Bernhard UHDE, „Denn Gott ist die Wahrheit“ (Koran 22,62).

III.

Die dritte Epoche dieser Wissenschaftsgeschichte wird von Descartes eröffnet. Descartes tilgt dabei die „Unvollkommenheiten“ der Prinzipien der alten und der mittleren Epoche: war das Prinzip der ersten Epoche zwar einsehbar und ließ eine Anwesenheit im Denken zu, so war es doch nicht vollkommen einheitlich; war das Prinzip der zweiten Epoche des abendländischen Denkens zwar vollkommen einheitlich, so war es doch nicht an sich selbst, sondern in der Notwendigkeit seiner Voraussetzung einsehbar, ließ also keine Anwesenheit im Denken zu. Das von Descartes heraufgeführte Prinzip aber ist vollkommen einheitlich und läßt Anwesenheit im Denken zu.

Gemäß der ersten methodischen Vorschrift seines „Discours de la Méthode“ nimmt Descartes nur das als wahres, sicheres Wissen, was nichts mehr in das Urteil nimmt als das, „que ce qui se présenterait si clairement et si distinctement à mon esprit, que je n’eusse aucune occasion de le mettre en doute“³². Allein die Möglichkeit, etwas zu bezweifeln, muß ausreichen, das Bezweifelte als falsch zu nehmen, um Wissen sicher zu gründen.³³ So muß nunmehr das Prinzip bewiesen werden, nicht mehr sich selbst als Prinzip erweisen. In dieser Form von Wissenschaft kann daher auch „Gott“ nicht mehr als Erstes Prinzip mit jener Sicherheit erscheinen, die beim Zweifel an diesem Prinzip eben dieses voraussetzt, da es ja die Möglichkeit gibt, seine Existenz zu bezweifeln. Wie es aber möglich ist, an Allem zu zweifeln, so ist es doch unmöglich zu bezweifeln, daß es beim Zweifel an Allem mit notwendiger Sicherheit ein zweifelndes Subjekt geben muß, denn auch der Zweifel daran setzt ein solches wiederum voraus.³⁴ Diese einfach erscheinende Erkenntnis begründet die gesamte neuere Wissenschaft, weil sie das zweifelnde, also denkende Subjekt an der logisch ersten Stelle sicheren Wissens, mithin als Prinzip erkennt. Das bedeutet: der Mensch erscheint als Herr seiner eigenen Urteile, die er logisch selbst zu besichern weiß. Damit wird jeder mögliche Gegenstand menschlichen Wissens eben diesem Urteil unterworfen, sodaß auch „Gott“ nicht mehr die Voraussetzung dieses Urteils, sondern Objekt dieses Urteils wird. So werden auch alle Religionen und Kulturen – auch die christliche Religion – menschlich selbstbestimmtem Urteil unterworfen.

Notizen zum Verständnis von ‚Wahrheit‘ in der religiösen Welt des Islam“, in *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 4, 2005, 83ff.

³² René DESCARTES, *Discours de la Méthode*, ed. Adam & Tannery, 18.

³³ René DESCARTES, *Principia philosophiae I*, ed. Adam & Tannery, 5.

³⁴ René DESCARTES, *Meditationes de Prima Philosophia II*, ed. Adam & Tannery, 26f.

Diese Unterwerfung unter das menschliche selbstbestimmte Urteil führt zur Aufklärung, indem das Prinzip menschlicher Selbstgewissheit als Grund menschlicher Freiheit verstanden wird: „für diese Aufklärung aber wird nichts erfordert als Freiheit.“³⁵ So Kant in seinem berühmten Aufsatz „Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?“ Dieser Aufsatz aus dem Jahre 1784 beginnt³⁶:

A u f k l ä r u n g ist der Ausgang des Menschen aus seiner selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit. Unmündigkeit ist das Unvermögen, sich seines Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. *Selbstverschuldet* ist diese Unmündigkeit, wenn die Ursache derselben nicht am Mangel des Verstandes, sondern der Entschließung und des Muthes liegt, sich seiner ohne Leitung eines anderen zu bedienen. Sapere aude! Habe Muth dich deines *eigenen* Verstandes zu bedienen! ist also der Wahlspruch der Aufklärung.

Und gegen Ende dieses Aufsatzes heißt es nochmals deutlich, was Ursache der genannten Unmündigkeit ist, aus der sich der Verstand befreien sollte:

Ich habe den Hauptpunkt der Aufklärung, d.i. des Ausgangs der Menschen aus ihrer selbst verschuldeten Unmündigkeit, vorzüglich *in Religions-sachen* gesetzt [...]³⁷

Hier wird deutlich, wie sich der Abschied des Prinzips der zweiten Epoche, das ja als „Leitung“ von Allem galt, vollzogen hat. Sich seines Verstandes zu bedienen, „sapere aude!“³⁸, ist Kennzeichen des „aufgeklärten Zeitalters“, das noch nicht erreicht ist: „Daß die Menschen, wie die Sachen jetzt stehen, im ganzen genommen, schon imstande wären oder darin auch nur gesetzt werden könnten, in Religionsdingen sich ihres eigenen Verstandes ohne Leitung eines anderen sicher und gut zu bedienen, daran fehlt noch sehr viel [...]"³⁹. So wird Aufklärung als Phase der dritten Epoche dieser Art von Philosophie im Abendland Ausdruck für den Gebrauch des freien, sich selbst setzenden Verstandes des Menschen, und dies nicht zuletzt gegenüber jener Epoche, die das Prinzip der Religion als Voraussetzung des Verstandes und seiner Setzung genommen, weil ihr gegeben, angesehen hatte.

³⁵ Immanuel KANT, *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?*, 484. Der Aufsatz erschien zuerst in der „Berlinischen Monatsschrift“ im Dezember-Heft des Jahres 1784, 481–494.

³⁶ KANT, *Beantwortung*, 481.

³⁷ KANT, *Beantwortung*, 492.

³⁸ KANT, *Beantwortung*, 481.

³⁹ KANT, *Beantwortung*, 491.

IV.

Die Moderne, die sich nach Ende der Epochen der Ersten Philosophie⁴⁰ entwickelt, ist als ein Ergebnis von Selbstbestimmung und Aufklärung zu verstehen und damit wiederum immer noch als Abarbeit des Prinzips der mittleren Epoche. Diese „Moderne“ entwickelt sich aus dem Abstoß von jener Ersten Philosophie, die mit Hegel zum System geworden war.

Zunächst Kierkegaard: schon der erste Satz des frühen Werkes „Entweder / Oder“ läßt mit Bezug auf Hegel diesen Abstoß erkennen: „Vielleicht ist es dir doch beigegeben, lieber Leser, ein wenig an der Richtigkeit des bekannten philosophischen Satzes zu zweifeln, daß das Äußere das Innere ist, das Innere das Äußere⁴¹.“⁴² Dieser Zweifel, Grundmethode der neueren Philosophie, führt zu einem Zweifel an der Methode:

Die absolute Methode, die Hegels Erfindung ist, ist bereits in der Logik eine schwierige Sache, ja eine glänzende Tautologie, die dem wissenschaftlichen Aberglauben mit mancherlei Zeichen und wunderlichen Taten zu Diensten gewesen ist. In den historischen Wissenschaften ist sie eine fixe Idee, und dies, daß die Methode dort sofort damit anfängt, konkret zu werden, da ja die Geschichte die Konkretion der Idee sei, hat wohl Hegel Veranlassung gegeben, eine seltene Gelehrsamkeit zu bekunden, eine seltene Macht, den Stoff zu gestalten, der durch ihn ausgiebig in Bewegung geraten ist, hat aber auch veranlaßt, daß der Sinn des Lernenden distrahiert wird [...] ⁴³

Dies mit dem Ergebnis:

Wie verhält sich überhaupt das empirische Ich zu dem reinen Ich-Ich⁴⁴? Wer ein Philosoph zu sein wünscht, möchte doch darüber etwas Bescheid wissen, und wünscht vor allem kein lächerliches Wesen zu werden, indem er eins-zwei-drei Hokuspokus in die Spekulation verwandelt wird. Falls jemand, der sich mit logischem Denken beschäftigt, zugleich menschlich genug ist, nicht zu vergessen, daß er, selbst wenn er mit dem System fertig würde, ein existierendes Individuum ist, so wird die Phantasterei und die Charlatanerei allmählich verschwinden [...] Es

⁴⁰ Heribert BOEDER, *Das Vernunft-Gefüge der Moderne*, Freiburg/München, 1988, 10.

⁴¹ G.W.F. HEGEL, *Wissenschaft der Logik* (Werke Jub. Ausg. IV), 656.

⁴² Sören KIERKEGAARD, *Entweder / Oder*, Düsseldorf, 1956, 3 (I, V).

⁴³ Sören KIERKEGAARD, *Philosophische Brosamen*, Köln, 1959, 92, Anm. 13.

⁴⁴ Dies läßt freilich auch an Fichte denken; vgl. schon J.G. FICHTE, *Grundriß des Eigenthümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre in Rücksicht auf das theoretische Vermögen von 1795* (J.G. Fichte-GA der Bayer. Akad. d. Wiss. Band 3), 147ff. u.a.

gehörte nur gesunder Menschenverstand dazu, einzusehen, daß Hegel sich an manchen Punkten unverantwortlich benommen hat [...]“⁴⁵

Und so nimmt Kierkegaard „das denkende Subjekt und seine Existenz“⁴⁶ in den Blick, das „dem objektiven Denken gleichgültig ist“⁴⁷, dagegen „ist der subjektive Denker als Existierender wesentlich an seinem eigenen Denken interessiert, ist in ihm existierend“⁴⁸. Um dieses Subjekt muß es aber gehen, ist es doch unmittelbar existierender Träger aller Gedanken, die zu seiner Reflexion werden. Und so kommt das Ganze der gesamten überkommenen systematischen, „objektiven“ Philosophie in Kritik, habe sie doch den unmittelbar Einzelnen in seiner Existenz nicht beachtet.

Sodann Marx: schon die ersten Abschnitte des frühen Werkes über „Die deutsche Ideologie“ greifen Hegel und dessen System an:

Die deutsche Kritik hat bis auf ihre neuesten Efforts den Boden der Philosophie nicht verlassen. Weit davon entfernt, ihre allgemeynphilosophischen Voraussetzungen zu untersuchen, sind ihre sämtlichen Fragen sogar auf dem Boden eines bestimmten philosophischen Systems, des Hegelschen, gewachsen. Nicht nur in ihren Antworten, schon in den Fragen lag eine Mystifikation. Diese Abhängigkeit von Hegel ist der Grund, warum keiner dieser neueren Kritiker eine umfassende Kritik des Hegelschen Systems auch nur versuchte [...]“⁴⁹

Und auch Marx gründet seine Kritik darauf, daß dieses System die „erste Voraussetzung“ nicht hinreichend beachte: „Die erste Voraussetzung aller Menschengeschichte ist natürlich die Existenz lebendiger menschlicher Individuen.“⁵⁰ Aber Marx spricht im Plural von dieser Existenz der „Individuen“, denn „bestimmte Individuen, die auf bestimmte Weise produktiv tätig sind, gehen diese bestimmten gesellschaftlichen und politischen Verhältnisse ein“, und:

Die Menschen sind Produzenten ihrer Vorstellungen, Ideen pp., aber die wirklichen, wirkenden Menschen, wie sie bedingt sind durch eine bestimmte Entwicklung ihrer Produktivkräfte und des denselben entsprechenden Verkehrs bis zu seinen weitesten Formationen hinauf. Das

⁴⁵ Sören KIERKEGAARD, *Unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift* 2, Köln, 1959, 251.

⁴⁶ KIERKEGAARD, *Unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift*, 200.

⁴⁷ KIERKEGAARD, *Unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift*, 200.

⁴⁸ KIERKEGAARD, *Unwissenschaftliche Nachschrift*, 200.

⁴⁹ Karl MARX, „Die deutsche Ideologie“, in Hans-Joachim LIEBER, Peter FURTH (Hrsg.), *Frühe Schriften* 2, Darmstadt, 1971, 13.

⁵⁰ MARX, 16.

Bewusstsein kann nie etwas anderes sein als das bewußte Sein, und das Sein der Menschen ist ihr wirklicher Lebensprozeß. Wenn in der ganzen Ideologie die Menschen und ihre Verhältnisse wie in einer Camera obscura auf den Kopf gestellt erscheinen, so geht dies Phänomen ebenso sehr aus ihrem historischen Lebensprozeß hervor, wie die Umdrehung der Gegenstände auf der Netzhaut aus ihrem unmittelbar physischen.⁵¹

Damit sei deutlich, daß die „ganze Ideologie“, mithin die gesamte überkommene systematische Philosophie, nicht den Vorrang der gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse als Produzent der Ideen erkannt habe: „Die Phrasen vom Bewusstsein hören auf, wirkliches Wissen muß an ihre Stelle treten.“⁵² – das Wissen um die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse und die Notwendigkeit einer Revolution derselben.

Schließlich Nietzsche: „Gott ist tot“. Kann man die Kritik Kierkegaards als die Frage an die Erste Philosophie und ihre Systeme verstehen „Was nützt dies mir?“, die Kritik von Marx als die Frage „Was nützt dies uns?“, so läßt sich die Kritik Nietzsches als die Frage „Wem nützt dies?“ auffassen. Es sei klar: dies nütze den eigentlich Schwachen, denjenigen, die eine Welt in eine „wahre“ und eine „scheinbare“ scheiden⁵³, den „Priestern“.

Diese dreifache Kritik von Kierkegaard, Marx und Nietzsche betrifft das Christentum fundamental. Beachtet denn die christliche Theologie den einzeln existierenden Menschen, die gesellschaftlichen Verhältnisse als mögliche Produzenten von Vorstellungen, die möglichen Interessen der „Priester“? Kann so die „Moderne“ auf dem Boden solcher Kritiken ein Christentum und christliche Theologie annehmen, das hinter diese Kritiken in Gestalten der zweiten Epoche der abendländischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte zurückzufallen scheint? Gar „Gott“ als Voraussetzung menschlichen Urteilens zu nehmen scheint gegen die Einsicht: „Die Moderne sieht sich, ohne Möglichkeit der Ausflucht, an sich selbst verwiesen“?⁵⁴ Und: „Eine der dominierenden Theorien der Moderne heißt: »Säkularisierung« und meint unter anderem eine Devalorisierung von Religion und Theologie“⁵⁵, denn es „sind im Weltbild der Moderne die Voraussetzungen für die Denk- und Erlebnisform der

⁵¹ MARX, 22f.

⁵² MARX, 24.

⁵³ NIETZSCHE, *Götzen-Dämmerung*, 73.

⁵⁴ Jürgen HABERMAS, *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne. 12 Vorlesungen*, Frankfurt, 1985, 16.

⁵⁵ Otfried HÖFFE, „Drei Pioniere der Moderne. Machiavelli, Bacon, Hobbes“, in *Merkur* 61, 2007, 1140.

Weltgöttlichkeit nicht mehr gegeben.“⁵⁶ Diese Moderne kann das Prinzip der zweiten Epoche, das für die Religion als „Gott“ gegeben war, auch nicht mehr als Prinzip eines überkommenen Wissens – „Gott ist tot“ – aufnehmen, sondern nur als abgetanes Wissen, das sich selbst entlarvt habe. Eine solche Auffassung der Moderne steht in der Folge der abendländischen Geistesgeschichte, deren dritte Epoche bereits schon aus dieser folgend und doch im Abstoß von der zweiten Epoche begriffen werden muß.

V.

Wie also steht es mit dem Christentum, wie mit der christlichen Theologie angesichts der Neuzeit, angesichts der Moderne? Zunächst ist festzuhalten: der Gedanke der Freiheit ist ein Grundgedanke der Neuzeit wie der Moderne. Diese Freiheit besteht vor allem in der Selbstbestimmung des menschlichen Urteilens als eines bei sich selbst gründenden und begründeten, eines Urteilens, das „an sich selbst verwiesen“ ist. Diese Freiheit bedeutet aber auch eine unmittelbare Anwesenheit bei einem einheitlichen Ersten Prinzip, wie es der dritten Epoche der abendländischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte entspricht. So auch wird die „Unmündigkeit“, von der Kant sprach, zu eben jener selbstbestimmten Freiheit, die vor die Religion, mithin auch vor das Christentum tritt.

Das Christentum verwahrt jedoch selbst alle jene Prinzipien, die in den Epochen der abendländischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte als Geschichte der Ersten Philosophie bestimmend waren. So ist zunächst zu sehen, daß dies Christentum auch in Hinsicht auf die dritte Epoche eben dieser Wissenschaftsgeschichte nicht anachronistisch ist, sodann, daß dies Christentum auch der Kritik dieser Prinzipien, die mithin auch Prinzipien des Christentums selbst sind, zu entgegen weiß.

Das Christentum verwahrt sowohl das inhaltliche wie das formale Prinzip der ersten Epoche, wie sie Aristoteles vollendet vorgetragen hatte: die Reflexion des Denkens, die eine Anwesenheit bei sich – wenigstens gelegentlich – zulässt⁵⁷, und den „Satz vom zu vermeidenden Widerspruch“⁵⁸. Die Reflexion des Denkens im Denken zu bestreiten setzt eben jenes Denken voraus, so daß diese Bestreitung gemäß des „Satz vom zu vermeidenden Widerspruch“ unmöglich ist, was nicht nur die Sicherheit dieses Prinzips, sondern auch die Verschränkung des inhaltlichen mit dem formalen Prinzip der ersten Epoche zeigt. Was aber hat dies mit dem Christentum zu tun? Das „Denken des

⁵⁶ Peter SLOTERDIJK, *Gottes Eifer. Vom Kampf der drei Monotheismen*, Frankfurt, 2007, 211.

⁵⁷ ARISTOTELES, 1072a 19ff.

⁵⁸ ARISTOTELES, 1005b 19f.

Denkens“ ist eine Reflexion, die Anwesenheit zulässt, wenngleich in Form einer „Doppelung“, wie Plotin später kritisieren wird.⁵⁹ Zugleich ist diese Reflexion in ihrer „Doppelung“ von Denken und Gedachtem selbst der reine Begriff von Anwesenheit in Doppelung von Denken und Gedachtem. Und genau so gleicht diese Reflexion jener Anwesenheit, die im Begriff der „Vergegenwärtigung“ innerhalb des Christentums, aus jüdischer Tradition überkommen, gedacht werden kann.

So ist im Judentum die

Tora Israel geschenkt zum Studium in der Weise, daß ihr Inhalt in Festen, Kulten und Gebeten vergegenwärtigt wird. Daher ist Judentum die ‚Religion der geglaubten Geschichte‘⁶⁰, einer unterscheidenden und zu vergegenwärtigenden Geschichte. Diese Vergegenwärtigung vollzieht sich realpräsentisch: sie wird so vorgenommen, daß sich der durch das Studium der Tora vergegenwärtigte Inhalt als Gegenwart und damit als zeitlos zeigt. Dies zu dem Zweck, die Handlungsweise Gottes durch Einsicht in die Unbegreiflichkeit kontradiktorisch-phänomenologischer Wirkungen identifizieren zu können, aber auch durch Identifikation mit den in der Tora Handelnden sich selbst als Menschen zu verstehen: sind wir doch alle Adam und Eva, Kain und Abel und all die Anderen, unabhängig von deren und von unserem Geschlecht. Deutlichstes Beispiel wohl für diese realpräsentische Vergegenwärtigung ist das Pessach-Fest. Das Fest gedenkt des Auszugs aus Ägypten, doch so, daß dieser Vorgang nicht in die Vergangenheit gelegt und an ihn gedacht wird, sondern daß er durch Nachspiel lebendige Gegenwart ist. Sodann aber ist auch der Inhalt des zu Gedenkenden zeitlos, weil er im Wiederholungsspiel vergegenwärtigt wird. Man sitzt zu Tische und speist und trinkt, wie die Väter und Mütter es seinerzeit taten, und in dieser Wiederholungshandlung wird die zeitlose Handlungsweise Gottes selbst Gegenwart: ‚In jedem Geschlechte und Zeitalter ist jeder verpflichtet, sich vorzustellen, als ob er gleichsam selbst aus Ägypten gegangen wäre, denn so sagt die Schrift: ‚Du sollst deinem Sohne an jenem Tage erzählen und sagen: Um dessentwillen, was der Ewige m i r getan, als ich aus Ägypten ging.‘ Nicht unsere Väter nur hat der Heilige – gelobt sei er – erlöst, sondern auch uns mit ihnen; denn so sagt die Schrift: ‚Und u n s hat er von da weggeführt, um uns hierher zu bringen und uns das Land zu geben, das er unseren Eltern zugeschworen hat.‘^{61 62}

⁵⁹ Vgl. vor allem PLOTIN, *Enneade* III, 8,9,1–25.

⁶⁰ Johann MAIER, *Judentum*, Göttingen, 2007, 21ff. („Die geglaubte Geschichte in der jüdischen Religion“).

⁶¹ Dr. M. LEHMANN, *Hagadah schel Peßach*, Basel, 1962, 124f.

⁶² Bernhard UHDE, „Religionen als Denkmöglichkeiten“, 8f.

Diese Vergegenwärtigung vereint Denken und Gedachtes in der Weise, daß beide sich gegenseitig bedingend zu Einem werden – werden, nicht sogleich sind: Anwesenheit wird im Vorgang dieser Einigung erreicht, indem das Gedachte nicht ungeschieden vom Denken gedacht werden kann.

Im Christentum nun vollzieht sich diese Art der realpräsentischen Vergegenwärtigung insbesondere in jener Vergegenwärtigung, die sich im Gedächtnis des „Herrenmahles“ erhält.⁶³ Und wieder gleicht diese Vergegenwärtigung dem Prinzip der Reflexion: „Objekt“ des Denkens, das „Gedachte“, wird in reiner Gegenwart eins mit dem „Subjekt“ des Denkens, dem Denken selbst, was Ausdruck findet im Gedanken und Vollzug der „communio“. Logisches Subjekt dieses Vorgangs ist Christus selbst.⁶⁴ So nimmt das Christentum diesen Gedanken der Reflexion prinzipiell als geschenkte Anwesenheit auf, verwahrt damit diesen Gedanken als Prinzip und bereitet damit die Verwahrung des Prinzips der zweiten Epoche vor.

Das Christentum verwahrt, wie deutlich erkennbar, das Prinzip der zweiten Epoche der abendländischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte, indem es jene Einheit kündigt, die als eine „jenseitige“ in die Doppelungen menschlicher Reflexion – und Geschichte – herabgekommen ist als die wahre „passio Dei“ und sich dort zerschlagen läßt. Und doch läßt jene Einheit als absolute Einheit selbst keine Anwesenheit bei sich zu, weshalb die Person des „Vaters“ ein Deus absconditus bleibt, wohl aber in den Wirkweisen erkennbar im „Sohn“ und „Geist“. Deshalb vergegenwärtigt sich der „Vater“ nicht, wohl aber „Sohn“ und „Geist“, wobei diese Form der Selbstvergegenwärtigung ihren Ursprung in jener Selbstvergegenwärtigung hat, die im Vorgang der „Auferweckung“ gründet. Erst mit diesem Vorgang erweist sich Christus als vollkommene gegensatzlose Einheit, indem selbst der größte für Menschen denkbare Gegensatz von Leben und Tod zusammenfällt in der Einheit des auferweckten Auferstandenen. Und eben diese Einheit läßt sich anschauen, von Maria am Grabe⁶⁵, anfassen gar von Thomas⁶⁶, und so läßt sie auch diese Geschehnisse durch das Zeugnis der Apostel vergegenwärtigen. Das Prinzip der „jenseitigen Einheit“, Prinzip der zweiten Epoche,

⁶³ Dazu vor allem Michael HAARMANN, „*Dies tut zu meinem Gedenken!*“. *Gedenken beim Passa- und Abendmahl. Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Abendmahls im Rahmen des jüdisch-christlichen Dialogs*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2004, sowie Thomas SÖDING, „Tut dies zu meinem Gedächtnis...!‘ Das Abendmahl Jesu und die Eucharistie der Kirche nach dem Neuen Testament“, in Stephan LOOS, Holger ZABOROWSKI (Hrsg.), „*Essen und Trinken ist des Menschen Leben*“. *Zugänge zu einem Grundphänomen*, Freiburg u.a., 2007, 57ff., besonders 78ff.

⁶⁴ HAARMANN, 278 f.

⁶⁵ Joh 20, 11ff.

⁶⁶ Joh 20, 24f.

vermittelt sich in eine Anwesenheit, Prinzip der ersten Epoche, indem es in jeweils zweifacher Ansprache begegnet, um die in der Reflexion gründende Anwesenheit zu schenken: zweifach ist die Anrede des Auferstandenen an Maria, bis diese erkennt, zweifach die Anrede an Thomas, bis Vergegenwärtigung geschieht.⁶⁷ So nimmt das Christentum diesen Gedanken der Einheit prinzipiell als geschenkte Anwesenheit auf, verwahrt damit diesen Gedanken als Prinzip und bereitet damit die Verwahrung des Prinzips der dritten Epoche vor.

Das Christentum verwahrt aber auch das Prinzip der dritten Epoche jener abendländischen Wissenschaftsgeschichte, das, wiewohl als Einheit begriffen, Anwesenheit zulässt. Wie aber kann eine Religion, in der doch Gott Prinzip von Allem ist, ein Prinzip verwahren, das als „prima cognitio“ das Subjekt, das denkende freie menschliche Subjekt erkennt? Hier sind zwei Gedanken des Christentums selbst von Bedeutung: zum Einen der Gedanke, der Mensch sei „Imago Dei“, zum Andern und bedeutender noch der Gedanke der Inkarnation. Bereitet der erste Gedanke den zweiten vor, so vollendet der zweite Einheit, Anwesenheit und Freiheit so, daß Neuzeit und darauf folgende Moderne mit ihrem Prinzip der frei urteilenden Selbstbestimmung mit dem Christentum versöhnt und gleichzeitig der Gedanke der Freiheit von Neuzeit und Christentum zusammengedacht werden können.⁶⁸

Der Gedanke der „Ebenbildlichkeit Gottes“, aus der Schrift genommen⁶⁹, hat schon die Rabbinen beschäftigt. „Ebenbildlichkeit“⁷⁰ heißt nicht „Gleichheit“, sondern „Abbild“, auch „Vertretung“, wie aus dem Dictum des Rabbi Hoschaja⁷¹ zur Schriftstelle hervorgeht:

Als der Heilige den ersten Menschen geschaffen hatte, hielten ihn die Dienstengel fälschlich [für Gott selbst] und waren im Begriff ‚Heiliger‘ zu ihm zu sagen. Was tat der Heilige? Er senkte ihn [sc. den Menschen] in tiefen Schlaf, und die Engel verstanden, daß er nicht mehr als ein Mensch war. [Gott und Mensch zusammen in der Welt sind] wie ein König und sein Statthalter, die zusammen in einer Staatskarosse fahren. Die Leute des Landes begannen zu rufen ‚Heil, Herr!‘, wussten aber nicht, wer der König sei. Was tat der König? Er stieß den Statthalter beiseite und warf ihn aus der Karosse, woraufhin alle verstanden, daß er nicht mehr als ein Statthalter war.⁷²

⁶⁷ HAARMANN, 278 f.

⁶⁸ Karlheinz RUHSTORFER, *Christologie* 1, Paderborn u.a. 2008, 133ff.

⁶⁹ Gen 1, 27.

⁷⁰ Hebr. „עֲבֹדָה“

⁷¹ Ein Amoräer der ersten Generation.

⁷² GenR 8,10.

Diese Differenz, deren geringe Unterschiedlichkeit gar Engel zu Irrtum veranlasst, läßt erkennen, daß der Mensch in der Welt gleich einem „Statthalter“⁷³ durch geschenkte Freiheit und Selbstbestimmung gekennzeichnet werden kann, wobei die Rede von der „Ebenbildlichkeit“ selbst ein Bild bleiben muß.⁷⁴ So bleibt diese „Ebenbildlichkeit“ ein Bild für die Reflexion der Vergegenwärtigung, die Tätigkeit des Königs – wiewohl ein jüdisches Bild! – ein Bild für die Selbstvergegenwärtigung des Einen.

Diese Bilder werden vollendet im Begriff der Inkarnation, indem der Eine in die Einheit von Gott und Mensch tritt und damit dem Menschen jenes Prinzip freisetzt, das ihn bei sich selbst vollkommen anwesend macht. Dieser Gedanke der Inkarnation gleicht jener Freisetzung des Individuums: „In der Inkarnation hat das einzelne Individuum des Lebens ganze Fülle in sich“, so Kierkegaard⁷⁵, „und diese ist für die übrigen Individuen nur dadurch, daß sie sie in dem inkarnierten Individuum anschauen“⁷⁶. Eben diese „Inkarnation“ aber vollzieht sich auch im Prinzip der Neuzeit selbst, das im Selbstverständnis als Abstoß von der zweiten Epoche abendländischer Erster Philosophie begriffen werden muß, aber eben doch im Gedanken der Freiheit mit diesem versöhnt werden kann. Und „kann man überhaupt mehr wollen, wenn es doch gerade das Eigentümliche des Menschseins ausmacht, dass ihm die Wahrheit frei zugesagt sein will, weil nur eine sich durch Freiheit auszeichnende Wahrheit ihn erfüllen, weil *frei* anerkennen kann?“⁷⁷ Diese Freiheit besteht in der Einheit und Anwesenheit bei sich selbst, eine zeitlose Reflexionsform ohne jede „Doppelung“, versöhnt mit dem Gedanken der begriffenen zeitlosen Einheit der Inkarnation des ersten Prinzips, das in die Erscheinung getreten ist. Geht also für die christliche Theologie der Gedanke der „Ebenbildlichkeit“ im Begreifen der Inkarnation des Logos so auf Christus über, daß dieser nicht mehr „Statthalter“, sondern „König und Statthalter“ in einem ist, so sind Freiheit und Einheit im Prinzip verwahrt. Damit ist das Christentum gegen den Vorwurf, anachronistisch zu sein, hinsichtlich des Prinzips der Neuzeit und der Moderne gerechtfertigt. Und dies in epochenübergreifender Gestalt des Wissens der

⁷³ Vgl. im Islam Koran 2,30, wenn Gott zu den Engeln spricht: „Ich werde auf der Erde einsetzen einen Stellvertreter [khalifa]“.

⁷⁴ Bernhard UHDE, „„Alles Vergängliche ist nur ein Gleichnis.“ Des Bildlosen Bild: Religion als Grenzüberschreitung“, in *Jahrbuch für Religionsphilosophie* 3, 2004, 205ff.

⁷⁵ KIERKEGAARD, *Entweder / Oder*, 67.

⁷⁶ KIERKEGAARD, *Entweder / Oder*, 67.

⁷⁷ Magnus STRIET, „Antinomistische Einsprüche im Namen des freien Gottes Jesu und des freien Menschen“, in Klaus MÜLLER, Magnus STRIET, *Dogma und Denkform. Strittiges in der Grundlegung von Offenbarungsbegriff und Gottesgedanke*, Regensburg, 2005, 124.

christlichen Theologie, die dies Begreifen ermöglicht und sich damit selbst als frei zeigt.⁷⁸

Die christliche Theologie begreift: das Prinzip der ersten Epoche ist verwahrt im Gedanken der Vergegenwärtigung, also vor allem im Sakrament; das Prinzip der zweiten Epoche ist verwahrt im Gedanken der Selbstvergegenwärtigung, also vor allem in der Auferstehung; das Prinzip der dritten Epoche ist verwahrt im Gedanken der Einheit und Freiheit, also vor allem in der Inkarnation. Die Position Kierkegaards ist aufgehoben in der „anthropologischen Wende der Theologie“ bei Karl Rahner⁷⁹, die Position von Marx geborgen in der lateinamerikanischen „Theologie der Befreiung“ von Gustavo Gutiérrez⁸⁰ und Jon Sobrino⁸¹, die Position von Nietzsche beachtet bei Magnus Striet⁸². Dies zeigt: die christliche, zumal die katholische Theologie ist nicht anachronistisch, sie hat sich selbst freigesetzt und muß frei bleiben, weil das Christentum selbst nicht anachronistisch, sondern verwahrend und frei ist.

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⁷⁸ Vgl. dazu schon Friedrich GOGARTEN, *Hoffnung und Verhängnis der Neuzeit. Die Säkularisierung als theologisches Problem*, München / Hamburg, 1958, 156ff.

⁷⁹ Karl RAHNER, „Theologie und Anthropologie“, in *Schriften zur Theologie VIII*, Einsiedeln u.a. 167, 43f. Vgl. dazu Peter EICHER, *Die anthropologische Wende. Karl Rahners philosophischer Weg vom Wesen des Menschen zur personalen Existenz*, Freiburg/CH, 1970.

⁸⁰ Gustavo GUTIÉRREZ, *Theologie der Befreiung*, Mainz, 1973.

⁸¹ Jon SOBRINO, *Christologie der Befreiung*, Ostfildern, ²2008.

⁸² Magnus STRIET, *Das Ich im Sturz der Realität. Philosophisch-theologische Studien zu einer Theorie des Subjekts in Auseinandersetzung mit der Spätphilosophie Friedrich Nietzsches*, Regensburg, 1998.

UNGARN UND DER BAYERISCHE KATHOLIZISMUS AM ENDE DES 19. JAHRHUNDERTS

JOHANN KIRCHINGER

Zusammenfassung: Die kirchlichen Beziehungen zwischen Bayern und Ungarn waren im Rahmen der katholischen Kirche am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts nicht durch direkte Kontakte der Amtshierarchien geprägt. Stattdessen ist eine erstaunlich breite gegenseitige Beeinflussung der katholischen Milieus festzustellen. Einerseits wirkten Vorstellungen von Ungarn auf die Entwicklung des politischen Katholizismus in Bayern ein. Andererseits expandierten Orden, die in der speziellen kulturellen und sozialen Situation der katholischen Kirche Bayerns nach der Säkularisation 1803 entstanden waren, nach Ungarn.

Schlagworte: Bayern, Georg Ratzinger, Judentum, Kulturkampf, Mallersdorfer Schwestern, politischer Katholizismus, Siebenbürgen, Ungarn

Die Erforschung der kirchlichen Beziehungen zwischen Ungarn und Bayern – bzw. was in der Vergangenheit jeweils unter diesen Namen verstanden wurde – scheint vor allem eine Angelegenheit der Mediävisten zu sein. Die Zeit als die bayerische Herzogtochter Gisela (984/985–1060) als Gattin des ersten christlichen ungarischen Königs Stephan I. (969–1038) wirkte und engagiert zur Ausbreitung des Christentums unter den Magyaren beitrug, stellt in beiden Ländern einen ersten und nicht wieder erreichten Höhepunkt in der Erinnerung an die gemeinsame Geschichte dar. Allein elf der 15 Vorträge der Tagung „Bayern und Ungarn im Mittelalter und in der Frühen Neuzeit“ anlässlich der bayerischen Landesausstellung des Jahres 2001 in Passau beschäftigten sich mit der Zeit Giselas¹. Dies ist leicht erklärlich. Seitdem die ungarische Kirche noch unter Stephan ihre Selbständigkeit erhalten und sich seit 1156 mit dem vom Stammesherzogtum Baiern losgelösten Herzogtum Österreich ein territorialer Keil zwischen die beiden Länder geschoben hatte, erreichten die gegenseitigen Beziehungen nie mehr die Intensität der Jahrtausendwende, wenngleich die gegen die Habsburger gerichteten außenpo-

¹ H. W. WURSTER, M. TREML, R. LOIBL (Hrsg.), *Bayern – Ungarn. Tausend Jahre. Aufsätze zur Bayerischen Landesausstellung 2001. Vorträge der Tagung „Bayern und Ungarn im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit“ in Passau 15. bis 18. Oktober 2000*, Regensburg, 2001. Ebenso beschäftigten sich allein vier der neun Vorträge eines Symposiums zur bayerisch-ungarischen Geschichte in Passau im Jahr 1986 mit dem Mittelalter. E. VÖLKL (Hrsg.), *Bayern und Ungarn. Tausend Jahre enge Beziehungen. Beiträge eines Symposiums der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft und des Osteuropainstituts Regensburg-Passau. Passau, 17. – 19. April 1986*, Regensburg, 1988.

litischen Verhandlungen zwischen den bayerischen Herzögen bzw. Kurfürsten und den Fürsten Siebenbürgens in der Frühen Neuzeit einige Aufmerksamkeit in der Forschung erregten². Die Betrachtung der Beziehungen beider Länder im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert steht dann ganz unter dem Zeichen der dynastischen Verbindungen. Zu nennen ist hier die Rolle der bayerischen Prinzessin Elisabeth (1837–1898) als Kaiserin von Österreich für den österreichisch-ungarischen Ausgleich³ sowie der letzte bayerische König Ludwig III. (1845–1921), der seinen Lebensabend nach seiner Absetzung auf seinem ungarischen Gut Sárvár verbringen wollte⁴. Daneben fanden die kulturellen Beziehungen einige Aufmerksamkeit, wobei vor allem die Beschäftigung mit der ungarischen Künstlerkolonie in München hervorzuheben ist⁵.

Dieser knappe Überblick zeigt, dass die kirchlichen Beziehungen beider Völker seit dem hohen Mittelalter zunehmend aus dem Blickfeld der Forschung geraten sind⁶. Deshalb soll hier der Versuch unternommen werden, den kirch-

² L. HÜTTL, *Max Emanuel. Der blaue Kurfürst 1679–1726. Eine politische Biographie*, München, 1976, 391–397; F. MAJOROS, B. RILL, *Bayern und die Magyaren. Die Geschichte einer elfhundertjährigen Beziehung*, Regensburg, 1991, 115–152; C. LANKES, „Die Türkenzeit“, in W. JAHN u. a. (Hrsg.), *Bayern – Ungarn. Tausend Jahre. Katalog zur Bayerischen Landesausstellung 2001 Oberhausmuseum, Passau 8. Mai bis 28. Oktober 2001*, Augsburg, 2001, 233–241.

³ MAJOROS, RILL, 166–170; K. AMTMANN, *Elisabeth von Österreich. Die politischen Geschäfte der Kaiserin*, Regensburg, 1998; Z. K. LENGYEL, „Im Zeitstrom – Von der Revolution zum Goldenen Zeitalter“, in W. JAHN u. a. (Hrsg.), *Bayern – Ungarn. Tausend Jahre. Katalog zur Bayerischen Landesausstellung 2001 Oberhausmuseum, Passau 8. Mai bis 28. Oktober 2001*, Augsburg, 2001, 325–330.

⁴ A. BECKENBAUER, *Ludwig III. von Bayern (1845–1921). Ein König auf der Suche nach seinem Volk*, Regensburg, 1987, 282–288; B. KERESZTESI, „Die Rolle der ehemaligen bayerischen königlichen Wälder von Sárvár in der Entwicklung der ungarischen Forstwirtschaft“, in *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* 19, 1991, 243–254.

⁵ In München wirkten ungarische Maler wie Simon Hollósy (1857–1918), Fülöp Elek László (1869–1937), Sándor Liezen-Meyer (1839–1898) oder Gyula Benczúr (1844–1920). L. BALOGH, *Die ungarische Facette der Münchner Schule*, München, 1988. Daneben arbeiteten auch ungarische Architekten in der bayerischen Landeshauptstadt. J. FEKETE, „Beiträge ungarischer Architekten zur Münchener Baukunst um 1880 und 1900“, in *Ungarn-Jahrbuch* 12, 1982/1983, 1–22.

⁶ Allein Ekkehard Völkl, mein allzu früh verstorbener akademischer Lehrer in osteuropäischer Geschichte an der Universität Regensburg, geht in seinem Überblick über bayerisch-ungarische Beziehungen im 19. Jahrhundert ausführlicher auf kirchliche Beziehungen ein. E. VÖLKL, „Bayern und Ungarn im 19. Jahrhundert“, in E. VÖLKL (Hrsg.), *Bayern und Ungarn. Tausend Jahre enge Beziehungen. Beiträge eines Symposiums der Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft und des Osteuropa-Instituts Regensburg-Passau. Passau, 17. – 19. April 1986*, Regensburg, 1988, 99–121.

lichen Beziehungen im Rahmen der katholischen Kirche im 19. Jahrhundert nachzugehen. Dabei kann sich der Blickwinkel nicht auf den Bereich der kirchlichen Hierarchien beschränken, denn zwischen diesen bestanden aufgrund ihrer voneinander abgegrenzten Selbständigkeit kaum Kontakte. Deshalb muss der Blick auf den Katholizismus geweitet werden, denn dieser Begriff umfasst nach der Definition Hans Maiers „all jene Erscheinungsformen des katholischen Christentums, die historisch-kontingenter Natur sind“, d.h. es sind über den Rahmen der Amtskirche hinaus die „ethnischen, nationalen, von spezifischen Milieus geprägten Formen gemeint, die sich im Kontext moderner Zivilisationen in einzelnen Ländern und unter bestimmten politischen und sozialen Bedingungen herausgebildet haben.“⁷

Franz Wieland – Ein antiklerikaler Bauernführer als bayerischer „Lajos Kossuth“

Dass Vorkommnisse im ungarischen Teil der Habsburgermonarchie jenseits der dynastischen Beziehungen in breiten Teilen der bayerischen Bevölkerung bekannt waren, zeigt sich etwa daran, dass der niederbayerische Bauernführer Franz Wieland (1850–1901)⁸ in der „Neuen freien Volkszeitung“ am 19. Februar 1901 mit dem ungarischen Nationalhelden Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894) verglichen wurde – und dies fünfzig Jahre nach seinem Wirken und ohne besondere Erläuterung: „Was Kossuth für die ungarischen, das war Wieland für die bayerischen Bauern: ein Befreier.“ Der Vergleich ist angebracht, denn so wie Kossuth die aufständische ungarische Regierung in den Jahren 1848 und 1849 gegen die Habsburger angeführt und die Bauernbefreiung vorangetrieben hatte, so kämpfte Wieland gegen die letzten Überreste der Feudalzeit in Bayern. Dabei vertraten beide auch einen scharfen politischen Antiklerikalismus. Der Antiklerikalismus des Protestanten und liberalen Politikers Kossuth war weltanschaulich bedingt. Er sah in der vom österreichischen Herrscherhaus gestützten privilegierten Stellung der katholischen Kirche in Ungarn ein Hindernis für die nationale Unabhängigkeit des konfessionell

⁷ H. MAIER, „Katholizismus“, in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 5, Freiburg i. Br., ³1996, 1368–1370; ferner A. RAUSCHER, *Entwicklungslinien des deutschen Katholizismus*, Paderborn, 1973; K. GABRIEL, F. X. KAUFMANN (Hg.), *Zur Soziologie des Katholizismus*, Mainz, 1980; A. LANGNER (Hg.), *Katholizismus, nationaler Gedanke und Europa seit 1800*, Paderborn, 1985; H. HÜRTEIN, *Kurze Geschichte des deutschen Katholizismus 1800–1960*, Mainz, 1986.

⁸ Zu Wieland vgl. J. KIRCHINGER, *Der Bauernrebell. Das Leben des streitbaren Landtagsabgeordneten Franz Wieland (1850–1901), Ökonom in Hierlbach, Post Straubing*, Regensburg, 2010.

gespaltenen ungarischen Volkes. Deshalb kämpfte er gegen den politischen Einfluss des katholischen Klerus⁹.

Die Entwicklung von Wielands Antiklerikalismus gründete indes in der Erfahrungswelt eines niederbayerischen Bauern und war wirtschaftlich bedingt. Dabei spielten außen-, kirchen- und wirtschaftspolitische Hoffnungen und Ängste in Bezug auf Österreich und Ungarn – brennpunktartig verdichtet im Handelsvertrag zwischen dem Deutschen Reich und der Donaumonarchie – eine zentrale Rolle. Der Handelsvertrag, den der deutsche Reichskanzler Leo von Caprivi (1831–1899)¹⁰ mit der Donaumonarchie 1891/1892 verhandelte, war Teil einer vorsichtigen Liberalisierung der Außenhandelspolitik, mit der er den Export von Industrieprodukten durch die Senkung der Agrarzölle fördern, so in innenpolitischer Hinsicht die wirtschaftliche Stagnation überwinden, das unruhige Element der Sozialdemokratie beschwichtigen und in außenpolitischer Hinsicht die Donaumonarchie enger an das Deutsche Reich binden wollte¹¹. Obwohl Georg Orterer (1849–1916)¹², ein führender Vertreter der Zentrumspartei, von der Wirkung der Agrarzölle überzeugt war und Sorge um die Verminderung der Getreide-, Vieh- und Holzpreise hatte, plädierte er im Reichstag am 12. Dezember 1891 doch für die Annahme des Handelsvertrages mit Österreich-Ungarn. Er sah darin die Möglichkeit,

ein enges und engstes volkswirtschaftliches Band um Deutschland und Österreich zugleich zu schlingen, um auf diese Weise die vielen engen stammverwandtschaftlichen Beziehungen, die uns mit Österreich verbinden, zum Ausdruck zu bringen.

Es ging ihm also nicht nur um wirtschaftliche, sondern auch um politische Absichten. Er behauptete, „daß es ein ernst begehrenswerthes Ziel sei, mit unserem Nachbarland Oesterreich in eine engere politische wie volkswirtschaftliche Vereinigung zu treten“. Dabei erklärte er, dass

in Bayern, das durch eine fast tausendjährige Vergangenheit mit diesem Lande besonders eng verknüpft ist, solche Verbindungen ein volles Verständniß und die wärmste Sympathie von jeher gefunden haben.

⁹ Zu Kossuths Kirchenpolitik vgl. C. FAZEKAS, „Lajos Kossuths Kirchenpolitik“, in H. FISCHER (Hrsg.), *Lajos Kossuth (1802–1894). Wirken – Rezeption – Kult*, Hamburg, 2007, 51–60; ferner J. HAUSZMANN, *Ungarn. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Regensburg, 2004, 159–171.

¹⁰ H. O. MEISNER, „Leo von Caprivi“, in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 3, Berlin, 1957, 134f.

¹¹ R. WEITOWITZ, *Deutsche Politik und Handelspolitik unter Reichskanzler Leo von Caprivi 1890–1894*, Düsseldorf, 1978, 49–87.

¹² Zu Orterer vgl. D. ALBRECHT, „Georg Ritter von Orterer“, in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 19, Berlin, 1999, 598.

Deshalb schloss er im Hinblick auf den Handelsvertrag:

Solche Schritte, meine Herren, haben meine politischen Freunde von jeher unterstützt und werden sie auch in Zukunft unterstützen, selbst unter der Voraussetzung und unter der Nothwendigkeit, daß damit die einen oder die anderen Opfer für große Zweige des Reiches eben unvermeidlich geworden sind.¹³

Obwohl Orterer also von den negativen Auswirkungen des Handelsvertrages auf die bayerische Landwirtschaft überzeugt war, trat er aus politischen Gründen für einen engen Schulterschluss mit Österreich-Ungarn ein. Dass es dabei nicht zuletzt auch nach dem Ende des Kulturkampfes zwischen den weltanschaulich liberalen Regierungen auf Reichs- und Landesebene einerseits sowie der katholischen Kirche andererseits um einen Ausgleich der doppelten Minderheitenposition der bayerischen Katholiken im Deutschen Reich ging, wird angesichts der Betonung der „stammverwandtschaftlichen Beziehungen“ und des Hinweises auf die von Seiten der Zentrumspartei „seit jeher“ vertretene „wärmste Sympathie“ für Österreich-Ungarn besonders deutlich. Tatsächlich hatte der politische Katholizismus in Bayern aus Angst vor einer protestantisch-preußischen Majorisierung mehrheitlich die kleindeutsche Reichsgründung (1870/1871) unter preußischer Führung abgelehnt und war für eine großdeutsch-föderalistische Lösung unter Führung Österreichs eingetreten¹⁴. Diese Einstellung wirkte trotz faktischer Akzeptanz der Reichsgründung immer noch nach¹⁵. Daneben ging es der Zentrumspartei bei der Annahme von Caprivis Handelspolitik nicht zuletzt auch um die auch von Caprivi verfolgte innenpolitische Absicht, die immer lauter vertretenen Interessen der Proletarier nach billigen Lebensmitteln zu befriedigen und so der Sozialdemokratie Wind aus den Segeln zu nehmen – ein parteipolitischer Grund also. Um Einfluss und Privilegien gegen die immer lauter werdenden sozial- und verfassungspolitischen Forderungen der Arbeiterschaft zu verteidigen, näherte sich der von der hohen Geistlichkeit und dem hohen Adel geführte Zentrumsflügel also immer

¹³ *Stenographische Berichte über die Verhandlungen des Deutschen Reichstags. VIII. Legislaturperiode 5*, Berlin, 1892, Sitzung am 12. Dezember 1891, 3374–3379.

¹⁴ F. HARTMANNGRUBER, *Die Bayerische Patriotenpartei 1868–1887*, München, 1986.

¹⁵ Zu der in den 1890er Jahren im politischen Katholizismus Bayerns herrschenden Reichsverdrossenheit vgl. K. MÖCKL, *Die Prinzregentenzeit. Gesellschaft und Politik während der Ära des Prinzregenten Luitpold in Bayern*, München, 1972, 352–364. Hoffnungen, durch einen Anschluss des katholischen Österreich die Dominanz des protestantischen Preußen zu brechen, waren auch in der Weimarer Republik noch wirksam. M. WEIGL, *Das Bayernbild der Repräsentanten Österreichs in München 1918–1938. Die diplomatische und konsularische Berichterstattung vor dem Hintergrund der bayerisch-österreichischen Beziehungen*, Frankfurt a. M., 2005, 91–97.

mehr den seit dem Kulturkampf so verhassten Bürokraten in der Reichs- und der bayerischen Staatsregierung an¹⁶.

In diesem Konflikt zwischen einer dynamischen und einer defensiv agierenden sozialen Schicht drohte die Landwirtschaft zermahlen zu werden. Obwohl die Zölle bereits vor der Senkung kaum in der Lage gewesen waren, die landwirtschaftlichen Erzeugerpreise zu stabilisieren¹⁷, wurde die Liberalisierung der Handelspolitik von den Landwirten allein für die unbefriedigende Preissituation verantwortlich gemacht. Der Jahresbericht des Landwirtschaftlichen Vereins für die Oberpfalz vermerkte im Jahr 1892:

Hemmend und hindernd kommen jedoch mehr und mehr sinkende Preise für alle landwirtschaftlichen Erzeugnisse, für Getreide wie für Vieh, zur Geltung. Was die gute Ernte mehr gebracht, wird durch die schlechten Getreidepreise wieder aufgezehrt. Die Hoffnungen, welche bei den hohen Viehpreisen 1891 für die Viehzucht berechtigt waren, zerrinnen allmählich bei weichenden Preisen und stockendem Absatz und eine allgemeine Mißstimmung macht sich geltend, weil nach der allgemeinen Ansicht durch den neuen Handelsvertrag mit Österreich-Ungarn jenes stetige Sinken der Viehpreise verschuldet worden ist.¹⁸

Dabei war es freilich weniger das gebirgige Österreich als die agrarische Potenz Ungarns, welche die bayerischen Bauern sorgenvoll nach Süden blicken ließ¹⁹.

¹⁶ MÖCKL, 228–349; H. KÖRNER, *Staat und Kirche in Bayern 1886–1918*, Mainz, 1977, 24–62; I. FARR, „From Anti-Catholicism to Anticlericalism: Catholic Politics and the Peasantry in Bavaria, 1860–1900“, in *European Studies Review* 13, 1983, 249–269; D. W. HENDON, *The Center Party and the Agrarian Interest in Germany 1890–1914*, Ann Arbor, 1984.

¹⁷ M. STEINKÜHLER, *Agrar- oder Industriestaat: Die Auseinandersetzungen um die Getreidehandels- und Zollpolitik des Deutschen Reiches 1879–1914*, Frankfurt a. M., 1992; W. ACHILLES, *Deutsche Agrargeschichte im Zeitalter der Reformen und der Industrialisierung*, Stuttgart 1993; H. HARNISCH, „Agrarstaat oder Industriestaat? Die Debatte um die Bedeutung der Landwirtschaft in Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft Deutschlands an der Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert“, in H. REIF (Hrsg.), *Ostelbische Agrargesellschaft im Kaiserreich und in der Weimarer Republik. Agrarkrise – junkerliche Interessenpolitik – Modernisierungsstrategien*, Berlin, 1994, 33–50.

¹⁸ Zit. nach A. HUNDHAMMER, *Geschichte des Bayerischen Bauernbundes*, München, 1924, 7.

¹⁹ Dies war wieder der Fall, als der Plan einer Zollunion zwischen dem Deutschen Reich und Österreich-Ungarn am Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges die bayerischen Agrarverbände aufschreckte, woraufhin sie sich unter Führung des Bayerischen Christlichen Bauernvereins – einer Organisation des politischen Katholizismus – zu einer Abwehrorganisation zusammenschlossen. J. KIRCHINGER, *Michael Horlacher. Ein Agrarfunktionär der Weimarer Republik*, Düsseldorf, 2011 [im Druck].

Der Unmut der ländlichen Bevölkerung Altbayerns aber richtete sich nun gegen die Zentrumspartei. Die Zentrumspartei, die es während des Kulturkampfes verstanden hatte, die Mehrheit der sozial heterogenen katholischen Wählerschaft hinter sich zu scharen, verlor jetzt ihr politisches Monopol. Angesichts der aufbrechenden sozioökonomischen Differenzen innerhalb der Zentrumswählerschaft büßte der Hinweis auf die gemeinsamen kirchenpolitischen Interessen immer mehr an Bindekraft ein. Die sich seit 1893 in dem katholischen Kerngebiet Bayern unter maßgeblicher Führung Wielands ausbreitende und gegen die Handelspolitik des Zentrums gerichtete Bauernbewegung – die erste landwirtschaftliche Interessenvertretung Bayerns – aber bekam einen dauerhaften antiklerikalen Charakter²⁰. Dieser war allerdings im Unterschied zu Kossuth nicht weltanschaulich motiviert. Wieland blieb zeitlebens ein frommer Mann. Eine seiner Töchter wirkte als Nonne in Niedernburg in Passau – das Kloster, in dem die ehemalige ungarische Königin Gisela als Äbtissin wirkte.

Der katholische Sozialethiker Georg Ratzinger und das ungarische Judentum

Als Agrarpolitiker entwarf Franz Wieland ein strikt wirtschaftsegoistisches Programm, das alle weltanschaulichen – d.h. kirchenpolitischen – Implikationen zu eliminieren versuchte. Dies blieb nicht ohne Widerstand, der innerhalb der Bauernbewegung von dem katholischen Sozialethiker, Priester und Publizisten Georg Ratzinger (1844–1899) – ein Großonkel von Papst Benedikt XVI. – getragen wurde. Ratzinger hatte sich mit dem Zentrum überworfen, da es ihm nach der Reichsgründung zu wenig reichsfeindlich und nicht entschieden genug katholisch war – weil es eine Politik machte, die zur Annahme des österreichisch-ungarischen Handelsvertrages führte²¹. Nun hoffte er, in der jungen Bauernbewegung aufgrund ihrer ausdrücklichen Zentrumsfeindschaft eine neue politische Heimat gefunden zu haben. Dabei versuchte er, dieser – im Gegensatz zu Wieland – eine sozialetische Programma-

²⁰ Zur Geschichte der Bauernbewegung vgl. HUNDHAMMER, *Geschichte*; H. HAUSHOFER, „Der Bayerische Bauernbund (1893–1933)“, in P. FRIED, W. ZORN (Hrsg.), *Aus der Bayerischen Agrargeschichte 1525–1978. Gesammelte Beiträge zur Bayerischen Agrargeschichte von Heinz Haushofer*, München, 1986, 166–182; H. BERGMANN, *Der Bayerische Bauernbund und der Bayerische Christliche Bauernverein 1919–1928*, München, 1986; I. FARR, „Peasant Protest in the Empire – the Bavarian Example“, in R. G. MOELLER (Hrsg.), *Peasants and Lords in Modern Germany. Recent Studies in Agricultural History*, Boston, 1986, 110–139; A. HOCHBERGER, *Der Bayerische Bauernbund 1893–1914*, München, 1990.

²¹ Zu Ratzinger vgl. J. KIRCHINGER, E. SCHÜTZ (Hrsg.), *Georg Ratzinger (1844–1899). Ein Leben zwischen Politik, Geschichte und Seelsorge*, Regensburg, 2008.

tik zu geben²². Die Grundlage dafür war sein 1895 in zweiter Auflage erschienenes Werk „Die Volkswirtschaft in ihren sittlichen Grundlagen“, in dem er den Kapitalismus einer harten neuscholastischen Kritik unterwarf und autoritäre Vorschläge für eine strikt reglementierte Wirtschaftsordnung machte²³.

Judenfeindliche Äußerungen stellen einen integralen Bestandteil von Ratzingers wirtschaftspolitischen Aussagen dar²⁴. Die für die katholische Judenfeindschaft am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts charakteristische Kombination aus religiös motiviertem traditionell-katholischem Antijudaismus und neuartigen, in der industriellen Entwicklung wurzelnden wirtschaftlichen Vorurteilen präsentierte Ratzinger in zwei pseudonym erschienenen Schriften²⁵. Antijüdische Schriftsteller aus dem katholischen Milieu wie Ratzinger erweiterten im 19. Jahrhundert die traditionelle Abneigung gegenüber dem Judentum

um judenfeindliche Stereotype, die nicht dem traditionellen Vorrat entstammten. Immer wieder identifizierten sie das Judentum mit den verhassten ‚Ismen‘, dem Sozialismus, dem Kapitalismus, dem Liberalismus, dem Materialismus, dem Atheismus; immer wieder liefen sie Sturm gegen den jüdischen Einfluss auf die Gesellschaft, auf Presse, Literatur

²² J. KIRCHINGER, „Theorie und Praxis sozioethischer Agrarpolitik. Georg Ratzinger und die Geschichte des ‚gerechten Preises‘“, in J. KIRCHINGER, E. SCHÜTZ (Hrsg.), *Georg Ratzinger (1844–1899). Ein Leben zwischen Politik, Geschichte und Seelsorge*, Regensburg, 2008, 301–348.

²³ G. RATZINGER, *Die Volkswirtschaft in ihren sittlichen Grundlagen*, Freiburg i. Br., ²1895.

²⁴ Die folgenden Aussagen stützen sich auf Manfred Eders grundlegenden Aufsatz über Ratzingers Verhältnis zum Judentum: M. EDER, „Ich habe gar keine Abneigung gegen die Juden als solche“. Georg Ratzingers Haltung zum Judentum“, in J. KIRCHINGER, E. SCHÜTZ (Hrsg.), *Georg Ratzinger (1844–1899). Ein Leben zwischen Politik, Geschichte und Seelsorge*, Regensburg, 2008, 221–289; zur spezifisch katholischen Ausprägung der Judenfeindschaft im 19. Jahrhundert vgl. U. MAZURA, *Zentrumspartei und Judenfrage 1870/71–1933. Verfassungsstaat und Minderheitenschutz*, Mainz, 1994; O. BLASCHKE, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus im Deutschen Kaiserreich*, Göttingen, 1997; U. ALTERMATT, *Katholizismus und Antisemitismus. Mentalitäten, Kontinuitäten, Ambivalenzen. Zur Kulturgeschichte der Schweiz 1918–1945*, Frauenfeld, 1999; G. FLECKENSTEIN, C. SCHMIDTMANN, „Katholischer Antisemitismus im europäischen Vergleich. Die Generaldebatte der 14. Tagung des Schwerter Arbeitskreises Katholizismusforschung am 25. November 2000 in Dortmund“, in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 49, 2001, 244–247.

²⁵ Zur Zuweisung der zwei Pseudonyme Robert Waldhausen und Gottfried Wolf an Ratzinger vgl. EDER, 230–232 und 256f.

und Theater; immer wieder erhoben sie Protest gegen von Juden geführte Banken, Warenhäuser, Tageszeitungen.²⁶

Dementsprechend behauptete Ratzinger im Jahr 1892 unter dem Pseudonym Robert Waldhausen:

Die Juden müssen wieder der christlichen Sozialform sich unterordnen und dem christlichen Erwerbsleben sich beugen. [...] Die Krankheit der heutigen Gesellschaft besteht gerade in dem Überwuchern der jüdisch-heidnischen Weltanschauung über die sittlichen Postulate des Christentums. Die Inferiorität des Heidentums und Judentums gegenüber dem Christentum muß auch äußerlich zum Ausdruck kommen, in dem Verhalten der christlichen Staaten.²⁷

Ratzinger äußerte die Ansicht,

daß dem Gros der Juden überhaupt jedes sittliche Bewußtsein im Erwerbsleben mangelt. Sie kennen keine anderen Erwerbsschranken, als das Strafgesetz. Winkt ein Vorteil, welcher größer erscheint, als die Strafe des Gesetzes, so wird auch dieses ungescheut mißachtet. Wir sehen dies ganz klar in dem Lande, dessen Erwerbsleben durch die Juden am meisten verwüstet wurde, in Österreich-Ungarn, auf welches wir deshalb auch hauptsächlich exemplifizieren müssen.²⁸

So monierte er die zunehmende Zahl jüdischer Professoren in Wien, Pest und Prag, um anschließend zu klagen: „Im österreichischen Reichsrat wurde der Verjudung der Universitäten mit keiner Silbe gedacht, obwohl die Überflutung aller höheren Lehranstalten mit Juden geradezu maßlos geworden ist.“²⁹ Dementsprechend beklagte er sich wenige Seiten später über die Rolle der jüdischen Presse bei der Ritualmordbeschuldigung im ungarischen Tisza-Eszlár: „Bei der Tisza-Eszlár-Affaire wurde die gesamte jüdisch-liberale Presse der Welt beteiligt. An Kosten für Telegramme, Bestechungen der Zeugen und der Zeitungen wurden 700.000 Gulden ausgegeben.“³⁰ Und wenige Seiten

²⁶ A. OWZAR, Buchrezension „U. Altermatt, Katholizismus und Antisemitismus. Mentalitäten, Kontinuitäten, Ambivalenzen. Zur Kulturgeschichte der Schweiz 1918–1945, Frauenfeld, 1999“, in *H-Soz-u-Kult* vom 4. Juli 2000 (<http://hsoz.kult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/rezensionen/id=245>).

²⁷ R. WALDHAUSEN [G. RATZINGER], *Jüdisches Erwerbsleben. Skizzen aus dem sozialen Leben der Gegenwart*, Passau, 1892, 77f.

²⁸ WALDHAUSEN, 17f.

²⁹ WALDHAUSEN, 49.

³⁰ WALDHAUSEN, 51; A. LICHTBLAU, „Die Debatten über die Ritualmordbeschuldigungen im österreichischen Abgeordnetenhaus am Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts“, in R. ERB (Hrsg.), *Die Legende vom Ritualmord. Zur Geschichte der Blutbeschuldigung gegen Juden*, Berlin, 1993, 267–292.

weiter behauptete er: „In Ungarn war es noch vor einem Jahrzehnt einfach unmöglich, gegen einen Juden Recht zu erlangen. Selbst jüdische Mörder gingen straffrei aus, wie der Prozeß Tisza-Eszlar bewiesen hat.“³¹ Dabei führte diese angenommene Bevorzugung seiner Ansicht nach zu berechtigten judenfeindlichen Ausschreitungen, wie anlässlich des Judenkrawalls von Ödenburg im Jahr 1883: „Wenn die Regierung weder die Macht noch den Willen hat, diese Auswucherung und Ausplünderung des Landes durch die Juden zu verhindern, dann ist sie selbst Schuld an den Exzessen der Notwehr.“³² Infolgedessen erschien ihm Ungarn neben den ebenfalls zur Donaumonarchie zählenden Ländern Galizien und Bukowina als besonders abschreckendes Beispiel für den jüdischen Einfluss auf das gesellschaftliche Leben³³.

Bischof Pilgrim von Passau und die Ungarnmission als Gegenstand kulturkämpferischer Geschichtspolitik in Bayern

Ungarn galt katholischen Judenfeinden wie Ratzinger im 19. Jahrhundert – in Verkennung der tatsächlichen sozialen Probleme – also als besonders abschreckendes Beispiel jüdischen Einflusses. Nun hatte Ratzingers Beschäftigung mit Ungarn jedoch nicht nur diese polemische – und im Übrigen auf methodisch fragwürdige Art und Weise³⁴ vorgetragene – Dimension. Ratzinger war nicht nur Wirtschaftspolitiker und Sozialethiker, er war von seiner eigentlichen akademischen Ausbildung her Kirchenhistoriker. Seine Doktorarbeit verfasste er bei dem katholischen Theologen und Kirchenhistoriker Ignaz von Döllinger (1799–1890), der sich anlässlich der Definition der päpstlichen Unfehlbarkeit vom Vorkämpfer des Ultramontanismus zum Ideengeber des Altkatholizismus entwickelt hatte³⁵. Ratzinger blieb seinem akademischen Lehrer zwar stets verbunden, seine kirchenpolitischen Wendungen machte er allerdings nicht mit³⁶. Er blieb papst- und kirchentreu – auch in seinen historischen Forschun-

³¹ WALDHAUSEN, 54.

³² WALDHAUSEN, 54f.

³³ G. WOLF [G. RATZINGER], *Das Judentum in Bayern. Skizzen aus der Vergangenheit und Vorschläge für die Zukunft*, München, 1897, 72f.

³⁴ Zu den methodischen Mängeln von Ratzingers Pamphleten vgl. EDER, 263f. und 283.

³⁵ Zu Döllinger vgl. J. FRIEDRICH, *Ignaz von Döllinger. Sein Leben auf Grund seines schriftlichen Nachlasses* 1–3, München, 1899–1901; G. SCHWAIGER, „Ignaz von Döllinger (1799–1890)“, in H. FRIES, G. SCHWAIGER (Hrsg.), *Katholische Theologen Deutschlands im 19. Jahrhundert* 3, München, 1975, 9–43; F. X. BISCHOF, *Theologie und Geschichte. Ignaz von Döllinger (1799–1890) in der zweiten Hälfte seines Lebens. Ein Beitrag zu seiner Biographie*, Stuttgart, 1997.

gen. So kam es, dass sich der aus der Passauer Diözese stammende Ratzinger auch mit der Geschichte der Aktivitäten der mittelalterlichen Passauer Bischöfe in Ungarn beschäftigte³⁷.

Den Anlass dazu bot ihm der von dem protestantischen Historiker Ernst Ludwig Dümmler (1830–1902)³⁸ im Jahr 1854 vorgetragene Vorwurf, Bischof Pilgrim von Passau (um 920–991) habe Urkunden zu dem Zweck gefälscht, für seinen Bischofsstuhl die erzbischöfliche sowie die Metropolitenerwürde über Ungarn in Anspruch zu nehmen, wobei er die Translation eines antiken Erzbistums Lauriacum (Lorch) nach Passau behauptete³⁹. Im Kulturkampf wurde dieser Vorwurf als Angriff auf die katholische Kirche des 19. Jahrhunderts verstanden. Es begann eine „Offensive der Katholiken des 19. Jahrhunderts von gewaltigem Ausmaße“⁴⁰. Unter den Verteidigern Pilgrims befand sich auch Ratzinger, der seine Verteidigungsschrift im Jahr 1872 im Mainzer Katholik publizierte. Dabei versuchte er, Pilgrim vom Vorwurf der Fälschung reinzuwaschen, indem er diese anderen Personen zuwies⁴¹.

Das Wirken der Mellersdorfer Schwestern in Siebenbürgen

In diese Zeit der kulturkämpferischen Auseinandersetzungen im Deutschen Reich fällt auch das Wirken bayerischer Orden in Ungarn. Zu nennen sind hier die im Jahr 1833 im Bistum Regensburg von Maria Theresia von Jesu Gerhardinger (1797–1879) gegründeten Armen Schulwestern, die im Jahr 1858 eine Filiale in der ungarischen Reichshälfte, und zwar in Temesvár, errich-

³⁶ Zum Verhältnis zwischen Ratzinger und Döllinger vgl. C. STEIN, „Ignaz von Döllinger und Georg Ratzinger. Rückblick auf ein spannungsreiches Verhältnis“, in J. KIRCHINGER, E. SCHÜTZ (Hrsg.), *Georg Ratzinger (1844–1899). Ein Leben zwischen Politik, Geschichte und Seelsorge*, Regensburg, 2008, 37–66.

³⁷ Die folgenden Ausführungen stützen sich auf: E. SCHÜTZ, „Im Spannungsfeld von Heilsgeschichte, Apologetik und historisch-kritischer Methode. Georg Ratzingers Beitrag zur bayerischen Geschichtsschreibung des 19. Jahrhunderts“, in J. KIRCHINGER, E. SCHÜTZ (Hrsg.), *Georg Ratzinger (1844–1899). Ein Leben zwischen Politik, Geschichte und Seelsorge*, Regensburg, 2008, 95–123.

³⁸ F. BAETHGEN, „Ernst Ludwig Dümmler“, in *Neue Deutsche Biographie* 4, Berlin, 1959, 161.

³⁹ E. L. DÜMMLER, *Pilgrim von Passau und das Erzbisthum Lorch*, Leipzig, 1854; J. ENGLBERGER, *Albert Behaim und die Lorcher Tradition in der Passauer Geschichtsschreibung. Die Descriptio gentium et diversarum nationum Europe*, Hannover, 2007.

⁴⁰ A. LEIDL, „Der Wandel des Pilgrimbildes in der Geschichtsschreibung“, in *Ostbairische Grenzmarken* 14, 1972, 73.

⁴¹ G. RATZINGER, „Lorch und Passau. Neue Forschungen“, in *Der Katholik* 52, 1872/1, 570–603; G. RATZINGER, *Forschungen zur Bayrischen Geschichte*, Kempten, 1898, 325–332.

teten⁴². In Pest unterhielten zwischen 1857 und 1861 Beschuhte Karmeliter aus Straubing auf Bitten des Primas von Ungarn, Kardinal János Scitovszky (1785–1866), einen Konvent mit der Aufgabe einen Friedhof zu betreuen⁴³. Vor allem aber ist aufgrund des bis zum heutigen Tag andauernden Wirkens die Geschichte der Mällersdorfer Schwestern in Siebenbürgen seit 1864 zu erwähnen⁴⁴.

Das Mällersdorfer Kloster wurde im Jahr 1109 als Benediktinerabtei gegründet. Eine Blütezeit erlebte es im 18. Jahrhundert. Die Kirche erhielt eine glanzvolle Ausstattung. Verschiedene Mönche waren als Lehrer und Professoren an Gymnasien und Universitäten tätig. Die Abtei erhielt den Titel „Sedes sapientiae“. Besonders gepflegt wurde auch das Musikwesen⁴⁵. 1803 wurde das Kloster im Rahmen der Säkularisation aufgehoben. Die wertvollsten Schätze des Klosters, darunter 6000 kostbare Bücher und Handschriften, wurden in die staatlichen Sammlungen geschickt, der Rest versteigert⁴⁶. 1869 kaufte die Ordensgemeinschaft der Armen Franziskanerinnen von der Heiligen Familie den in Privatbesitz befindlichen Teil des Klosters und errichtete dort ihre Zentrale, woraufhin die Ordensfrauen im Volksmund als Mällersdorfer Schwestern bezeichnet wurden. Errichtet wurde die Ordensgemeinschaft von dem Priester Dr. Paul Josef Nardini in der damals bayerischen Rheinpfalz. Der im Jahr 1821 geborene und 1846 zum Priester geweihte Nardini gründete am 2. März 1855 in dem pfälzischen Industrieort Pirmasens die Schwesterngemeinschaft, um der dort herrschenden wirtschaftlichen Not und Entkirchlichung zu begegnen. Am 27. Januar 1862 starb Nardini im Alter von 40 Jahren. Die junge Schwesterngemeinschaft wuchs schnell. Am Todestag Nardinis

⁴² VÖLKL, 101f.; *Selige Theresia von Jesu Gerhardinger (1797–1879). Ein Leben für Kirche und Schule. Zum 200. Geburtstag. Ausstellung in der Bischöflichen Zentralbibliothek Regensburg, St. Petersweg 11–13, 20. Juni bis 19. September 1997*, Regensburg, 1997, 280.

⁴³ VÖLKL, 99–101.

⁴⁴ Zur Geschichte des Ordens in Siebenbürgen vgl. L. SCHRANZ, *Die Kongregation der Armen Franziskanerinnen von Mällersdorf (1855–1925)*, Mällersdorf, 1925, 209–212 und 390–414; o.V., *Hundert Jahre Mällersdorfer Schwestern*, Mällersdorf, 1955, 128–135; VÖLKL, 102; J. MARTON, T. JAKABFFY, *Die Jahrhunderte des siebenbürgischen Katholizismus. Illustrierte Geschichte der Diözese*, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, 75; R. BAUER, „Helfen in großer Not. Die Arbeit der Mällersdorfer Schwestern in Rumänien“, in *Im Blickpunkt. Zeitschrift der Mällersdorfer Schwestern. Beilage zur Ausgabe 2/2010*, 2–6.

⁴⁵ Zur Geschichte des Klosters Mällersdorf vgl. G. PÖLSTERL, *Mällersdorf. Das Landgericht Kirchberg, die Pfliegerichte Eggmühl und Abbach*, München, 1979, 122–130; R. BAUER, „Die Aufhebung der Benediktinerabtei Mällersdorf 1803“, in *Verhandlungen des Historischen Vereins für Niederbayern* 112/113, 1986/1987, 5–80, hier 20–30.

⁴⁶ BAUER, „Aufhebung“, 5–80.

zählte sie 220 Schwestern. Es bestanden bereits 36 Niederlassungen. Davon lagen neun Zehntel in Bayern⁴⁷.

Die Ordensgemeinschaft der Armen Franziskanerinnen von der Heiligen Familie ist eine typische Ordensgründung aus dem 19. Jahrhundert, als die Luft eines richtiggehenden Ordensfrühlings nach dem Tiefpunkt der Säkularisation die katholische Kirche durchwehte. Mit den damals gegründeten caritativ und pädagogisch tätigen Orden reagierte die katholische Kirche auf die Herausforderungen der sozialen Frage, der Industrialisierung und der darauf zurückgehenden Verarmung und Entkirchlichung breiter Bevölkerungsschichten⁴⁸. Deshalb ist es nicht verwunderlich, dass auch bei den Armen Franziskanerinnen von Anbeginn an die Krankenpflege und die Kindererziehung im Mittelpunkt ihrer Tätigkeit standen und immer noch stehen.

Die Geschichte des Ordens in der Donaumonarchie begann im Jahr 1859. Damals pflegten die Schwestern Verwundete österreichische und ungarische Soldaten auf dem oberitalienischen Kriegsschauplatz, als die Donaumonarchie um ihre italienischen Besitzungen gegen das Königreich Sardinien kämpfte. Als Geste der Dankbarkeit wurde den Mellersdorfer Schwestern erlaubt, im Gebiet der gesamten Donaumonarchie Sammlungen durchzuführen. So kamen sie auch nach Hermannstadt. Die Gattin des dort stationierten kaiserlichen Kommandanten Juliana Johanna Marie Stephanie Gräfin bzw. Fürstin Montenuovo, geb. Gräfin Batthyány-Strattmann (1827–1871)⁴⁹ bat die Ordensleitung, eine Niederlassung in Siebenbürgen zu errichten. Denn im Zuge der beginnenden Industrialisierung herrschten auch in Siebenbürgen wirtschaftliche Not, Verwahrlosung unter Kindern und zunehmende religiöse Gleichgültigkeit. Trotz einiger Bedenken wegen der weiten Entfernung und der fremden Sprache entsprach die Ordensleitung der Bitte, zumal die Fürstin den Grundstock für den finanziellen Unterhalt der Schwestern legte. Am 19. November 1864 trafen die ersten sechs Schwestern in Hermannstadt ein. Sie lernten die ungarische Sprache – eine von den staatlichen Behörden zur Auflage gemachte Voraussetzung ihres Wirkens in Ungarn – und konzentrierten sich auf die Erziehung verwahrloster Kinder. Wegen der großen Nachfrage nicht zuletzt auch aus bürgerlichen Kreisen mussten sie bald eine Lehrerinnenbildungsanstalt in

⁴⁷ Zur Geschichte des Ordens vgl. SCHRANZ, *Kongregation*; o.V., *Hundert Jahre Mellersdorfer Schwestern*; R. BAUER, *Paul Josef Nardini. Ein Leben für Benachteiligte*, München, 2007.

⁴⁸ G. FLECKENSTEIN, „Von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zu den Kulturkämpfen“, in E. GATZ (Hrsg.), *Geschichte des kirchlichen Lebens in den deutschsprachigen Ländern seit dem Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts* 7, Freiburg i. Br., 2006, 205–241.

⁴⁹ C. von WURZBACH, *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich, enthaltend die Lebensskizzen der denkwürdigen Personen, welche seit 1750 in den österreichischen Kronländern geboren wurden oder darin gelebt und gewirkt haben* 19, Wien, 1868, 50–54.

Hermannstadt eröffnen, um genügend Lehrerinnen für die Volksschule, die Handels- und die Haushaltungsschule zu haben. Um das Zentrum in Hermannstadt entstand dann ein Kranz von neuen Niederlassungen: 1877 Holzmengen, 1887 Hátszeg, 1888 Petrozsény, 1893 Marosvásárhely, 1895 Kronstadt, 1899, Szilágysomlyó, 1903 Szamosújvár, 1914 Sepsiszentgyörgy. In allen diesen Filialen konzentrierte sich der Orden auf die Jugendpflege. Der zweite Schwerpunkt seiner Arbeit lag auf der Krankenpflege, seitdem diese von den Schwestern im Jahr 1887 im Bergwerkspital von Petrozsény übernommen worden war. 1899 folgten die Mallersdorfer Schwestern einem Ruf der ungarischen Regierung nach Klausenburg, und zwar an die Kliniken der medizinischen Fakultät der Landesuniversität. Am Beginn des Ersten Weltkrieges wirkten in Klausenburg 80 Mallersdorfer Schwestern. Insgesamt waren damals 250 Schwestern in 22 Niederlassungen in 17 ungarischen Ortschaften tätig. – Bei den Mallersdorfer Schwestern ist kein deduzierendes Lamentieren über den vermeintlich verderblichen Einfluss von Juden auf das Wirtschaftsleben wie bei Ratzinger zur gleichen Zeit, sondern zupackendes Eintreten für die sozial Schwachen zu sehen. Zwei Seiten einer katholischen Medaille, der sich die Kirchengeschichte als Wissenschaft stellen muss.

Die Übertragung Siebenbürgens, wo am Ende des Ersten Weltkrieges alle Filialen der Mallersdorfer Schwestern in der ungarischen Reichshälfte lagen, auf Rumänien hatte für den Orden einige Einschränkungen im Schulbetrieb zur Folge. So durften die Ordensangehörigen nur mehr für ungarische Einrichtungen katholischer Konfession tätig sein. Darüber hinaus forderte die rumänische Regierung von den Mallersdorfer Schwestern die Errichtung einer eigenständigen siebenbürgischen Provinz, was am 25. April 1923 im Mutterhaus beschlossen wurde. M. Agapita Engelhardt (gest. 1936), die Vorsteherin der Mädchenschule von Petrozsény, wurde zur ersten Provinzoberin ernannt. Das quantitative Übergewicht der deutschen Schwestern wurde seither zugunsten der ungarischen abgebaut.

Einen die Existenz gefährdenden Schlag versetzten erst die rumänischen Kommunisten dem Orden, als am 1. August 1949 alle religiösen Gemeinschaften aufgelöst wurden. Die Schwestern mussten ihr Ordenskleid ablegen und die Konvente verlassen. Die deutschen Schwestern waren ohnehin bereits im Frühjahr geflohen, nur die 140 ungarischen Ordensangehörigen waren zurück geblieben. Die Hälfte der Schwestern wurde vom Staat als Krankenpflegerinnen übernommen, der Rest fand Unterschlupf in Pfarrhäusern und bei ihren Angehörigen. Obwohl die Schwestern keine klösterliche Gemeinschaft mehr pflegen durften, gelang es ihnen doch, den Kontakt untereinander zu halten, sich gegenseitig beizustehen und den Geist des Ordensgründers am Leben zu erhalten. Das konnten sie tatsächlich so lange durchhalten, bis der Untergang des Kommunismus im Jahr 1989 einen Neuanfang ihres franziskanischen Wirkens ermöglichte. Am 4. Oktober 1991 konnte wieder eine Nieder-

lassung der Mallersdorfer Schwestern in Siebenbürgen eröffnet werden. Einige der verstreut lebenden Schwestern kehrten zurück, junge Kandidatinnen schlossen sich an. Für den Aufbau eines eigenständigen siebenbürgischen Ordenszweiges kam personelle und finanzielle Hilfe aus dem niederbayerischen Mutterhaus. 1992 eröffnete der Kindergarten der Mallersdorfer Schwestern in Odorhei. 1994 folgte ein Hort für arme Schulkinder. Ein Jahr später übernahmen die Schwestern das Altenheim für 18 arme und alte Menschen in Kézdiszentlélek. 1997 wurde ein Waisenhaus in Szépvíz eröffnet, zwei Jahre später in Oradea eine Tagesstätte für behinderte Kinder und 2004 das Haus Nazareth – eine weitere Einrichtung für behinderte Kinder – in Odorhei. In diesem Jahr legten dann die ersten jungen ungarischen Schwestern ihr Gelübde im Ordenszentrum in Odorhei ab. Somit ist der siebenbürgische Ordenszweig integraler Bestandteil eines weltweit agierenden Ordens, der neben Niederlassungen in Deutschland und Siebenbürgen auch Filialen in Südafrika besitzt.

Zusammenfassung

Die Beziehungen zwischen Bayern und Ungarn im 19. Jahrhundert auf dem Gebiet des Katholizismus weisen eine ganz spezifische Qualität auf. Direkte Kontakte gab es kaum, nur punktuell, wenn auch im Fall der Mallersdorfer Schwestern mit weittragenden Konsequenzen bis in die Gegenwart. Da Österreich als territorialer Keil zwischen Bayern und Ungarn lag, dominierten die Vorstellungen von Ungarn das Feld der gegenseitigen Beziehungen auf kirchlichem Gebiet. So konnte die Vorstellung vom ungarischen Judentum zum Gegenstand eines bayerischen judenfeindlichen Schriftstellers werden und die mittelalterliche Ungarnmission zum Mittel der Agitation in den kulturkämpferischen Auseinandersetzungen im Deutschen Reich. Und die kirchen- und parteipolitischen Hoffnungen des politischen Katholizismus in Bayern auf eine engere Anbindung an die Donaumonarchie konnten im Zusammenhang mit der Furcht vor der agrarischen Potenz Ungarns die Gründung einer antiklerikalen landwirtschaftlichen Interessenvertretung provozieren. So ist auch in kirchengeschichtlicher Hinsicht dem Regensburger Osteuropahistoriker Ekkehard Völkl zuzustimmen, der im Hinblick auf die bayerisch-ungarischen Beziehungen im 19. Jahrhundert zu dem Ergebnis kam: „Sie entfalteteten sich in einer ziemlichen Breite, aber ohne herausragende Höhepunkte.“⁵⁰

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GIBT ES EINE ÖKONOMIE DES GLÜCKS? ANMERKUNGEN ZU EINER THEOLOGISCHEN GLÜCKSLEHRE

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Zusammenfassung: Im Sinne des christlichen Menschenbildes ist der Kern des Menschen als Ideal zu denken. Er ist gut infolge der Teilhabe an Gottes vollkommener Gutheit und damit vom Wesen her auf das Gute und auf Gott hin ausgerichtet. Der Mensch erlebt sich zugleich auch als Mängelwesen, als in seiner Freiheit zum Guten und zum vollkommenen Glück eingeschränkt. Die Möglichkeit ewigen Glücks in Gott schließt notwendig die Möglichkeit einer ewigen Abwendung vom Guten und von Gott ein. Aus der Perspektive Gottes und im Licht der Auferstehung Christi kann jedes menschliche Leben und jede noch so fragmentarische Lebensgeschichte als vom Kern und vom Wesen her als geglückt gedeutet werden.

Schlagworte: christliches Menschenbild, Natur des Menschen, Herzensbildung, Sozialethik, Glückseligkeit, katholische Soziallehre, Selbstbildung, Auferstehung Christi, Komplexität des Glücks.

1.

Das christliche Menschenbild könnte man in einem ersten Anlauf kennzeichnen mit dem, was einst der katholische Münchner Kabarettist Karl Valentin einmal so auf den Punkt brachte: „Der Mensch an sich ist gut, aber er wird immer seltener!“ Genau das ist mit der alttestamentlichen Rede vom sagenhaften Garten Eden, dem vergangenen Paradies der Idealität, und mit der Rede von der ursprünglichen Gottesebenbildlichkeit des Menschen im Schöpfungsbericht gemeint.¹ Der Kern des Menschen, sein ursprüngliches Wesen also, ist als Ideal gedacht; es ist gut infolge der Teilhabe an Gottes vollkommener Gutheit und damit vom Wesen her auf das Gute und – christlich gedacht – auf Gott hin ausgerichtet. Oder anders, mit dem hl. Thomas von Aquin: Das Gute ist wirklich, das Böse ist eigentlich „unwirklich“, „privatio boni“, Abwesenheit von Gutem – was seiner Grausamkeit keinen Abbruch tut, wohl aber tröstlich ist im Blick auf seine mögliche Überwindung! Für das theologische Denken der Scholastik und für Thomas von Aquin wird die Gottesebenbildlichkeit des Menschen verwirklicht durch seine geistigen Tätigkeiten; gerade durch diesen wesenhaften Bezug zum vergeistigten Glück (und nicht bloß durch die Möglichkeit einer empirisch fassbaren Bedürfnisbefriedigung) überragt der Mensch als einziges der Lebewesen den Bereich der

¹ O. H. STECK, *Der Schöpfungsbericht der Priesterschrift: Studien zur literarkritischen und überlieferungsgeschichtlichen Problematik von Genesis 1, 1-2, 4a*, Göttingen, 1981.

empirischen Natur. Damit hat der Mensch gerade durch seine Möglichkeit (oder Verweigerung) der Aktuierung seiner sittlichen Freiheit zum vollkommenen Glück eine Sonderstellung im Kosmos inne. Aber: Der Mensch erlebt sich zugleich auch als Mängelwesen, als durch Defekt und „Ursünde“ je schon in seiner Freiheit zum Guten und zum vollkommenen Glück eingeschränkt. Die Schöpfung Gottes als innerste Wesensnatur des Menschen ist eingeschränkt durch die ebenso zur faktischen Natur des Menschen gehörende Fähigkeit zur Verfehlung und zum Bösen. Daher muss diese wesenhafte, aber gebrochene Freiheit zum Guten und zum Besten gefördert und angereizt werden. Mit anderen Worten: Es braucht Anreizsysteme für den Menschen, damit er im Gewissen sich auf das Gute hin ausbildet und ausstreckt, damit er das Gute in konkreter Gestalt in seinem Leben für attraktiv hält und es in die Tat des Alltags umsetzt. Dies charakterisiert den christlichen Begriff von Bildung: Ausbildung des ursprünglichen Gottesebenbildes durch entschiedene Gewissens- und Herzensbildung, damit das Bild des Guten konkrete Gestalt im Denken und Handeln gewinnt. Solche Bildung ist aber keineswegs nur eine Aufgabe von Personen, sondern ebenso von Institutionen, näherhin von Staat und Wirtschaft: Die guten Strebungen des Menschen sollen durch Anreize gefördert, die Versuchungen zum Bösen dagegen durch Sanktionen abgewehrt werden. Denn dem Menschen fehlen instinktive und unfehlbare Neigungen zum Guten und zum Besten, er neigt zu Fremd- und Selbstzerstörung, er hält ein nur scheinbar Gutes für ein wirklich Gutes und verstrickt sich auf der suchartigen Suche nach dem Guten im Vorletzten, in der Sünde, im Bösen.

2.

Die Beschreibung des christlichen Menschenbildes gipfelt in der zunächst vielleicht staubig und weltfremd klingenden Behauptung, der Mensch sei zur Heiligkeit berufen. Das meint: Gott wird als höchstes Ideal guten und geglückten Lebens gedacht, und der Mensch ist dazu berufen, wie Gott zu werden – nicht freilich einfach durch eigene vergebliche und sich verstrickende Anstrengung, sondern durch die zuvorkommende Gnade und Liebe Gottes befördert und befähigt. Nur der Mensch vermag über die Grenze seiner Existenz, seines Lebensraumes und seiner Lebenszeit hinaus zu denken. Und nur der Mensch stößt im Nachdenken über das mögliche Beste auf die Möglichkeit Gottes, auf ein unüberbietbares Ideal, das Person ist und vom Wesen her als Liebe lebt. Gott ist hier zunächst gedacht als Absolutum, als losgelöst von den Bedingungen von Raum und Zeit, als grundsätzliche Überschreitung von Raum und Zeit als den normalen empirischen Bedingungen menschlicher Existenz. Gott fungiert als prägende Form der eigenen und immer schon gebrochenen, unvollkommenen Lebensgeschichte:

Die Lebensgeschichte wird in den Sog dieses seelischen Erlebens hineingezogen, sie kommt im Grunde auf eine Geschichte der Seele hinaus. Das verwirrende Vielerlei an Tatsachen und Begebenheiten, das den eigenen Lebensweg kreuzt und bisweilen durchkreuzt, ist kein zusammenhangloses Nacheinander und Nebeneinander, vielmehr wird es unter eine prägende Form gestellt, und diese stammt aus einer zugeschriebenen oder zugewiesenen Bedeutung.²

Menschliches Leben wird mit Hilfe des Gottesbegriffs gedeutet und damit geprägt; die äußerste Grenze des Könnens und das Beste der menschlichen Möglichkeiten ist in diesem Begriff Gott brennglasartig gebündelt. Hier kommt der Begriff der Heiligkeit, der in der deutschen Sprache nicht zufällig an den Begriff „heil“ im Sinne von Ganzheit erinnert, ins Spiel: Denn solche Heiligkeit meint jetzt gerade das Ausschöpfen der besten menschlichen Möglichkeiten, als Gegenstück zum Fragment und zum Unvollkommenen. Solches unfassende Glück nimmt in der Religionsgeschichte allmählich den Namen Gott an und trägt in der christlichen Offenbarung den Namen und das Gesicht Jesu Christi.

3.

Die menschliche Wesensnatur verwirklicht sich im Raum gesellschaftlicher und staatlicher Ordnung und Zivilisation. Es bilden sich ethische Traditionen aus, die Wege zu gelungenem und geglücktem Leben erhoffen lassen. Insofern steht die Kultur im Dienst einer nach vollkommener Vollendung strebenden menschlichen Natur, die ihrerseits nur schwach vorgezeichnete Wege zu dieser Vollendung in den Instinkten findet. Jede Form höherer Kultur entsteht durch ein Vernunftrecht, das sich als eine Art kritisches Naturrecht ausweist: Was denkt jeder Mensch von Natur aus und mit seiner Vernunft als gut und vollkommen? Das Zueinander von Natur und Kultur zu bestimmen und zugleich die Grenze zwischen einer Ausbildung und einer Zerstörung der ursprünglichen Natur immer neu in den Blick zu nehmen, ist die vornehmste Aufgabe der Ethik, nicht zuletzt der Sozialethik. Kultur erscheint dann als notwendiger Humus einer menschenwürdigen Gesellschaft und einer menschenwürdigen Wirtschaft; Kultur bildet die notwendige Ergänzung und Überformung einer in sich gebrochenen Natur. Diese menschliche Natur trägt zwar noch eine schwache Erinnerung an das Beste (an das ursprüngliche Paradies des geglückten Lebens) in sich, ist aber aus sich heraus nicht in der Lage, dieses Glück zu erreichen. Aus dieser Sicht der christlichen Theologie ist Rousseau entschieden zu widersprechen, wenn er mit seinem Ruf „Zurück zur

² K. DEMMER, „Die Moralthologie und das Sakrament der Versöhnung. Einige Notizen zu einem vernachlässigten Thema“, in *Theologie und Glaube* 93(2003), 433–446, hier 435.

Natur“ die ursprüngliche Natur einfach wiederherzustellen können glaubt, und zwar durch eine radikal subjektivistische Moral. „Rousseau errichtet einen neuen, einen konsequent subjektiven Maßstab, der Epoche machen sollte. Dieser Maßstab lautet: Übereinstimmung – nicht mit einer objektiven Norm, sondern mit sich selbst.“³ Das Paradies ist auf Erden nicht zu konstruieren; das war noch der Irrtum der neomarxistischen Bewegung nach dem 2. Weltkrieg und auch etwa der von Rousseau inspirierten deutschen Reformpädagogik. Aber auch Thomas Hobbes mit seinem berühmt-berüchtigten Wort „Homo homini lupus est – der Mensch ist dem Menschen ein Wolf“ ist aus christlicher Sicht zu widersprechen, wenn er die Natur des Menschen einfach für böse und verderbt hält und nur durch den staatlichen Leviathan zu bändigen glaubt: Das Paradies ist auf Erden, im Geist des Menschen nämlich und in guten Gedanken, bruchstückhaft zu erkennen und auch durch Anreize zum Guten in Umrissen und wenigstens skizzenhaft zu erstellen. Das Streben jedes Menschen nach Glückseligkeit führt, kantianisch gesprochen, zu der Variante des Kategorischen Imperativs, wonach zu tun ist, wodurch der Mensch würdig ist, glücklich zu sein: in Übereinstimmung mit sich als dem Wesen der Sittlichkeit zu leben. Kultur speichert solche menschenwürdige Mittel der Glücksgewinnung. Gedacht sei etwa an den Begriff der unveräußerlichen Menschenwürde, die der Staat zu garantieren hat: Es ist das Recht des Individuums auf eine würdige, seiner Vernunft und seinen Neigungen angemessenen Glücksstrebung. Daher unterstreicht Otfried Höffe: „Die Neigungen sind übrigens nicht glücksunwürdig, vielmehr für sich genommen unschuldig. Nur die Mittel und Wege sind des Glückes würdig (z. B. Ehrlichkeit) oder aber unwürdig (z. B. Betrug).“⁴

4.

Für das Menschenbild von Staat und Wirtschaft heißt das aus Sicht der christlichen Theologie: Dem Individuum und seiner gebrochenen Freiheit zum Guten gebührt der ständige Vorrang vor dem Kollektiv, der Person gebührt der Primat vor der Gesellschaft. Daher unterstreicht die katholische Soziallehre den zentralen Wert von Personalität und Subsidiarität und spricht von Ehe und Familie als der Keimzelle des Staates. Nicht der Staat hat ursprünglich ein Recht, sondern jede Person hat unveräußerliche Grundrechte, und der Staat hat nur insoweit Recht (einschließlich des Gewaltmonopols), als er bedrohte Rechte von Personen zu schützen hat. Jedem offenkundigen oder auch klandestinen Unterjochen der Person durch einen philosophischen oder ökonomischen

³ R. SPAEMANN, *Rousseau – Bürger ohne Vaterland*, München, 1992, 23.

⁴ O. HÖFFE, *Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft. Die Grundlegung der modernen Philosophie*, München, 2004, 294, Anm. 46.

Utilitarismus oder durch totalisierende Gesellschaftssysteme ist entschieden zu widersprechen und zu widerstehen. Aber umgekehrt gilt auch: Die Heiligung und Vervollkommnung des Menschen im Blick auf ein gelungenes Bild vom Glück ist von Staat und Gesellschaft entschieden zu fördern. Es braucht Anreize zur Heilung und zum Guten durch Bildung und Leitbilder. Wenn alles gleichgültig ist aus Sicht des Staates, wenn der Staat sich selbst als gleichgültig gegenüber allen Werten und in diesem letztlich absurden Sinn als wertneutral empfindet, wenn jede Lebensentscheidung und jede Lebensform als vor dem Gesetz und vor der Gesellschaft gleichgültig betrachtet wird, dann ist letztlich alles gleichgültig, dann wird auf Dauer auch der Mensch gleichgültig gegenüber dem wirklich Guten, dann geht es letztlich nur noch um unterschiedliche Optionen höchst unterschiedlicher Individuen, die miteinander nicht mehr teilen als den entschiedenen Willen zum Überleben um jeden Preis. Dieser Wertrelativismus (auf dem Boden eines zumeist unthematischen Nonkognitivismus) und die damit verbundene Absage an ein gewissensbindendes Naturrecht – wobei Natur für den Rest an nicht manipulierbarer biologischer Zufälligkeit als Substrat menschlichen Wesens steht – wäre das Ende der Menschheit und die Abschaffung des Menschen, vor der C. S. Lewis hellsichtig schon 1943 warnte:

Das Endstadium ist da, wenn der Mensch mit Hilfe von Eugenik und vorgeburtlicher Konditionierung und dank einer Erziehung, die auf perfekt angewandter Psychologie beruht, absolute Kontrolle über sich selbst erlangt hat. Die *menschliche* Natur wird das letzte Stück Natur sein, das vor dem Menschen kapituliert.⁵

5.

Eine der stillschweigend von Staat und Gesellschaft vorausgesetzten Grundlagen, von denen etwa das berühmte Böckenförde-Diktum spricht, ist jener primäre Personbegriff, der zur Ausbildung einer Persönlichkeit und zur geglückten Selbstverwirklichung hin drängt.⁶ Daraus folgt die Förderung des Bewusstseins von der absoluten Einmaligkeit und Unwiderruflichkeit des eigenen Lebens und der unverwechselbaren Berufung jedes Menschen zu einem unverwechselbaren Glück. Genau hier setzt der Gedanke einer ewigen Unsterblichkeit der menschlichen Seele an, der von Plato paradigmatisch für

⁵ C. S. LEWIS, *Die Abschaffung des Menschen*, Einsiedeln, 1983 [Original engl.: *The abolition of Man, or Reflections on education with special reference to the teaching of English in the upper form of schools*, Oxford, 1943], 62.

⁶ K. HILPERT (Hg.), *Selbstverwirklichung. Chancen – Grenzen – Wege*, Mainz, 1987; G. KREPPOLD, *Selbstverwirklichung oder Selbstverleugnung?*, Münsterschwarzach, 1988.

das gesamte abendländische Denken formuliert wird,⁷ und sich mit dem jüdischen Gedanken einer unwiderruflichen Gottesebenbildlichkeit des Menschen verbindet. Jeder Idee von Wiedergeburt und Reinkarnation ist damit vom Christentum aus eine entschiedene Absage erteilt, freilich auch jeder billigen Idee von umstandsloser Allversöhnung im Jenseits. Die Möglichkeit ewigen Glücks in Gott schließt notwendig die Möglichkeit einer ewigen Abwendung vom Guten und von Gott ein. Und nicht der physische Tod ist das eigentliche Unglück des Menschen, sondern der geistige Tod, verstanden als dauerhafte Verstockung im Unrecht. Schon bei Plato heißt es daher lapidar:

Denn das Sterben an sich fürchtet niemand, er müsste denn keine Spur von Verstand und Mannhaftigkeit in sich haben, aber das Unrecht tun fürchtet er; denn dass die Seele übertoll von Frevel in den Hades kommt, das ist das größte aller Übel.⁸

Daraus folgt dann auch der klassische Grundsatz jeder menschlich geglückten Existenz,

dass man sich mehr hüten müsse vor dem Unrecht tun als vor dem Unrecht leiden und dass ein Mann vor allem anderen danach trachten müsse, nicht gut zu scheinen, sondern gut zu sein, im öffentlichen wie im privaten Verkehr.⁹

Das ganze menschliche Leben ist ein ununterbrochener Weg der Scheidung und Entscheidung zwischen Gott und Vergänglichkeit, zwischen Heiligkeit und Genüßlichkeit, zwischen Glück und Zufriedenheit. Diese unverwechselbare Berufung eines jeden Menschen zur Selbstbildung und zur Lebensentscheidung ist zuletzt auch der Kern jeder Solidarität von Menschen in Staat und Gesellschaft: Jeder Mensch wird ungeachtet seiner Leistungen und Fähigkeiten als Gottes Ebenbild und mit Würde ausgestattet erkannt, anerkannt und geschützt.

6.

Das Christentum denkt das menschliche Streben nach umfassendem Glück unter der Signatur von Leiden und Fragment, daran erinnert die Rede von der Erbsünde. Das vollkommene Glück ist nicht von dieser Welt und existiert nur als Idee, im Geist und im Beten des Menschen. Dennoch kann aus der Perspektive Gottes und im Licht der Auferstehung Christi jedes menschliche Leben und jede noch so fragmentarische Lebensgeschichte als vom Kern

⁷ F. RICKEN, „Die Unsterblichkeitsgewissheit in Platons Phaidon“, in DERS., *Gemeinschaft – Tugend – Glück. Platon und Aristoteles über das gute Leben*, Stuttgart, 2004, 24–35.

⁸ PLATO, „Gorgias“, in DERS., *Sämtliche Dialoge*, I, Hamburg, 1993, 158.

⁹ PLATO, 165.

und vom Wesen her als geglückt gedeutet werden; theologisch drückt sich dies in den sieben Sakramenten aus, die nicht von ungefähr an die geglückten sieben Schöpfungstage Gottes erinnern. Das verlangt aber vom Menschen (jenseits von Eden und diesseits der Ewigkeit) einen beherzten Mut zum Vorletzten und eine nüchterne Tapferkeit im Angesicht vorläufigen Scheiterns. Klaus Demmer unterstreicht daher:

Wer mit vielerlei Grenzen zu leben hat, muss den Mut zum Glück besitzen, sonst verliert er Schritt für Schritt seine Selbstachtung, er gibt sich auf und wird zusehends zum Spielball seiner unkontrollierten Wünsche, Empfindungen und Gedanken. Er stilisiert sich in der inneren Welt seiner Vorstellungen zum Opfer hoch, nicht bedenkend, dass sich so auf Dauer nicht leben lässt.¹⁰

Mit Recht kann davon gesprochen werden, der Gedanke an Gottes Ewigkeit erhöhe „die Komplexität des Glücks, um die Übersicht über das, was sich Menschen unter dem Glück und seiner Erreichbarkeit vorstellen, in Frage zu stellen.“ Das letzte Glück ist dann nicht verabschiedet, sondern redimensioniert:

Einem religiösen Verständnis zufolge begegnet der Mensch vielmehr im Glück einem Überschuss an Wirklichkeit und einem Mehrwert des Lebens, der ihn ahnen lässt, dass dieses Glück nicht nur von dieser Welt ist. Es ist die vornehmliche Aufgabe einer theologischen Glückslehre, an diesen Bezug zu einer letzten, den Menschen übersteigenden und doch sein Leben prägenden Wirklichkeit zu erinnern.¹¹

Es ist mithin der schleichenden Versuchung zu wehren, der Mensch sei im Grunde nur ein effizient reizbares konsumierendes Kaninchen oder eine technisch optimierbare arbeitsame Ameise. Dem tritt das christliche Menschenbild und seine Idee vom Glück entgegen. Wir sind in der Tat jenseits von Eden – aber nicht unrettbar verloren, sondern auf dem Weg zu einem neuen Eden, zur noch ausstehenden Vollendung, zu einem Glück unvordenklicher Vorstellung. Dieses Glück trägt nach christlichem Glauben den Namen Gott.

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¹⁰ K. DEMMER, „Das vergeistigte Glück. Gedanken zum christlichen Eudämonieverständnis“, in *Gregorianum* 72(1991), 99–115, hier 108.

¹¹ J. LAUSTER, *Gott und das Glück. Das Schicksal des guten Lebens im Christentum*, Gütersloh, 2004, 190.

THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVERS IN THE WORKS OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

ZOLTÁN BARA

Abstract. Saint John Chrysostom (344/354–407 A.D.) was one of the main figures of the 4th- century Christian Church. There is no other Father that left a vaster literary heritage. As regards the work of Saint John Chrysostom, we may say that he has left a great work to posterity, unequalled both in size and in contents, comprising 18 volumes in Migne edition (Father Jacques-Paul Migne 1800–1875: French publisher of theological works, a Roman Catholic priest). The topics that Saint John Chrysostom’s approaches in his homilies, letters and other writings are extremely diverse, tackling all the complex problems of human soul.

This article analyzes the works of the famous 4th-century preacher and orator, mainly his sermons and exegetical writings, focusing on the following subjects and points of view: the laity and social life, the ideal Christian society, the peculiarities of the society, family life, education, the duties of parents, the role of pagan schooling in education, the process of education by age groups, differences between Christian and pagan culture, the mission of the laity in family life, the issue of marriage, the identity of the laity in the Church and ways of experiencing the threefold function (*munera*) of the laity (as priest, prophet, and king).

Keywords: Saint John Chrysostom, Greek Fathers, Christianity, Antioch, Constantinople, Ecclesiology, preacher, ideal Christian city, laity, preaching

The presence of Christian ecumenical thinking in our pluralist world is a general desire of the Church. This is what the popes and great theologians of the 20th century, as well as Christian thinkers recommend. This ecumenical attitude is exemplified by instances from the history of the Church, set before us as models to follow. Such a model-personality is John Chrysostom (Ἰωάννης Χρυσόστομος – The Golden Mouth¹), a surprisingly modern character of church history. I wish to add as a curiosity that the Antiochian partners of the great theologian (Diodorus of Tarsus and Theodore of Mopsuestia²) were decisive, respected and recognized personalities of their age, but they were condemned

¹ John – whose surname “Chrysostom” occurs for the first time in the “Constitution” of Pope Vigilius (PL 60, 217) in the year 553 – is generally considered the most prominent doctor of the Greek Church and the greatest preacher ever heard in a Christian pulpit. His natural gifts, as well as exterior circumstances, helped him to become what he was.

² VANYÓ L., *Az ókeresztény egyház irodalma I., Az első három század*, Budapest, 2000, 588; 662; MARTON J., *Keresztény ókor*, Marosvásárhely, 2004, 164.

after they died. However, exactly the opposite happened with Chrysostom: he was persecuted, unrightfully and unjustly condemned by synods, but everybody respected him after he died, and his teachings have been accepted ever since in the West and in the East alike. It is on this account that the personality of John Chrysostom is so attractive, he suffered for the truth.

Preliminaries

The leaders of the western Church have repeatedly urged a better and deeper understanding of the Eastern Churches. Amongst these, Pope Leo XIII encouraged, in several of his Apostolic Letters and encyclicals³, the benevolent relationship between the Latin Church and all those who bear the Christian name, but have a different faith, or keep no community with the heir of Peter. The Pope emphasized that the Holy See appreciated the Eastern Churches and offered its direct help to them; he also highlighted that the Holy See wished to preserve their peculiarities. The Church finds itself in several kinds of relationships with these communities.

In his *motu proprio* issued 1 May 1917, *Dei Providentis*, Pope Benedict XV formulated his statement determinedly in the favour of Christian unity: “The Church is not Greek, not Latin, nor Slavic, but one and universal foundation, the repository of truth and saintliness. It is a summarizing and general sacrament for the salvation of all peoples, all languages, and all nations.”⁴ This thought was carried on unchanged in the *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* decree of the Second Vatican Council:

The Catholic Church holds in high esteem the institutions, liturgical rites, ecclesiastical traditions and the established standards of the Christian life of the Eastern Churches, for in them, distinguished as they are for their venerable antiquity, there remains conspicuous the tradition that has been

³ LEO XIII, *Praeclara gratulationis publica* [Apostolic Letter of Pope Leo XIII., June 20, 1894], *AAS* 26 (1894) 707, <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113praec.htm> 10. 10. 2010; *Leonis XIII Acta*, 14 (1894), 358–370; *Christi nomen* (on Propagation of the Faith and Eastern Churches, Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII promulgated on 24 December 1894), in *Leonis XIII Acta*, 14 (1894), 405–409; *Orientalium dignitas* (On the Churches of the East by Pope Leo XIII November 30), 1894 in *Leonis XIII Acta*, 14 (1894), 201–202; <http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Leo13/113orient.htm> [10.10.2010].

⁴ *Motu proprio Dei providentis* (1 May, 1917): “[...] in Ecclesia Iesu Christi, ut quae non latina sit, non graeca, non slavonica, sed catholica, nullum inter eius filios intercedere discrimen, eosque, sive latinos, sive graecos, sive slavos, sive aliarum nationum [...]” in *AAS* 9 (1917), 529–531.

handed down from the Apostles through the Fathers and that forms part of the divinely revealed and undivided heritage of the universal Church.⁵

Catholics, therefore, are earnestly recommended to avail themselves of the spiritual riches of the Eastern Fathers, which lift up the whole man to the contemplation of the divine.⁶ Pope John Paul II urged the Church to this very same affectionate thoughtfulness by the example of his life and by his official statements. He wrote in his Apostolic Letter beginning *Euntes in mundum*: “Europe is Christian in its very roots.”⁷ The two forms of the great tradition of the Church, the Eastern and the Western, the two forms of culture complement each other like the two “lungs” of a single body. It could be said that the two currents, Eastern and Western, have become simultaneously the first great forms of the inculturation of the faith, within which the one and undivided fullness entrusted by Christ to the Church has found its historical expression. In the differing cultures of the nations of Europe, both in the East and in the West, in music, literature, the visual arts and architecture, as also in modes of thought, there runs a common life-blood drawn from a single source.⁸ In his Apostolic Letter *Orientalis Lumen*, Pope John Paul II showed appreciation for the profound spiritual treasury of the Churches of the East, and urged all followers of the Christian faith to know them; for Eastern Catholics he even set it forth as a serious task. To follow this advice would mean our great enrichment by the knowledge of our traditions, as well as the development of our life of prayers.⁹

Pope Benedict XVI also emphasizes that, although there is much more to be done, it is the time to propagate the “ecumenism of love” among the various Christian denominations.¹⁰ The common statement of Pope Benedict XVI and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, written in the Phanar district of Istanbul

⁵ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Eastern Catholic Churches *Orientalium Ecclesiarum*, 1.

⁶ Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis redintegratio*, 15.

⁷ Apostolic Letter *Euntes in Mundum* on the occasion of the Millennium of the Baptism of Kievan Rus, 12; 21, in *AAS* 80 (1988), 935–956.

⁸ Encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, 34, in *AAS* 79 (1987), 406.

⁹ Apostolic Letter *Orientalis lumen* (2 May, 1995), 3, in *AAS* 87 (1995), 747.

¹⁰ “[...] what should be encouraged first of all is the ecumenism of love, which directly descends from the new commandment that Jesus left to his disciples. Love accompanied by consistent behaviour creates trust [...] ecumenical training should be intensified, starting from the foundations of the Christian faith, that is, from the proclamation of the love of God who revealed himself in the Face of Jesus Christ.” http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/Benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/november/documents/hf_benxvi_spe20061117_pc-chrstuni_en.html. [10.10.2010].

on November 30, 2006, marks this commitment.¹¹ This statement is entirely valid today as well, inasmuch as it emphasizes that the true dialogue of love must advocate and suggest the cultivation of inter-confessional and inter-personal relations.

John Chrysostom is one of the Eastern Church Fathers whose teachings are still unanimously accepted by the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Western Churches.¹² Chrysostom is surprisingly modern even while being ancient. He lived in an age when Eastern and Western Christianity, despite their differences in rites, still considered themselves as one. John Chrysostom is, therefore, our common asset.

Last but not least, the age in which we examine the role of the laity is historically unique, and as such, may yield unique conclusions for present-day pastorship. Firstly, because today the Catholic Church – since the Second Vatican Council – has a different view on the laity, on those baptized. In our age the Church and the secular Christian live under essentially new circumstances. All those conditions which had defined the people of past ages, which had offered the framework of traditional societies and two thousand years of pastorship – natural residence communities, homogeneous society – fell apart. The urbanized man, deprived of the protection of the community, has to suffer several consequences of alienation and has to deal with the moral liberalism of the media and its values often radically contrasting Christianity and the traditional values of mankind.

The Church should find its pastoral ways these days in this completely new context; it needs new pastoral principles, or in other words, a new kind or new methods of evangelization. Accordingly, the role and task of the laity in the Church and in the world is completely new as well. What is the mission of a layman – what can he do for the innovation of the Church, in the interest of evangelisation? Although this question has a bibliography that would fill a library, it is not always the new approaches that are intriguing and compelling, but the well-known, trodden paths, which may sometimes be repeated in church history, should also be discovered. John Chrysostom is an outstanding saint of the 4th century; he was priest in two metropolises of his age. In the 4th century, just like today, in the 21st century, the Church had to deal with urbanization. It

¹¹ http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/november/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20061130_dichiarazione-comune_it.html [10.10.2010].

¹² The Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Churches honor him as a saint and count him among the Three Holy Hierarchs, together with Basil the Great and Gregory Nazianzus. He is recognized by the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church as a saint and as a Doctor (Doctor Eucharistiae) of the Church.

was this special situation at that time, too, which made the Church apply the methods of evangelization, aiming for the general efficiency of the Christian value system. However, human nature and human needs have not changed much ever since. In answer to the challenges of various ages, the Church always updated the eternal truths entrusted to it. The Second Vatican Council brought upon great changes in the self-understanding of the Church as well. The Council set forth the fundamental unity of the Christians (clergy and laity) to modern society. Many have interpreted this as a new image of the Church. The Second Vatican Council advocated the *communio-ecclesiology*. The concept of the Church as a community was exposed in a Decree issued after the synod treating the problem of the laity, entitled *Christifideles laici*, updating it with reference to the mission and vocation of the laypeople. “The identity and original dignity of the believers of Christ is only revealed in the mystery of the Church as community and mystery. Their vocation and mission within the Church and the world can only be defined by this dignity.”¹³ The importance of the concept of the Church as a community is primarily not pragmatic, but dogmatic. The Council did not define the clergy by contrast to the laity. The whole Church is a pastoral nation, in which the clergy and the laity equally find the essence of their identity in their mission and vocation received by Christ, in the unity with Christ.¹⁴ This new concept of the Church, placed on Biblical and Patristic grounds, has had several theological consequences ever since the Council, even to this day. A turning point in the Council’s concept, closely connected to the image of the Church, is the reassessment of the relationship between the Church and the world. Before the Council the world was outside the sphere of the sacred. As opposed to this, the Council, by applying the theological term “the signs of time”, defines the world as a space where God communicated himself to the Church and to mankind. With reference to the laity, this definition had the consequence that civil life, their activity in the world became for them the place of consecration, while the way of consecration leads through the world. The Second Vatican Council issued a special decree about the apostolic activity of the laity (*Apostolicam auctositatem*, 18 November, 1965), which details those contained in the dogmatic constitution of the Church on this matter (*Lumen Gentium*, 21 November, 1964). This document, in which, similarly to all the others, the expression “secular believers” was used instead of “laymen”, presented the essence and characteristics of the apostolic activity of the laity. “The missions are different in the Church, but the

¹³ JOHN PAUL II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles laici* (30 December, 1988), n. 2, in *AAS* 81 (1989), 393–521.

¹⁴ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, 33.

mission is one” – pinpoints the document, and thus settles the theological roots of the pastoral work of the laity, as identical with that of the clergy.¹⁵ Their justification as apostles is offered by their unity with Christ, who sends them unmediated. Baptism engrafts them into his body, the Holy Spirit enforces them in Confirmation, and the Lord himself communicates to them by the Eucharist the love that is the basis of all apostolic work. This basic stance is enforced again in the passage on lay spirituality, which reads: “the efficiency of the apostolic work of the laity depends on how lively is their relationship to Christ.”¹⁶ Although laypeople work in the world, their mission deriving from their unity in Christ refers at the same time both to the world and to the Church. They equally fulfil their mission in the Church and in the world, in the order of spiritual things and transient things.¹⁷ Therefore, it is not the ecclesiological essence of the laity, but their field of apostolic work, which differs from that of the clergy. They must conduct their apostolic work amongst transient things; this is what they must primarily renew.¹⁸ This train of thought seems revolutionary even today, and still the preliminaries and rationality of these thoughts are there almost word-by-word in the homilies of John Chrysostom.

Chrysostom’s personality and special contributions to the universal Church

It is almost impossible to write about John Chrysostom, the priest, without taking into account the *two communities* where he practiced his vocation as a priest. The social situation – in this case the spiritual, economic and social background of the two metropolises – was decisive in all regards of Chrysostom’s life conduct.¹⁹ Chrysostom’s entire existence refers to that of his

¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, *Decree Apostolicam actuositatem*, 2 and 25.

¹⁶ *Decree Apostolicam actuositatem*, 4.

¹⁷ *Decree Apostolicam actuositatem*, 5.

¹⁸ *Decree Apostolicam actuositatem*, 7 and 13.

¹⁹ That is where Saint John Chrysostom’s witness shines so brightly and holds forth such importance for us today. He was born and raised in one of the leading cities of the Roman Empire, Antioch, and died in Constantinople. He did not lead a life detached from the surging city crowds. He knew human nature; he loved it and sought to save it. St. John considered Christians to be saviors of the city, guardians of the city, patrons of the city, and teachers of the city. Besides his own practical experience of the city, from his Hellenic intellectual inheritance Saint John possessed a tremendous appreciation for the πόλις as the very center of civilization. No Father of the Church has left us a more articulate vision for the sanctification of the city than Saint John Chrysostom. It is our Christian task to plumb his depths in crafting a responsible vision for Christian ministry in this urban context.

followers: first as a priest in Antioch, then as the Bishop of Constantinople, he was able to identify himself with both Church communities under his guidance. The first decisive factor was, thus, *the society of the city*. The city, according to his views, must first of all be a city built upon Christian principles.²⁰ The earthly city must be the imitation of the heavenly city, this must be its target, or at least it should try to develop in that direction.²¹ In Chrysostom's city, human relations and the solution of social problems must work according to the norms of the Christian faith, namely by the pattern of the norms of Early Christian communities.²² Therefore, he cites *The Acts of the Apostles* in almost all his pertaining homilies. However, the image of the ideal city – just like previously with Plato, and later with Tommaso Campanella or Saint Thomas More – is utopian with him as well. Making use of all his knowledge and erudition, he wants to *inculturate* the city living by pagan principles and breathing *pagan culture*, ennobling it with Christian spirituality and a Christian system of values. This is his aspiration on the literary-stylistic level of his homilies as

²⁰ Against this background, in Constantinople itself, John proposed in his continuing *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* the model of the primitive Church (Acts 4,32-37) as a pattern for society, developing a social “utopia” (almost an “ideal city”). In fact, it was a question of giving the city a soul and a Christian face. In other words, Chrysostom realized that it is not enough to give alms, to help the poor sporadically, but it is necessary to create a new structure, a new model of society, that is, a model based on the outlook of the New Testament. It was this new society that was revealed in the newborn Church. John Chrysostom thus truly became one of the great Fathers of the Church's social doctrine: the old idea of the Greek “polis” gave way to the new idea of a city inspired by Christian faith. With Paul (1 Cor 8,11), Chrysostom upheld the primacy of the individual Christian, of the person as such, even of the slave and the poor person. His project thus corrected the traditional Greek vision of the “polis”, the city in which large sectors of the population had no access to the rights of citizenship, while in the Christian city all are brothers and sisters with equal rights. The primacy of the person is also a consequence of the fact that it is truly by starting with the person that the city is built, whereas in the Greek “polis” the homeland took precedence over the individual, who was totally subordinated to the city as a whole. So it was that a society built on the Christian conscience came into being with Chrysostom. And he tells us that our “polis” [city] is another, “our commonwealth is in heaven” (Phil 3,20) and our homeland, even on this earth, makes us all equal, brothers and sisters, and binds us to solidarity. Pope BENEDICT XVI, “St. John Chrysostom, On Wednesday, 26 September [2007], at the General Audience in St. Peter's Square”, in *L'Osservatore Romano Weekly Edition in English*, 3 October 2007, page 11.

²¹ Pope BENEDICT XVI, *The Fathers of the Church: From Clement of Rome to Augustine of Hippo*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2009, 86.

²² O. PASQUATO, *I laici in Giovanni Crisostomo tra Chiesa, famiglia e città*, Roma, 2006.

well. His *style* – besides correctness and clarity – is brilliant and flowing,²³ with an inimitable and unique combination of the most suitable notions and examples. Although Chrysostom became famous and unique due to his homilies and not his exegesis, he is similar to Demosthenes in argumentation, to Cicero in his eloquence, and to Bossuet in his biblical and evangelical foundations. He is the last great metropolitan orator of the ancient world.²⁴ He only read and wrote in Greek, he did not understand Syrian.²⁵ Thus Chrysostom was Greek, a Greek Christian, and a Greek city burgess as well.²⁶ Like all other great orators, he could establish a close, impressive relationship with his audience.²⁷ To his mind, the preacher is the messenger of Heaven.²⁸

While recognizing, though with reservations, the human value of *pagan schooling*, he marks its boundaries, and warns about its dangers. With respect to Hellenist schooling, family-centred morality, and moral education, he recommends deculturation. In John's programme education starts in the family, in early childhood; thus the family is the place and cradle of education, that is,

²³ FOZIO, *Biblioteca*, Milano, 1992, 285.

²⁴ M. SIMONETTI, *Lettera e/o allegoria. Un contributo alla storia dell'esegesi patristica*, *Studia Ephemeridis Aug.* 23, Roma, 1985, (180–188) 180. Scholarship has engaged Chrysostom's work in every era of Church history, not just orthodox Christian scholars like Photios the Great, but non-orthodox as well, like Saint Thomas Aquinas, who considered Chrysostom's Commentary on Matthew to be virtually inspired, or the Protestant Reformer John Calvin, who held Chrysostom in such high regard as an exegete. In the 19th century John Henry Newman described Chrysostom as a "bright, cheerful, gentle soul; a sensitive heart." J. H. NEWMAN, "St. Chrysostom", in *Historical Sketches, The Church of the Fathers; St. Chrysostom; Theodoret; Mission of St. Benedict*, 2., London – New York, 1888, 217.

²⁵ *In Matthaenum homiliae* 7, 2, J.-P. MIGNE (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca*, Paris 1857–1866, Ind. 1928–1936. [PG], 57, 7; *In Matthaenum homiliae* 16, 7, PG 57, 248.

²⁶ E. DEKKERS, "Limites sociales et linguistiques de la pastorale liturgique de s. Jean Chrysostome", in *Augustinianum* 20, Roma, 1980, 119–129.

²⁷ W. MAYER, "Who came to Hear John Chrysostom Preach? Recovering a late Fourth-Century Preacher's Audience", in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovaniensis* 76, Louvain, 2000, 73–87; J. H. W. G. LIEBESCHÜTZ, *Barbarians and Bishops. Army, Church, and State in the age of Arcadius and Chrysostom*, Oxford, 1990, 172; S. ZINCONE, "Il valore teologico della predicazione di san Giovanni Crisostomo", in *Augustinianum* 49 (2009), 407–420.

²⁸ *In Genesim sermo* 44, 1, PG 54, 406; R. BRÄNDLE, "Johannes Chrysostomus I.", in *Reallexion für Antike und Christentum* 139/140, Stuttgart, 1997, (426–503) 468; G. ASTRUC, A. LE BOULLUEC, "Les senses caché des Ecritures selon Jean Chrysostome et Origène", in *Studia Patristica* 25, Berlin, 1993, 1–25.

the first and most important factor in the educational process. The person's moral and religious education is the right and duty of the family. The young man brought up this way enriches his religious knowledge on the liturgical meetings in the Church, accompanied by his father. The Church is dependent on the family, and the family on the Church; thus they mutually complete each other in this process. The layman's mission, received by the Church, is to *turn his family into a small Church, a cell of the great Church*, that is, into a family-Church. He considers that the real remedy of the dangers is the moral education of children in the family. The family is the place where the children's integral education happens. Chrysostom divides children's education into several stages, and conceives of it as *the task of parents*, determined by the priority of the instruction to a moral life, and the correct educational environment. Since the education of children happens in a pagan, Jewish, and Christian environment, Chrysostom's programme also goes through changes, when he recommends better and more precise analyses and prescriptions after dividing first the environment, then education into stages. His thinking also developed from the point of view of the necessity of education, when, following a reductive, monastic-type educational pattern, he recommends the Greek *paideia*, of course, with a pure, Christian content.²⁹

For Chrysostom the uniqueness of the Church justifies the expectation that members of the Church should be connected to the Church just like to their own bodies.³⁰ However, the thesis of the unity of the Church cannot be

²⁹ BARA Z., "Valláserkölcsi prioritás Khrüszosztomosz tanításában", in *Studia Theologica Transsylvaniensia* 8, 2006, 23–30.

³⁰ "Saint John Chrysostom taught that the κοινωνία of the Church is a profound miracle. Whence is the origin of the Church? From where did our sacred community arise, brothers and sisters? It has no mere human foundation. The apostles did not simply gather together and come up with the idea of this organization, with certain goals, members, and dues. Not at all. The Church is the continuation of the miracle of the Nativity of Christ. The Son of God was enfleshed in the womb of the Holy Virgin, and born into the world. The Son of God is progressively enfleshed in the establishment and propagation of the Church in the world. The Church is His very Body, the miraculous expansion of His Incarnation in the world. The supernatural origin of the Church is demonstrated, according to St John Chrysostom, by the miracle that took place on the Precious and Life-Giving Cross. When our Savior was hanging upon the Cross, He was pierced with a spear, and suddenly blood and water poured out from His sacred side (*Catecheses ad illuminandos* 3, 17). This blood and water is Holy Baptism by which one is incorporated into the Church, and the Holy Eucharist by which one grows in the Church. These holy mysteries came forth from the side of our Savior in the same way that Eve was taken from the side of Adam. The Church is the Bride of Christ, and so was taken from His side while He was on the Cross, as a fruit of His sacred atonement.

reconciled with the enmities among the members. For there is a blood relation between Christ, the Head, and the Church, *his body*; Christ did not take his body from Heaven, but he took on the body of the Church.³¹ “I have become blood and flesh for you, now I return to you my blood and flesh to become, thus, your blood.”³² Christ, the Word incarnate, descended from Heaven to assimilate the Church. The core of the Christian community is the Christian family itself. The form outlined by Chrysostom is the small Church in which the Christian spouses may follow the mystery of Christ, and the Church, as a paradigm from which the ideal of Christian marriage must spring.

For Chrysostom the family is a pre-eminent place – right after the Church – for reading the Scriptures.³³ The role of the father is decisive: if in Judaism the father is the representative of the synagogue, in a Christian family he is the “prolonging” of the priest, the bishop, as well as the teaching mission of the Church. The Christian family was strongly influenced by pagan customs both in Antioch and in Constantinople. It is a fact that the pagan customs connected to marriage were harsh indeed: the betrothed, whether girl or boy, had to accept their father’s choice about their future spouse; this custom was already in use in the time of Pericles, the pioneer of the Athenian democracy. For wealthy families marriage was a good business opportunity. The wedding habits, from the nuptial ceremony to the feast, the immoral dances and songs of the *mimus*, the cries of the attendants are like preludes for the later dissensions, the love of luxury and abortions, which desecrated the marriage.³⁴ It is in contrast to these customs that Chrysostom formulated his particular project on Christian marriage and the Christian family. From the singularity of the purpose of

She is a miracle of new creation.” G. FRANK, “L’eucharistie et la mémoire sensorielle selon Jean Chrysostome”, in N. BÉRIOU, B. CASEAU, D. RIGAU (eds.), *Pratiques de l’eucharistie dans les Églises d’Orient et d’Occident. II. Les receptions*, Paris, 2009, 765–777; BARA Z., “Ekkoléziológiai szempontok Krüszosztomosz homíliáiban”, in *Studia Theologica Transsylvaniaensia* 13/1, 2010, 131–146.

³¹ *Ante exsilium* 2, PG 52, 429.

³² *In Joannem homiliae* 47, 3, PG 59, 261.

³³ We can decipher creation in the light of Scripture, the letter that God has given to us. God is called a “tender father” (*philostorgios*), a healer of souls (*Homily on Genesis* 40, 3), a mother and an affectionate friend (*On Providence* 8, 11–12). But in addition to this second step — first, the creation as a “ladder” to God, and then, the indulgence of God through a letter which he has given to us, Sacred Scripture — there is a third step. BENEDICT XVI, *The Fathers of the Church: From Clement of Rome to Augustine of Hippo*, 85.

³⁴ ZAMFIR K., “Men and Women in the House(hold) of God. Chrysostom’s Homilies on 1Tim 2,8-15”, in *Sacra Scripta* 2, 2008, (144–164) 151.

marriage – this was initially the *remedium concupiscentiae* for him as well – he arrived, also due to his background as a priest, to the twofold purpose: temperance and procreation. Approaching from the side of temperance, following the ideas of Saint Paul, Chrysostom got to a more personal level, which meant for him perfect love and the purity of marriage. The unity of the spouses brings to life the unity and unbreakability of the sacrament of marriage, as the sign of the mystical union between Christ and the Church.

Chrysostom takes over the traditional view about married life, according to which the woman is subject to the man on all levels, although in a differentiated way, which is constructed according to the thought-pattern offered by Eph 5,23 and Eph 5,28. In his particular train of thought, the various types of relationships characteristic to family life are also built upon this thought-pattern. From the merely physical contemplation of the sacrament of marriage he arrives to the ideal of Paul's "great secret": thus the purpose of marriage is not only procreation, but also the mutual completion of the two parties.³⁵ The transition from the Church to the "small Church" ("Domestic Church"), the family is compulsory.³⁶ The problems occurring during this process are very complex, as are also the solutions offered by John Chrysostom. It is natural that in his attempt to find solutions he was influenced by his education, as well as the tension of the difficulties deriving from it. His erudition reclines on three cultural pillars: the Jewish, Greek, and Christian habitual systems. To master the Israelite tradition means for him an education within the family, common prayer in the family, the familiarity with and reading of the Bible, the forcefulness of the relationship between the father and the son. The Greek dimension, which, after the setback of monastic influences, continued with the classical form of the *paideia*, was due to Chrysostom's Antiochian learning. The Christian dimension, which Chrysostom wanted to bring in as an inner structuring principle of the families, was less successful in reality.

³⁵ BARA Z., "Aranyházú Szent János a házasság szentségéről", in *Studia Theologica Transsylvaniensia* 12/1, 2009, 99–123.

³⁶ In this spirit the 'Domestic Church' (ecclesiola) is lived out in our love for each other and the love Jesus has for His Church. We learn and grow in faith as individuals, as couples, and as community. "The Christian home is the place where the children receive the first proclamation of the faith. For this reason it is rightly called 'Domestic Church,' a community of grace and prayer, a school of human virtues and of Christian charity." JOHN PAUL II, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris Consortio* (22 November 1981), 17, in *AAS* 74 (1982): http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jpii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio_en.html [10.10.2010].

Within the Christian family, Chrysostom paid special attention to *women*, who, as *betrothed, wives, mothers, and nuns*, were the incarnation of the true feminine ideal. The Christian woman is pious, self-sacrificing, devoted, the embodiment of kindness, love and beauty. It is also a fact that of all the Church fathers of the age, John Chrysostom's ideas about women are the most tender and positive. However, he says nothing else about their social role; in this he remains a product of his age. In Constantinople, especially during Chrysostom's second exile, there was a woman of important and significant role, a deaconess called Olimpiades, who maintains the relationship between the exiled bishop and his followers with extraordinary ability and wisdom. Olimpiades also stands as evidence for Chrysostom's respectful treatment of women.

In the *Christian community*, which Chrysostom readily calls *family*, everybody has the same dignity due to baptism. He invites the lay believers to actively take part in community life: to collaborate with the clergy and the bishop by the power of baptism, which makes them apt for partaking in the *threefold munus of Christ*, that is, the priestly, the kingly, and the prophetic function.³⁷ In his view the believers' practice of general priesthood appears in the liturgy by completing the bishop's and the clergy's prayers.³⁸ The "diaconia of love" for the poor is also a very important task, since it is Christ himself whom the believers serve when helping the poor.³⁹ The help and support of the poor is the altar on which lay believers may present their sacrifice (alms) to Christ because we always "*help*" Christ if we help the poor. The laity must also take part in the pastoral work of the bishop and the clergy by the power of their general priestly function, since they are more suitable for constant communication in the city than the priests and the bishop.

The (private) education or instruction of others is the prophetic function of lay believers, and it must be characterized by a permanent communication with the clerical hierarchy. They must be like a bridge by which they must pass the teaching of the priests and the bishop on to everybody, that is, Christians, but also heretics and pagans. The condition is a life of confession, always emphasized by Chrysostom. The author describes the practice of the royal

³⁷ BARA Z., "Il sacerdozio dei fedeli in San Giovanni Crisostomo", in *Studia Theologica Transsylvaniensia* 2, 2001, 77–100.

³⁸ BARA Z., "Krüszosztomosz az eukarisztia ünneplésén való tevékeny részvételről", in NÓDA M., ZAMFIR K., DIÓSI D., BODÓ M. (eds.), *Ideje az emlékezésnek, Liber amicorum a 60 éves Marton József köszöntése*, Budapest – Kolozsvár 2010, (119–126), 122.

³⁹ BARA Z., *Il sacerdozio di Cristo e dei fedeli in San Giovanni Crisostomo*, Alba Iulia/Gyulafehérvár, 2010, 148.

function within the religious community, as the common enterprise of the clergy and the laity on the level of leadership and governing.⁴⁰ Thus the magistrate may receive advice and assistance from his inferior (a layman). According to Chrysostom, this function can be exercised in deciding the adequacy of the candidates for priesthood, in the just criticism of ecclesiastical issues, as well as in the collaboration with the bishop about matters of discipline.

The local Church and the family are always open for external mission with the aim of Christianising the city and its customs. However, the building of a Christian city needs an inner construction first: to demolish an old principle that the citizens do not procreate for themselves but for the glory of the city. Chrysostom, therefore, repeatedly stresses: everybody is the master of his own body, and it is not the city that has command of their body. Chrysostom here too uses the argument of *oikonomia*; this is the norm to be followed by a family. *The Christian family and Christian marriage is the basis of the new society*. Chrysostom praises the Christian family in contrast to the city built upon the old social principles; therefore, *everything that threatens the Christian family must be excluded* from the city of Antioch, even if it is connected to the traditions of the city. The Christian from Antioch should not tolerate the loud pagan feasts, horse races, or theatres and the agora. Chrysostom wanted to dispose of all these as bad pagan habits.⁴¹ Of course, to enjoy nice things was not only entertainment for the city people, but a community rite, the feast of the joy of life.⁴² Recognizing and acknowledging this fact, Chrysostom recommended new opportunities for feasting. Unfortunately, all these could not be accomplished, since Chrysostom was already a bishop in the capital of the world as it was known then, and not in the provincial Antioch. A way to prolong the evangelisation of the city recommended and supported by Chrysostom were the processions in the neighbourhood of the city, organized for the veneration of saints and martyrs. The origins of these processions can be

⁴⁰ BARA Z., “A laikus identitása Aranyszájú Szent Jánosnál”, in *Studia Theologica Transsylvaniensia* 10, 2008, 121–136.

⁴¹ M. FOUCAULT, *L'uso dei piaceri* III., Economica, Milano 1985, 147–155; S.-P. BERGJAN, “Das hier ist kein Theater, und ihr sitzt nicht da, um Schauspieler zu betrachten und zu klatschen, Theaterpolemik und Theater metaphern bei Johannes Chrysostomos”, in *Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum* 8 (2004), 567–592.

⁴² E. PATLAGEAN, *Pauvreté économique*, 182–183; F. GRAF, “Feste und Fehden. Städtische Feste und der Konflikt der Religionen im spätantiken römischen Reich”, in M. WALLRAFF, R. BRÄNDLE (Hrsg), *Chrysostomosbilder in 1600 Jahren: Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenvaters*, Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 105, Berlin – New York, 2008, 3–22.

found both in pagan and in Hebrew tradition. In Chrysostom's pastoral thinking, the processions to the martyria and the processional veneration of relics could replace immoral theatrical performances; such veneration of saints and martyrs may call upon imitation by the city dwellers, and, last but not least, this is a serious form of evangelisation.

However, this characterization may seem too superficial and meaningless. Because of his personal evangelic ideals and his Christian virtues, his personality needs a deeper scrutiny. The *hierarchy of virtues* for Chrysostom *can be deduced from their connection with the common good*. The authentic virtue is related to Christ's activity, which we will imitate provided we do everything in the interest of the common good, and do not only seek our own welfare.⁴³ Actually, there is one single commandment, which comprises the requirement of the love for God and one's neighbour. Nothing explains this better, and he who believes in Christ, learns nothing else than paying attention to one's neighbour and caring for their salvation.⁴⁴ Virginité and fasting are useful and important in themselves, but that what serves the need of one's neighbour in all circumstances is more praiseworthy.⁴⁵ The measure of the greatness of virginité is fraternal love and the compassion (*compassio*) felt for others.⁴⁶ There is no Christian love where there is no care for the needy. One can ascend to heaven without virginité, but nobody can go there, even being a virgin, if lacking compassion and charity.⁴⁷ The box for alms must stand there by the bedside in the inner room of every family.⁴⁸ *Most important virtues are love, truth, and the alms* – even more important than virginité.⁴⁹ Christian families must always be open for the poor. The beautiful songs of the *kontakia* in the Byzantine Church still preserve the virtue of compassion formulated by Chrysostom.

However, he, who was *the advocate of none other than the poor*, had to give up his utopian dream that the rich would share their goods with the poor; he became the preacher of the duty of charity, stating that for the rich,

⁴³ *In Joannem homiliae* 15, 3, PG 59, 101.

⁴⁴ *De beato Philogonio* 6, PG 48, 752.

⁴⁵ *In illud Habentes eundem spiritum* 6, PG 51, 277; H. R. DROBNER, *Patrologia*, Roma, 2003, 438.

⁴⁶ *In illud Habentes eundem spiritu* 6, PG 51, 276–277; A. WENGER, art. "S. Jean Chrysostome", in *Dictionnaire du Spiritualité, Ascétique et Mystique* 8, Paris, 1974, 339.

⁴⁷ *In Matthaëum homiliae* 47, 4, PG 58, 486.

⁴⁸ *In epistulam I. ad Corinthios* 43, 4, PG 61, 373.

⁴⁹ *In Matthaëum homiliae* 46, 4, PG 58, 480.

almsgiving was a necessary means for salvation: “I say not these for the sake of the poor, but for your salvation, oh, you rich because all shall be damned who here on earth did not feed Christ in the poor.”⁵⁰ It is particularly noteworthy that John, similarly to Jesus, did not leave the poor to their fate, but linked their subsistence to the rich, claiming that the rich could not live or be saved without the poor. God left the poor and poverty to the benefit of the rich, since the alms are the instrument of God’s mercy in the hands of the rich.⁵¹ For John Chrysostom the man begging at the Church entrance in need of alms is the greatest treasure of the Church. The poor also raises the complexity of the Church, he is a *living sermon* on almsgiving, since by his mere presence he permanently signals for the believers that wealth is transitory, can easily be lost, and is of no avail on this earth.⁵²

Chrysostom’s image of women is definitely positive. In his view the woman is not lower ranked than the man in her abilities for apostolic service. As apparent in his sermons, he even counts on women in this service. This is why we treat his collaboration with Olimpiades in more detail.

John Chrysostom’s pastoral ideas and activity must be assessed *in the light of his eschatological spirituality*. The reshaping of society and the city is not a self-sufficient task for him, nor the changing of a simply morally good and nice habit. Chrysostom thinks in a completely different dimension: the life of a Christian does not end in this world;⁵³ we are the expectants of another world, in which everybody attains their own reward or punishment. Unfortunately, the world does not hurry towards the promised land of Christ, but feels better on Satan’s path.⁵⁴

The ultimate cause of his activity, which he recommends for the laity as well, is *the glory of God*; this must be the purpose and unifying idea of all their activities, this doxological element must accompany their whole lives. Therefore, human existence, in Chrysostom’s words, is similar to the lyre, the aim of which is to allow the chords of the strings to harmoniously resound the praise of God, and beyond: It must become a perfect appraisal of God. This doxological vocation urges the believer to break away from all earthly things

⁵⁰ *In epistulam ad Colossenses homiliae* 8, 1, PG 62, 351.

⁵¹ *De eleemosyna* 1, PG 51, 261.

⁵² *In epistulam I. ad Corinthios*, PG 61, 254–255; C. CRÉPEY, “La récompense, un thème majeur dans le discours pastoral de Jean Chrysostome”, in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 83 (2009), 97–113.

⁵³ *Ad populum Antiochenum* 9, PG 49, 27.

⁵⁴ *In epistulam ad Philippenses* 13, 2, PG 62, 279. S. VEROSTA, *Johannes Chrysostomus. Staatsphilosoph und Geschichtstheologe*, Graz, 1960, 145–156.

and yearn for heavenly things. This must happen as it happens when one is playing the lute. Similarly to the lute, we must pay attention and be mindful that the strings of our existence are tight and well tuned, and are always animated and enforced by the experience of faith, so that Christ, the lutist, may find the pleasing, harmonious divine melody (the life of the Christian), which is one, true, and unrepeatable. Christ expects the Christian man to be, like a lute, disposed to Him, well tuned, and always ready.⁵⁵

Chrysostom recommends Paul the Apostle as an ideal: “May Christ speak from our exemplary lives. [...] Therefore, he has created such a strong structure (existence) for us, and he wants not that it remained unused, but he wants it to be permanently ready. And if you say that this is so, then why don’t you keep the loose strings tuned and ready, why do you let the strings fall out of tune and become soft with your languidity, and the whole lute become unusable, [...], but if Christ finds it ready and tuned, he will play it for the benefit of our souls.”⁵⁶

Chrysostom places this game of love between Christ and all other people into an even deeper context, which draws the entire heaven into this harmonious unity: he calls into dance the angels, archangels, the cherubim, even the Holy Spirit itself. At this point the image of the lyre is insufficient as an analogy because now we shall carry within ourselves, or what is more, we shall be the abode of the Lord of the Sun and the Moon, the Lord of the angels,⁵⁷ and we ourselves become identical with the skies.⁵⁸ In addition, the personal relationship of man and God opens up for an ecclesiastical perspective; this is another mode of God’s presence among us. His presence follows the pattern of loving cohabitation: *For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them* (Matt 18,20). The *doxological* perspective inspired Chrysostom’s whole life, and it definitely marked the ultimate aim of his spirituality. Everything else is liminal and transitory, and is meant to be exceeded. Chrysostom’s last words, “Glory to God for everything”,⁵⁹ as in a *verbum abbreviatum*, comprised every word he ever thought or uttered during his life, and referred back in a way to his life in

⁵⁵ P. KLASVOGT, *Leben zur Verherrlichung Gottes. Botschaft des Johannes Chrysostomos. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Pastoral*, Bonn, 1992, 247.

⁵⁶ *In epistulam ad Romanos homiliae* 8, 7, PG 60, 464.

⁵⁷ *In epistulam ad Romanos homiliae* 8, 7, PG 60, 464.

⁵⁸ KLASVOGT, 247.

⁵⁹ PALLADIUS, “Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome” 11, in A.-M. MALINGREY (ed.), *Sources Chrétiennes*, Paris, 1988 [SC], 341, 226.

Antioch: “I know no other life than you and your salvation.”⁶⁰ His whole life, beyond anything else, was *taking pains for the salvation of others*, which is for him the *greatest doxology* proffered for God. This is the most sublime and ultimate message that the pious and holy priest⁶¹ transmitted as inheritance to the laity of the two cities, which he ruled, but also to us, his present-day listeners and readers.

John Chrysostom’s basic attitude, which characterized him as a priest in Antioch and later a bishop and for which he readily undertook any sacrifice, suffering, and persecution, was his unconditioned devotion for the truth and his followers. He was convinced that the Church was Christ’s Church, and that Christ is always present in his Church. It was by the faith of this permanent divine presence that he could *formulate in such a beautiful and unique manner* his wonderful lines on Christ’s presence in the Church: “the Church triumphs invincibly; it overcomes the scheming of deceitfulness; it brightly repels the attacks of shame; if it is wounded, its wounds will not inflame; if the rivers flood, it will not be flooded, if it embarks on a ship, it will not be shipwrecked; if it goes to war, it will not be defeated.”⁶² It was this conviction that guided the words and actions of Chrysostom. He never had faith in his own strength; he was physically weak, but spiritually strong, and always reclined on God’s mercy. It was also this conviction which made him accept his exile, and what is more, even before his death he prayed to the Glorious God for all this – “May glory be to God for everything.”⁶³

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⁶⁰ *Ad populum Antiochenum* 9, 1, PG 49, 103.

⁶¹ PALLADIUS, “*Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*” 20, in *SC* 341, 450.

⁶² *Homilia de capto Eutropio* 2, 17, PG 52, 397: „Τοιοῦτον ἔχει μεγεθος ἡ Εκκλησία πολεμουμένη νικᾷ ἐπιβουλευομένη περιγίνεται ὕβριζομένη, λαμπρότερα καθίσταται δέχεται τραύματα, καὶ οὐ καταπίπτει ὑπὸ τῶν ἐλκῶν κλυδωνίζεται, ἀλλ’ οὐ καταποντίζεται χειμάζεται, ἀλλὰ νανάγιον οὐχ ὑπομένει παλαίει, ἀλλ’ οὐχ ἡττᾶται πυκτεύει, ἀλλ’ οὐ νικᾶται.”

⁶³ XVI. BENEDEK PÁPA, *Az egyházatyák*, Budapest, 2009, 126; H. CAMPENHAUSEN, *Părinții greci ai Bisericii* [trans. M-M. ANGHELESCU], București, 2005, 229; E. NICA (PS. EMILIAN LOVIȘTEANUL), “Monahismul în viața și opera Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur”, in *Analele Științifice ale Universității Al. I. Cuza* (serie nouă), *Teologie Ortodoxă*, tomul XII, Iași, 2007, (125–138), 131.

IMMORTALITY IN THE BOOK OF WISDOM IN THE CONTEXT OF THE OVERLAPPING WORLDS

RÉKA VALENTIN

Abstract. This essay addresses the concept of immortality in the Book of Wisdom within the context of its cosmology. According to the Book of Wisdom, God created all things in order that they might exist; the created world was incorrupt and in communion with God through wisdom, and the dominion of death was not on earth. Death, however, came to earth having been invited by the wicked. Consequently, the earth became the space where three realms can be seen: the earth is overlapped by the Kingdom of God and that of Hades. Therefore, human beings have the opportunity to enter either of these two kingdoms, thus, experiencing life or death. Within this context, wisdom becomes the criterion in appropriating immortality, that is, an eternal communion with God.

Keywords: God, death, earth, wisdom, righteous, wicked, immortality.

1. Introduction

The Book of Wisdom¹ provides us with a cosmology, which depicts the universe divided into three realms. By identifying these realms and describing

¹ From now on I refer to it as Wisdom. As a place of origin, the majority of scholars accept an Alexandrian setting in the early Roman period. See provenance and dating in David WINSTON, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, AB 43, Garden City, 1979, 20–25; Moina MCGLYNN, *Divine Judgment and Divine Benevolence in the Book of Wisdom*, WUNT 139, Tübingen, 2001, 9–13. Apocalyptic eschatology, wisdom tradition and Greek philosophy are the sources influencing the concept of immortality in Wisdom. See George W. E. NICKELSBURG, *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism*, HTR 26, Cambridge, 1972, 62–82; John J. COLLINS, “Cosmos and Salvation: Jewish Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Hellenistic Age,” in John J. COLLINS (ed.), *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, JSJSup 54, Leiden, 1997, 317–338; repr. from *History of Religions* 17 (1977); John J. COLLINS, “The Root of Immortality: Death in the Context of Jewish Wisdom,” in John J. COLLINS (ed.), *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, JSJSup 54, Leiden, 1997, 351–367; repr. from *HTR* 71 (1978); John J. COLLINS, “Apocalyptic Eschatology in Philosophical Dress in the Wisdom of Solomon,” in James L. KUGEL (ed.), *Shem in the Tents of Japhet: Essays on the Encounter of Judaism and Hellenism* JSJSup 74; Leiden, 2002, 93–107; Alan F. SEGAL, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Western Religion*, ABRL, New York, 2004, 385–386; James M. REESE, *Hellenistic Influence on the Book of Wisdom and Its Consequences* AnBib 41, Rome, 1970, 33–89; Jack T. SANDERS, “Wisdom, Theodicy, Death, and the Evolution of Intellectual Traditions,” in *JSJ* 36 (2005), 273–274.

the dynamics between them, we get a clearer picture of the way the world is ordered in Wisdom. This undertaking helps us to recognize the factors that determine the fate of human beings in Wisdom's perception. The cosmology of Wisdom provides the framework for our understanding of *immortality*; the Kingdom of God, Hades and the earth constitute the context in which life or death falls to man's share. In this article, therefore, we shall embark upon a project of presenting the Kingdom of God, Hades and the earth, the way they are related to each other, as well as their importance with regard to the life of human beings. We shall also reflect on the role of wisdom, which is highlighted with regard to achieving immortality. *Immortality* proposed by Wisdom is defined in terms of a life that is already present in the righteous and continues after death.

εἰμὶ μὲν κἀγὼ θνητὸς ἄνθρωπος ἴσος ἅπασιν [...]
 διὰ τοῦτο εὐξάμην καὶ φρόνησις ἐδόθη μοι
 ἐπεκαλεσάμην καὶ ἦλθεν μοι πνεῦμα σοφίας [...]
 ὃν οἱ κτησάμενοι πρὸς θεὸν ἐστείλαντο φιλίαν
 διὰ τὰς ἐκ παιδείας δωρεὰς συσταθέντες
 ἐμοὶ δὲ δῶη ὁ θεὸς εἰπεῖν κατὰ γνώμην
 καὶ ἐνθυμηθῆναι ἀξίως τῶν δεδομένων² (7:1ab, 7, 14b-15b)

2. God and His Kingdom

The first realm that will be discussed is pictured as a kingdom. κρινουῶσιν ἔθνη καὶ κρατήσουσιν λαῶν καὶ βασιλεύσει αὐτῶν κύριος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας³ (3:8) implies a kingdom⁴, where the αἰδιος⁵ God is the king, a sovereign ruler,

² “I also am mortal, like everyone else [...] Therefore I prayed, and understanding was given me; I called on God, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. [...] those who get it obtain friendship with God, commended for the gifts that come from instruction. May God grant me to speak with judgment, and to have thoughts worthy of what I have received [...]” If not otherwise stated, the Bible references point to the *Book of Wisdom*.

³ “They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them forever.” All Biblical translations are from NRSV.

⁴ See also 10:10. Note that we treat the book as a literary unit.

⁵ “Eternal”; for the eternity of God see 2:23; 7:26; 13:1-9. Eternity here has to be understood in its absolute sense, that is, without beginning or end because it refers to God and his kingdom. The accusative of duration of time in 3:8, especially because it is in plural, also implies eternity in an absolute sense. See Ilaria RAMELLI, David KONSTAN, *Terms for Eternity: Aiónios and Aídios in Classical and Christian Texts*, New Jersey, 2007, 39–41, 48; H. SASSE, “aiōn”, *TDNT* 31.

and where the exalted righteous will also rule.⁶ The verse describes a transcendent eternal kingdom that is not on earth; the transcendence of this kingdom is supported by God's transcendence (13:1-9), too.⁷ The Kingdom of God appears to stand in opposition to Hades' world (1:13-14). Apart from being eternal, the Kingdom of God also has qualitative attributes, since it is a metaphor for the communion with God, and eventually for immortality.⁸

In order to have a better perception of this realm, we shall now look at God, the king of this kingdom. The doctrine of God in Wisdom is best described as a diversity of images; these images gradually depict God in Himself⁹ and in relation to the cosmos. $\delta \omega\nu$ (13:1b)¹⁰ is described by a variety of roles. Above all his other roles, God is portrayed as the King of cosmos (3:8; 6:3-5; 12:12-18).¹¹ He is all powerful and invincible (5:19; 11:17-22),

⁶ 6:4 also mentions the Kingdom of God, but the context of the verse differs from that of 3:8, and it is more likely that βασιλεία refers to the earthly rule of the kings, who are under the rule of God. See "The Earth - A Created Kingdom". From the context of 3:8c (3:1-9 is linked to 2:12-20, where the wicked condemn the righteous to death), it becomes evident that Wisdom speaks about the afterlife of the righteous in 3:1-9; thus, 3:8c refers to the eschatological reign of the righteous, not to earthly rule.

⁷ See below.

⁸ 3:1-9 associates various states with the Kingdom of God (being in the hand of God, judgment and reigning, remaining in God's love, and all of them describe the Kingdom of God qualitatively as different aspects of the closeness to God (see also the last two propositions of the sorites in 6:17-20). Immortality in Wisdom, as Reese formulates it, is "a state of eternal, blessed communion with God and his saints", REESE, 62.

⁹ The author of Wisdom uses the teleological and cosmological arguments of Plato, Aristotle and the Stoa in 13:1-9 to support the existence of God. WINSTON, 253. We do not treat this issue in details; what is relevant for us is the relationship between God and the cosmos.

¹⁰ "The one who exists"; God has life, therefore he is immortal. The term emphasizes the existence and eternity of God. Wisdom rejects the Platonic understanding of God; God is the personal creator, who is transcendent. REESE, 50–62. For more details concerning 13:1, see WINSTON, 249; Addison G. WRIGHT, "Wisdom," in Raymond E. BROWN et al. (eds.), *JBC*, Englewood Cliffs, 1968, 565; José VILCHEZ, Erik EYNIKEL, "Wisdom of Solomon," in William R. FARMER (ed.), *The International Bible Commentary: An Ecumenical Commentary for the Twenty-First Century*, Collegeville, 1998, 981.

¹¹ For a discussion of the sovereign power of God, see MCGLYNN, 48–50; REESE, 74–75. The background of the presentation of God and that of the just man is the Hellenistic kingly ideal. For a more detailed treatment of this subject see REESE, 71–87.

sovereign but merciful.¹² For the righteous, He is a king, who protects (5:16) and rewards (3:7-8; 13; 5:16), whereas for the unrighteous, He is the King and Judge, whose wrath leads to destruction (1:6-11; 3:16-19; 4:6, 20f; 5:17:23).

Since God has life (13:1b; 2:23b; 7:26), He can create. He is the transcendent, omniscient Creator of all (13:1-5)¹³, including cosmos and humankind (9:1-2a).¹⁴ He created all for living (1:13-14; 2:23)¹⁵ and wants to spare all (11:15-12:27).¹⁶ The transcendent Creator is present in the world through His wisdom (1:1-7; 7:22-27; 8:1, 4; 9:1, 18).¹⁷ Human beings also establish a relationship with God by entering into symbiosis with wisdom (8:9, 16).¹⁸ The character of wisdom, as well as her movements (1:5; 4:2; 6:13-16; 7:24a)¹⁹, display the dynamics of the communication between God and people.

¹² “God’s restraint of power and demonstrations of mercy are the main indicators of the real extent of his power” argues McGlynn, in MCGLYNN, 49. McGlynn concludes that mercy is synonymous with the power of God (see Isa 16:5). See MCGLYNN, 50.

¹³ See REESE, 53–62; Leo G. PERDUE, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job*, JSOTSup 112, Sheffield, 1991, 41.

¹⁴ “The opening verse of the prayer of Solomon duplicates the double notion of creation in Genesis 1; that is, the creation of cosmos and of humanity.” Michael KOLARCIK, “Creation and Salvation in the Book of Wisdom,” in Richard J. CLIFFORD, John J. COLLINS (eds.), *Creation in the Biblical Traditions*, CBQMS 24; Washington, 1992, 102, note 10.

¹⁵ See “The Earth – A Created Kingdom”.

¹⁶ The mercy dialogue in 11:15-12:27 implies universal salvation. See Reese, 109–112, 114–116; MCGLYNN, 52–53; Michael KOLARCIK, “Universalism and Justice in the Wisdom of Solomon,” in N. CALDUCH-BENAGES, J. VERMEYLEN (eds.) *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom*, BETL 143, Leuven, 1999, 289–301; Frederic RAURELL, “From ΔΙΚΑΙΟΣΥΝΗ to ΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΑ,” in N. CALDUCH-BENAGES, J. VERMEYLEN (eds.), *Treasures of Wisdom: Studies in Ben Sira and the Book of Wisdom*, BETL 143, Leuven, 1999, 331.

¹⁷ The terms *righteousness*, *goodness*, *wisdom*, *the spirit of the Lord*, *holy spirit*, and *hand of God* are employed synonymously in Wisdom (see 1:1-7; 10:4; 14:6). They represent the various manifestations of God in the cosmos. See WINSTON, 100, 34; Ernest G. CLARKE, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, CBC, Cambridge, 1973, 14; WRIGHT, “Wisdom,” 559; MCGLYNN, 58, 98–99. Among all these, wisdom becomes the main manifestation in Wisdom. See CLARKE, 14; Joseph REIDER, *The Book of Wisdom*, JAL, New York, 1957, 51, note 4; WINSTON, 34. See also chap 10–19 for the work of wisdom on behalf of humankind.

¹⁸ REESE, 41. For the community between wisdom and man see also 1:1-5; 7:14, 27c; 6:12-21; 9:9-12.

¹⁹ Wisdom is depicted as continuously moving back and forth, penetrates the righteous, but flees from the evil.

Further, there are two other images contributing to the whole picture, which are only experienced by the righteous. God is the Friend (7:14b, 27)²⁰ and Father of the righteous (2:12, 13, 18; 11:10; 19:6).²¹ These latter images describe a relationship between God and the righteous that works on a different level. As the Father and Friend of the righteous, God creates a relationship that does not require subordination on the part of human beings; rather, it displays a bond between the members of a family.

All these images assembled together form the mosaic of the picture of God. Each fragment in the mosaic has importance in itself, but also contributes to the whole picture. God is the Creator, but He is also a Creator who judges. The various fragments of the mosaic are interrelated. Our next task is to see how these images are working within the mosaic. How can the image of a creator who loves be compatible with that of the judge who destroys the wicked? Can a king that judges be a father and a friend, too? What is the importance of these roles in the context of immortality?

We could observe that the diversity of God's roles is not revealed to all. There are some features which can be experienced only by the righteous. In a similar way, the righteous will never know some aspects of God that will be experienced by the wicked alone.²² The book reflects the idea that God is both righteous and merciful. As a merciful Creator, God gives the possibility for all to repent (11:15-12:27); however, being righteous, God is opposing unrighteousness.²³ Furthermore, since the world created by Him is good (1:14), He is responsible for preventing it from deterioration and, thus, He has to judge unrighteousness. Moreover, the creation itself is ordered in a way that promotes goodness and opposes unrighteousness.²⁴ Therefore, "creation, exodus and salvation are all related in the book as sings of God's justice and goodness. [...] The exodus event and the ultimate judgment are the continuity of God's

²⁰ For friendship in Greco-Roman world see David KONSTAN, "Friendship, Frankness and Flattery," in John T. FITZGERALD (ed.), *Friendship, Flattery and Frankness of Speech: Studies on Friendship in the New Testament World*, Leiden, 1996, 7–19.

²¹ See REESE, 109.

²² The book clearly asserts the exaltation of the righteous as a king and judge (3:7-8). This either means that he is not judged by God or God's visitation upon him actually constitutes of his exaltation.

²³ Righteousness and justice is God's breastplate and helmet in the fight against the wicked (5:18); consequently, his enemies must be unrighteousness and injustice.

²⁴ MCGLYNN, 30.

creative efforts. Both events re-establish God's goodness and justice [...]”²⁵ Thus, the fact that the wicked face the judging God, whereas the righteous experience the loving Father, arises from the principle of creation: the world was created for living, and the Creator will always oppose anything that menaces the life of His creation.²⁶

The answer to the last question is given by the mosaic as a whole: the hope of the righteous is based on a Creator, who created all for living, a King and Judge, who saves, and the family bond with the Father and Friend. The righteous, who is in communion with God, will also share the qualities of God; he will partake in love and power by becoming king and judge, the child of the Father, as well as His friend. Most importantly, the righteous will have life, receiving the life from $\delta\ \omega\upsilon$; therefore, he shares in His immortality.

3. Hades' Kingdom

Death is mentioned first in 1:12a: $\mu\eta\ \zeta\eta\lambda\omicron\upsilon\tau\epsilon\ \theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \pi\lambda\acute{\alpha}\nu\eta\ \zeta\omega\eta\varsigma\ \upsilon\mu\omega\upsilon\nu$ (1:12a).²⁷ By warning the audience, the author acknowledges its existence. The reason behind the call in 1:12 is explained by 1:13: $\acute{\omicron}\tau\iota\ \delta\ \theta\epsilon\delta\varsigma\ \theta\acute{\alpha}\nu\alpha\tau\omicron\nu\ \omicron\upsilon\kappa\ \acute{\epsilon}\pi\omicron\iota\eta\sigma\epsilon\nu$ ²⁸. This coheres with the argument of 1:14: that God created all for living and the dominion of death is not on earth.²⁹ The context of the exhortation, thus, sets a clear demarcation between God and death. Death is not coming from God; it is a reality distant from God. On the contrary, God created this whole world for living; death was not part of his creation and it was not in his plans (1:14).³⁰ Indeed, death appears to be the characteristic of the realm called $\acute{\alpha}\delta\omicron\upsilon\ \beta\alpha\sigma\acute{\iota}\lambda\epsilon\iota\omicron\varsigma$ ³¹ (1:14),³² the term describes this realm as the

²⁵ KOLARCIK, “Creation and Salvation,” 98–99. For an intense treatment of the theme of justice and merci, see MCGLYNN. For the Exodus account, see chapters 11–19.

²⁶ Note that the statement that the creation is good also means that it is in communion with God, and therefore it is designed for immortality. See more at “The Earth – A Created Kingdom”.

²⁷ “Do not invite death by the error of your life.”

²⁸ “Because God did not make death”; the argument of 1:13 implies absolute free-will with regard to sin, as it is expressed in Deut 30:19: “I offer you the choice of life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life.” See REIDER, 56–57, note 13.

²⁹ For the interpretation of this verse see “The Earth – A Created Kingdom”.

³⁰ See Michael KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death in the Book of Wisdom 1-6: A Study of Literary Structure and Interpretation*, AnBib 127; Roma: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991, 67, 147; A. P. HAYMAN, “The Survival of Mythology in the Wisdom of Solomon,” *JSJ* 30 (1999), 127–136; REIDER, 57–58, note 14; RAURELL, 347.

³¹ “dominion of Hades”.

dwelling of a ruler or a kingdom. Hades' kingdom is the dominion that stands in opposition to God and His creation (1:13-14; 5:17f), but it has a relationship with the wicked (1:16; 2:24).³³ The connection between Hades and the earth is established by the ungodly, who invite death and make covenant with him (1:16a).³⁴ Thus, death emerges personified as the enemy of God and the overlord of the wicked. Hades is identified with the Devil's kingdom in 2:24a; there again, death appears personified. Nevertheless, behind the mythological figure of death we can recognize an abstract religious concept. The author uses the mythological framework in order to visualize God's enemy, death that "God did not make". But this gives rise to the question: how can we interpret the *death that God did not make*? 1:16d and 2:24b add a qualifying statement to

³² God did not make death, Hades' world is not on earth, nor is the poison of destruction, i.e., death (1:13-14). In conclusion, the death that "God did not make" must be in Hades' world. See also Yehoshua AMIR, "The Figure of Death in the 'Book of Wisdom'," *JJS* 30 (1979), 159–160.

³³ Clarke argues that there is no dualism in Wisdom because God's supremacy is never questioned; Hades is not set against God, but against man, CLARKE, 27-28. See also Beverly Roberts GAVENTA, "The Rhetoric of Death in the Wisdom of Solomon," in Kenneth G. HOGLUND et al. (eds.), *The Listening Heart: Essays in Wisdom and the Psalms in honor of Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm.*, JSOTSup 58, Sheffield, 1987, 132. It is true that the author claims the supremacy of God, since Hades seems to be weak compared to God (17:13) and God is the one who condemns people to ultimate death (1:11; 4:19f). However, Wisdom emphasizes that death is not made by God; it exists separately from God and it also stands in opposition to God and the creation. On this basis we can say that the cosmology of Wisdom is dualistic. Amir points out that in 1:16 and 2:24 the wicked are "designated as Death's portion." "An overlord, to whom the wicked are allotted as his portion [...] fits into a dualistic pattern in which mankind, or perhaps the world at large (if the wicked are said to be 'of' his portion, that portion may not be confined to human beings), is divided into good and bad. As such, he must be a kind of rival figure to God himself." See AMIR, 157. However, we cannot agree with Amir regarding the dualistic pattern of the whole world, since Wisdom emphasizes the goodness of creation which is in harmony with God in saving and judging. See more about the role of cosmos at "The Earth – A Created Kingdom". Hayman argues that "at an intellectual level our author is a monist, but at the emotional level a dualist." HAYMAN, 128, note 8.

³⁴ Amir concludes that the author "because of his philosophical training, knows that the link between *Thanatos* and the wicked cannot have occurred in historical time but must be part of the human condition in general; therefore the covenant is allotted a place in the primordial time of Creation, where, as documented by Isaiah, it provides a necessary link towards understanding the process of depravation of the original God-willed world." AMIR, 166.

1:13-14, restricting death to the wicked alone, therefore, this *death* cannot refer to mortality; *death that God did not make* must refer to ultimate death.³⁵

As we have noted, death comes to earth through the wicked, who become engaged in a dynamics of evil³⁶, which starts with grumbling (1:2-11)³⁷ and ends in ultimate death (2:24). Once the unrighteous have perverse thoughts and grumble (1:3-6), lose connection with God (1:3) because wisdom does not enter their soul (1:4-5). At the moment they are not in relation to God, they are connected to Hades (1:16ab). They strengthen their relationship with Hades through a covenant that irrevocably bounds them to the kingdom of death (1:16c).³⁸

³⁵ KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death*, 146–148. For the personification of death and its mythological aspect, see AMIR, 154–178; COLLINS, “Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 97–98. Hayman accentuates the mythological aspect of death to such a degree that he declines any theological concept behind the figure of death, HAYMAN, 130–139. Nevertheless, the mythological aspect does not rule out the theological concept of death. The figure of Devil enhances the personification, but there is a theological concept underlying it. Although the identification of Hades with the Devil seems to be the necessary consequence of the parallel between 1:16 and 2:24, the figure of Devil does not seem to be well-designed. Therefore, it is more convincing to speak about the concept of ultimate death in the personified figure of Hades; it is ultimate death that is the opponent of God, rather than Devil himself. Note that *death* is an ambiguous concept in Wisdom. We shall not deal with all notions here, since only *ultimate death* is relevant for our study. For the notions of mortality and physical death as a punishment, see KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death*, 159–184.

³⁶ The term “dynamic of evil” is used by KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death*, 164, 176.

³⁷ Amir notes that the author does not give any explanation why some men are wicked. “[...] in any case, he will not say, in conformity with Qumran theology, that they are wicked because they are under the Devil’s rule. For him, the contrary is true: they have made Satan their overlord, and they belong to this flock because ‘they are worthy to be of his portion.’”, AMIR, 163–164. Seeley proposes that the author attempts to combine Hebrew and Hellenistic tradition in Wisdom, in order to create a new story; thus, the origin of evil is explained both as the consequence of idolatry (1:16) and that of the philosophers’ reasoning (2:1-5; 13:1-5). David SEELEY, “Narrative, the Righteous Man and the Philosopher: an Analysis of the Story of the *Dikaios* in Wisdom 1-5,” in *JSP* 7 (1990), 60–61.

Kolarcik argues that the wicked’s view upon mortality starts their engagement with evil. Since they are incapable to regard mortality in faith, mortality becomes a tragic reality for them, whereas for the righteous the acceptance of mortality leads to openness towards God. KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death*, 163–170.

³⁸ The description of the dynamic of evil seems to have the implication that the wicked already lost their communion with God before death came to earth. However, the loss of communion with God is none other than the covenant with death; those who are not

Similarly to the Kingdom of God, ἔδου βασιλείος has both qualitative and quantitative attributes. Since Hades is separated from the Kingdom of God, being in relation with Hades is equal to experiencing spiritual death. The wicked, who have lost their connection with God (1:4-5; 5:6), already share death on earth.³⁹ As we have demonstrated, Hades can also be defined in quantitative terms as a space that lies outside of the Kingdom of God and outside of earth, too. Although Wisdom does not deal with the question of Hades' eternity, neither does it give us clear answer to what being in Hades implies. The dualistic cosmology suggests that Hades' kingdom is eternal.⁴⁰ εἰς ὕβριν ἐν νεκροῖς δι' αἰῶνος⁴¹ and ἔσσονται ἐν ὀδύνη⁴² (4:19) may refer to eternal suffering⁴³, but the rest of the verse appears to stand in opposition to this meaning: the wicked will be dashed to the ground, they will be left barren and dry, and their memory will perish (exactly the future the wicked project for themselves in 2:2-5).⁴⁴ However, the picture of 4:19 may imply more than the wicked's simple perishing. In case we accept a double judgment scheme, the wicked cease to exist after an intermediate state of suffering. If, however, we do not accept this scheme, the wicked may cease to exist after a judgment, which involves that they experience death as a punishment.⁴⁵ What has begun in the earthly life of the wicked will be completed

living in righteousness are already dead (5:6-13). There is no middle position; if one is not in communion with God, he must be in communion with death. These images that seem to develop a chronology of human fall, in fact, serve to emphasize the responsibility of the wicked and depict their gradual separation from God as their wickedness is increasing.

³⁹ Note that the term *spiritual death* in our understanding refers to what Kolarcik calls the *dynamic of evil* and not the death of the soul after physical death. We prefer to use the first term for the *dynamic of the evil* exposes only one side of the consequences of grumbling, namely, that the wicked are drawn in this dynamics, whereas *spiritual death* also expresses that death has begun to work on their soul; spiritual death can be contrasted with the spiritual life of the righteous on earth.

⁴⁰ HAYMAN, 136.

⁴¹ “an outrage among the dead forever”

⁴² “they will suffer anguish”

⁴³ As Reider concludes from the scene of judgment (4:20-5:1ff) and 4:19 (they will suffer anguish), see REIDER, 38, 56, note 11.

⁴⁴ See KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death*, 163–170; John J. COLLINS, “The Mysteries of God: Creation and Eschatology in 4QInstruction and the Wisdom of Solomon,” in Florentino Garcia MARTINEZ (ed.), *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition*, BETL 168, Leuven, 2003, 292.

⁴⁵ KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death*, 170–174. 4:19 uses the term δι' αἰῶνος (through ages) which also implies that the state of the wicked among the dead described in 4:19 is not

after their physical death, when they experience ultimate death⁴⁶, which is the ultimate separation from God and the cosmos.⁴⁷

4. The Earth – A Created Kingdom

ἔκτισεν γὰρ εἰς τὸ εἶναι τὰ πάντα καὶ σωτήριοι αἱ γενέσεις τοῦ κόσμου καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐταῖς φάρμακον ὀλέθρου οὔτε ἄδου βασιλείον ἐπὶ γῆς (1:14).⁴⁸ The eternal God created the earthly world⁴⁹ for living, therefore, the world is healthful (1:14bc) and it is meant to share immortality with God (see 1:14d).⁵⁰ The chiasm in 1:14 emphasizes the incorruption of the created world and the absence of death; because of God’s creative act, the creation is wholesome.⁵¹ εἰς τὸ εἶναι, therefore, means that God created all things to partake of His own nature, which is Being.⁵²

eternal in the strict sense or this is an intermediate state after which they will be destroyed forever. For the use of the term in the Septuagint see RAMELLI, KONSTAN, 37–50.

⁴⁶ See NICKELSBURG, 88–89, 162–164; Émile PUECH, “The Book of Wisdom and the Dead Sea Scrolls: an overview,” in Angelo PASSARO, Giuseppe BELLIA (eds.), *The Book of Wisdom in Modern Research: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology*, DCL Yearbook, Berlin, 2005, 128.

⁴⁷ KOLARCIK, *The Ambiguity of Death*, 163.

⁴⁸ “For he created all things so that they might exist; the generative forces of the world are wholesome, and there is no destructive poison in them, and the dominion of Hades is not on earth.”

⁴⁹ For the question whether the earth was created ex nihilo or out of formless matter see WINSTON, 38–40; REIDER, 34; HAYMAN, 127–129. In any case the cosmology does not change, since even in the latter case God is the one who gave form and life to the formless matter. See MCGLYNN, 32–33.

⁵⁰ τὰ πάντα refers first of all to humankind, as the parallel shows it (compare 11:26), but it also refers to the cosmos as attested in 9:1-2a (compare 18:24, where the whole cosmos is presented to be under God’s protection). See RAURELL, 345, note 38.

⁵¹ Compare Gen 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31. The creation is wholesome because God created it. See KOLARCIK, “Creation and Salvation,” 101; RAURELL, 345. For the philosophical background of the idea see WINSTON, 108–109. “[...]by the use of σωτήριοι the author seems to understand the world (κόσμος) as a platform of the relationship between man and God.” RAURELL, 346. Amir concludes from the use of present tense in the description of the primordial nature of creation in 1:14 that although 1:16 declares the entrance of Death into the world, “the principles on which He created his world are still considered as valid. [...] the eternity of the universe, established by the act of creation itself, holds good even now.” AMIR, 174. However, this does not imply eternity in the strict sense, but an eternity that has a beginning and may not have an end.

⁵² REIDER, 57, note 14. See also the doctrine of God.

Although it is mostly referred to as γῆ, τὰ πάντα or κόσμος, the earth also appears as a kingdom in 6:4: ὅτι ὑπῆρέται ὄντες τῆς αὐτοῦ βασιλείας οὐκ ἐκρίνατε ὀρθῶς.⁵³ The verse affirms the sovereignty of the Creator on earth. This created kingdom is ruled by earthly kings, which are, however, appointed by God (6:3; 9:7). This implies that the rulers have right to rule over people, but it also involves that they are subordinated to the Creator, who is the King of Kings (6:4a; 9:4ff; 12:16; 5:17-23).⁵⁴ Notwithstanding the appearance of death on earth (1:16a; 2:24a), God remains the King of the earth⁵⁵ and the creation is still affirmed to be good. By forming a parallel with 5:17-23, 1:14 introduces the cosmological principle that the creation is wholesome and always on the side of God (5:17-23; 19:6). The cosmos continues the work of the creation to restore justice for the righteous.⁵⁶ The wicked are both condemned by God, and rejected by the cosmos (5:17).⁵⁷

Human being is described from both the perspective of God (2:23) and that of man (7:1), therefore, the anthropology of Wisdom presents us a kind of duality. From the human perspective, man is a mortal being with the limitations of mortals (7:1; 8:19-20; 9:15),⁵⁸ whereas from the perspective of God he is created incorrupt (1:14; 2:23) and oriented towards immortality (6:17-21). ὅτι ὁ

⁵³ “Because as servants of his kingdom you did not rule rightly”

⁵⁴ That kings are subordinated to God was accepted biblical doctrine (1 Chron 29:11-12; Dan 2:21; Sir 10:4, 8). See WINSTON, 152.

⁵⁵ For the powerlessness of Death’s domain and his impotence on earth (17:13; also 1:14), see WINSTON, 282; AMIR, 173–178.

⁵⁶ KOLARCIK, “Creation and Salvation,” 100–101; see also COLLINS, “Apocalyptic Eschatology,” 106. “The salvific tendency of the world is explained by the presence of righteousness in the world. [...] The way in which humanity is related to the salvific forces of the world is further expressed in terms of wisdom.” COLLINS, “Cosmos and Salvation,” 320. God re-creates the world for the just through wisdom, who was already present at the creation; in the history of Israel “each saving moment is a recreation.” KOLARCIK, “Creation and Salvation,” 104. For the role of the cosmos in reward and punishment see also chapters 11–19.

⁵⁷ COLLINS, “Cosmos and Salvation,” 320–324, 327. The hope of the author in an ultimate judgment, when justice will be restored on earth, is that God created the world for living and the history of salvation. KOLARCIK, “Creation and Salvation,” 101–107; KOLARCIK, “Universalism and Justice,” 300–301; REESE, 126, 128.

⁵⁸ The anthropology of Wisdom seems to be a mixture of Hellenistic and Hebrew vision on man; there is no fixed system, but a mixture of influences. See WINSTON, 29–32; COLLINS, “The Root of Immortality,” 362–367; REESE, 71–87; SEGAL, 385–386; PUECH, 127–132; N. T. WRIGHT, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Minneapolis, 2003, 162–175.

θεὸς ἔκτισεν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐπ’ ἀφθαρσίᾳ καὶ εἰκόνα τῆς ἰδίας ἀϊδιότητος ἐποίησεν αὐτόν⁵⁹. Wisdom ascribes more significance to the latter perspective. Man is portrayed in 2:23 as a created being, who bears the image of God’s eternity. His original condition was ἐπ’ ἀφθαρσίᾳ, “in incorruption”; therefore, incorruption has to be viewed “not as man’s goal but as the positive quality granted to his nature enabling him to enter into a special, personal relationship with his Creator”.⁶⁰ Thus, the two perspectives on man, that of God and man, do not contradict, but they relate to the different aspects of humans;⁶¹ although mortal according to his limited time on earth, man becomes immortal in his relation to God.

In addition, there is another image that underscores the immortality purposed for man. Man is king in the earthly kingdom, appointed by God to rule the world (9:2-3).⁶² The regality of man evolves from his acceptance of being mortal and weak. “Yielding to be born [...] goes together with admitting dependence on someone else and therefore being mortal.” From this anthropological truth rises the prayer for wisdom that leads one to immortality (7:1-14). Thus, notwithstanding his mortality, “regality is man’s true vocation” because of the “eschatological destination of man to eternity, to incorruptibility, immortality”.⁶³ Man’s regality will be consummated in the future, when the righteous will be rewarded in the Kingdom of God (3:8; 5:16).

⁵⁹ “for God created us for incorruption, and made us in the image of his own eternity”

⁶⁰ REESE, 66; he further emphasizes that the dative case (ἐπ’ ἀφθαρσίᾳ) points to a state in 1:13; 17:3, 7; 18:13. 14:12 also confirms that incorruption was man’s original state. REESE, 66, note 158; see also 132, note 25. “Man is constituted, by the very act of creation, as it were by definition, as an immortal being.” See AMIR, 161.

⁶¹ COLLINS, “The Mysteries of God,” 300–301, 304; MCGLYNN, 110.

⁶² The term “kingship” has diverse connotations in Wisdom: the kingship of rulers, the regality of everyday man. Our focus is on the latter, since the addressee of the book is the everyday man rather than certain kings. See REESE, 76–77; CLARKE, 15, 63–64; REIDER, 3.

⁶³ Roberto VIGNOLO, “Wisdom, Prayer and Kingly Pattern: Theology, Anthropology, Spirituality of Wis 9,” in Angelo PASSARO, Giuseppe BELLIA (eds), *The Book of Wisdom in Modern Research: Studies on Tradition, Redaction, and Theology*, DCL Yearbook; Berlin, 2005, 277, 279; see also CLARKE, 48. “Here the feature of regality is redeemed, provided that the mortal condition would be restored completely and realistically, acknowledging an immortal and eternal destination to it (inclusive of resurrection, besides immortality of the soul).” VIGNOLO, 280. We do not treat the issue of a possible nuance of corporality in the concept of immortality. For this see Paul BEAUCHAMP, “Le salut corporel des justes et la conclusion du livre de la Sagesse,” *Bib* 45 (1964), 491–526; PUECH, 117–141; WRIGHT, *The Resurrection*, 162–175.

To sum it up, the perspectives on the origin and end of humankind are closely linked. On the one hand, “the end is only explained by the origin”: immortality that will be completed in the afterlife of the just is the gift granted to man when he was created. On the other hand, “the origin will get its full realization in the ultimate future of everybody”.⁶⁴

5. The Overlapping Worlds and the Role of Wisdom

It has been illustrated that Wisdom conceives of the world as a three-storey universe, consisting of three realms. We should now like to turn to the interrelation between these realms.

The earth, the kingdom created for living (1:14), belongs to God and God is its real king (5:17-23; 6:3-4). Wisdom, who was present at the creation, establishes man’s communion with God (7:14, 27-28); those who accept wisdom are, thus, related to the Kingdom of God. However, the ungodly (1:16) start to grumble against God. Death, which had no relation with the earth before, enters once the ungodly invite it (1:16a). Thus, we can see that people on earth are divided into two groups: righteous (δίκαιοι) and unrighteous (ἀσεβείς or ἀδίκοι). Those who live according to wisdom (see 1:1-4ff; 4:7-9) are the righteous. They please God (4:10a, 14a) and trust Him (1:2; 3:9ab). They are undefiled, who have not done lawless things (3:13-14; 4:1); they are God’s elect (see 3:9c; 4:15; 6:10a), who passed the test of God (3:2-6). The righteous are the children of God (2:13b, 16d, 18a), therefore besides living on earth, they already live in the spiritual world of God. Thus, the Kingdom of God overlaps the earth and the righteous already share spiritual immortality.

We can recognize here a concept of immortality that is a continuum; it does not only refer to the afterlife of the righteous, but it already begins on earth.⁶⁵ This *immortality*, however, should not be understood in the Greek sense of pre-existence, since it is not the nature of the soul, but a gift of God.⁶⁶ Man obtains it through wisdom (1:1, 15; 3:15; 4:9; 6:10, 17-21; 7:14, 27-28; 9:9-12), and as a consequence, only the righteous will partake in it. Wisdom is the one who makes people children (2:13, 18) and friends of God (7:14, 27). Being in the family of God means sharing the life of God, which is eternal life. The father-child image adds another nuance to the concept of immortality. Since the

⁶⁴ Maurice GILBERT, “The Origins According to the Wisdom of Solomon,” in Núria CALDUCH-BENAGES, Jan LIESEN (eds.), *History and Identity: How Israel’s Later Authors Viewed Its Earlier History*, DCL Yearbook; Berlin, 2006, 173.

⁶⁵ See also NICKELSBURG, 88–89, 162–164.

⁶⁶ See REESE, 62–71; WRIGHT, “Wisdom,” 557; VILCHEZ, EYNIKEL, 978; WRIGHT, *The Resurrection*, 174.

righteous is the child of God already on earth (2:12), his eternal life does not only start after death, but starts in the moment he is called the child or friend of God. The fulfillment of the righteous' communion with God eventuates after death when he will be in the hand of God and among the saints, receives kingship and will live forever (3:1-9; 5:1, 5, 15-16).⁶⁷

We meet a similar concept of death in Wisdom. Those who grumble and do not live according to righteousness (1:2-10, 16) are the unrighteous, who lost connection with God (1:3) because wisdom does not enter their soul (1:4-5)⁶⁸. They make covenant with Death. In this way, Hades' kingdom also overlaps the earth. Accordingly, the wicked are also living in two worlds similarly to the righteous: they are still on earth, but also in Hades' kingdom, hereafter experiencing spiritual death (5:6-13). After death the wicked will be in Hades' world forever and their punishment will be ultimate death (4:19f).

Both the righteous and the unrighteous are part of the earthly world and at the same time one of the spiritual worlds. They are living on earth and they are connected with either God or Hades. In the earthly life both of them are in the same space, yet in the spiritual world they are separated, belonging to different worlds. The author stresses the impact of man's choice on his destiny. "Life on earth will decide if end corresponds with the origin."⁶⁹ Once man chooses to live with wisdom or rejects her, he is drawn into a labyrinth and cannot avoid his destiny. The sharp division of the righteous and unrighteous on earth exposes a dichotomy; man can either be in God's kingdom or that of Hades, but he cannot belong to both parties at the same time. Nonetheless, the picture is more complicated. God is not only the King of His Kingdom, but the King of the earth, too; consequently, the unrighteous are also in some kind of relation to God. They are not living in God's kingdom, but as part of the earthly world, they are living in God's created kingdom. This gives them a chance to switch from one spiritual world to the other until their physical death because God will always give them a possibility to repent (11:20-26; 12:1-22). The opposite of this may also happen. Since there is interaction between the people on earth, the unrighteous can also influence the righteous, hence God's

⁶⁷ For the story of the righteous and his continuing state after death see WRIGHT, *The Resurrection*, 162–175. We shall not deal with the eschatological timetable of the book here. For a detailed discussion of this topic, see NICKELSBURG, 87–90.

⁶⁸ The unrighteous separation from God takes place step by step. They have perverse thoughts (1:3a) and the perverse thoughts affect the heart (1:4a), they are exposed by the tongue (1:4b, 6, 8, 8b, 10b, 11), they do lawless deeds (1:9c), finally they pine away (1:16b) and make a covenant with death (1:16c).

⁶⁹ GILBERT, 173.

intervention in 4:11-12. Earthly life is a continuous contest between virtue and evil; man is always given a chance to choose between good or evil, but there is also possibility to hesitate.⁷⁰ Once the righteous and unrighteous die, they lose their earthly life and they remain in the spiritual world they have chosen and they will share either eternal life (1:15) or ultimate death (1:11; 2:24a) because there is unbridgeable gap between God and death. As a consequence, the worldview of Wisdom is linear, since after death people go on living or sharing death analogous to their earthly life. Nevertheless, the author is optimistic regarding the fate of humankind; his hope originates from his doctrine of creation. Incorruption was man's original condition (2:23), therefore, humanity cannot be oriented towards destruction (see 15:1-3).⁷¹

Conclusion

It has been demonstrated that the basis of hope for eternal life in Wisdom is its theology of creation. Wisdom views cosmos, creation and human beings from the perspective of God. All things were created by God in order that they might exist, and death was neither part of God's creation, nor in His plans. Even when death entered the earth as a result of the wicked's action the creation remained good, still based on the principle on which it was created. Equally important is the statement that human beings were created in incorruption; incorruption, however, is not a characteristic inherent in people, but the gift of God. It is wisdom who preserves people incorrupt, making them able to participate in the life of God. If wisdom enters one's soul, he becomes the child of God and receives eternal life. Those who reject wisdom, on the contrary, will share death. Wisdom, therefore, constantly calls our attention to love righteousness because one's fate is determined by his earthly life. Eternal life and death are not awaited with the future, but they are realities present on the earth and will be consummated in the afterlife.

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⁷⁰ From the picture of the victorious marching of virtue (4:2) we understand that earthly life is a contest between virtue and evil. We all have to pass the test of God (3:5), which is not a single moment but it takes all our life. As Reese notes: "in no other biblical passage is the moral option described in this manner", see REESE, 128.

⁷¹ REESE, 142.

I CONSIGLI EVANGELICI, UN CAMMINO ALLA SANTITÀ

EMILIO GONZÁLEZ MAGAÑA

Sommario: Dio ha donato a tutto quello che si incorpora alla sua famiglia santa per il battesimo, il dono dello Spirito Santo, il quale purifica e rinnova tutte le cose, portandoli alla sua perfezione. La vocazione sacerdotale che nasce da questa realtà cristiana e si alimenta da essa, abbia gli stessi fondamenti. Il popolo di Dio ha diritto a chiedere che i sacerdoti vivano una vita coerente e caritatevole e questo solamente si riesce mediante una profonda esperienza di Dio. La Chiesa le ha denominate consigli evangelici, perché aiutano nella ricerca della santità e sono mezzi che manifestano la configurazione con Gesù buon Pastore. I consigli evangelici nella vita dei presbiteri sono coniugabili solo alla luce di un'esperienza di fede del sacerdote in Cristo, in una sequela imitativa, solo per amore, di Lui che diventa per la persona, orientamento che fonda le scelte, i pensieri e le azioni.

Parole chiave: Chiesa, sacerdote, spiritualità sacerdotale, la carità pastorale, la santità sacerdotale, la fraternità sacerdotale, l'obbedienza, il celibato, la povertà, fedeltà del sacerdote.

Il tema scelto per l'Anno Sacerdotale è *Fedeltà di Cristo, fedeltà del sacerdote*. L'obiettivo di questo Anno è stato quello di «far percepire sempre più l'importanza del ruolo e della missione del sacerdote nella Chiesa e nella società contemporanea».¹ Un altro tema rilevante, è la necessità di potenziare la formazione permanente dei sacerdoti legandola a quella dei seminaristi perché

Ogni giorno siamo sempre chiamati alla conversione, ma in questo anno lo siamo in modo del tutto particolare, unitamente a quanti hanno ricevuto il dono dell'ordinazione sacerdotale. Conversione a cosa? Conversione per essere sempre più autenticamente quello che siamo, conversione alla nostra identità ecclesiale per un ministero che sia assolutamente conseguente ad essa, affinché una rinnovata e gioiosa coscienza del nostro "essere" determini il nostro "agire" o meglio offra lo spazio a Cristo Buon Pastore per vivere in noi ed agire attraverso di noi.²

Inoltre, dobbiamo insistere che la nostra spiritualità non può essere altro che il riflesso della spiritualità di Cristo, unico e Sommo Sacerdote del Nuovo Testamento. E, come il Sommo Pontefice ha voluto

¹ BENEDETTO XVI. Udienza ai membri della Congregazione per il Clero riuniti per la Plenaria il 16 marzo 2009.

² Mauro PIACENZA, Segretario della Congregazione del Clero. Lettera inviata ai sacerdoti di tutto il mondo, 19 giugno 2009.

cercheremo tutti insieme di far riferimento all'identità di Cristo Figlio di Dio, in comunione con il Padre e lo Spirito Santo, divenuto Uomo nel seno verginale di Maria e alla sua missione di rivelare il Padre e il suo mirabile disegno di salvezza. Questa missione di Cristo comporta anche la costruzione della Chiesa: ecco il Buon Pastore (cf. Gv 19,1-21) che dona la vita per la Chiesa (cf. Ef 5,25). Conversione sì, e di ogni giorno, affinché lo stile di vita di Cristo sia sempre più lo stile di vita di ciascuno di noi.³

Qualsiasi riflessione, per tanto ci deve aiutare a capire che,

come presbiteri tutti noi siamo impegnati in essere per gli uomini, essere operai per la costruzione dell'unica Chiesa di Cristo, per cui dobbiamo vivere motivatamente e fedelmente la comunione di amore con il Papa, con i Vescovi, con i confratelli, con i fedeli. Dobbiamo vivere la comunione con l'ininterrotto cammino della Chiesa nelle viscere del Corpo mistico.⁴

Occorre una spiritualità sacerdotale rinnovata.

Per Agostino Favale,

nel suo nucleo fondamentale la spiritualità cristiana non è altro che l'effetto dello sviluppo della vita di grazia, scaturente dal dono e dall'azione ininterrotta dello Spirito, al quale il battezzato cerca di offrire la sua premurosa collaborazione nelle concrete circostanze in cui vive ed opera.⁵

Tutti, sin dall'inizio della nostra esistenza e per invito di Dio, riceviamo la grazia che consiste nella partecipazione nella vita della Santissima Trinità, per mezzo del Figlio, il Verbo Incarnato, chi per mezzo della sua morte e resurrezione, ha aperto le porte verso questa comunione.⁶ In questo modo, l'umanità consacrata da Dio, è chiamata a vivere in comunione con Lui e coi fratelli, riconoscendo che ha ricevuto:

Ogni tipo di beni spirituali, [...] e ci ha scelto in Lui, prima della creazione del mondo, affinché fossimo santi ed irreprensibili nella sua presenza, per l'amore. Egli ci predestinò ad essere i suoi figli adottivi per mezzo di Gesù Cristo, come al beneplacito della sua volontà.⁷

³ PIACENZA.

⁴ PIACENZA.

⁵ Agostino FAVALE, *I presbiteri, identità, missione, spiritualità e formazione permanente*, Torino, 1999, 248.

⁶ M.I. RUPNIK, *Il discernimento*, Roma, 2004, 182.

⁷ Ef 1,3-5.

Per compiere questa missione, Dio ha donato a tutto quello che si incorpora alla sua famiglia santa per il battesimo, il dono dello Spirito Santo, il quale purifica e rinnova tutte le cose, portandoli alla sua perfezione. Per mezzo di questo Spirito, l'umanità si inserisce nel Corpo di Cristo e riceve i doni necessari per la sua configurazione col Signore.⁸ È questo stesso Spirito chi accompagna il processo di maturità e perfezione dell'uomo, discepolo di Gesù.⁹ Col risultato che lo Spirito Santo sia il fondamento rivelatore ed unificatore della spiritualità cristiana, come si professa nel Credo, perché «Nessuno conosce l'intimo di Dio, bensì lo Spirito di Dio.»¹⁰ Quindi, solo da questa vita nello Spirito, è che può capirsi e vivere una vita spirituale, particolarmente cristiana.¹¹ La spiritualità che germoglia del fonte battesimale, si esprime e sviluppa attraverso i diversi carismi e ministeri che lo stesso Spirito dona ai suoi membri¹² perché «c'è diversità di attività, ma è lo stesso Dio quello che realizza tutto in tutti»,¹³ «un solo mediatore tra Dio e gli uomini: Gesù Cristo»,¹⁴ ed un «Spirito santificatore».¹⁵

Non è di rimpiangere, pertanto, che la vocazione sacerdotale che nasce da questa realtà cristiana e si alimenta da essa, abbia gli stessi fondamenti. Con questo, il ministro, acquisisce nuove responsabilità perché non sta oramai solo in mezzo alla comunità ecclesiale, ma si impiega di fronte a lei, per guidarla verso Cristo. Per questa ragione, quando si fa menzione ad una spiritualità laicale, religiosa o sacerdotale, si vuole enfatizzare che l'identità ricevuta nel battesimo per lo Spirito Santo, deve maturarsi secondo la vocazione, carismi o ministeri ricevuti.¹⁶ Così, quando la Chiesa si costruisce «non in un'uniformità, bensì in una differenziazione armonica e vivenziale»,¹⁷ si dimostra, da un lato,

⁸ Ef 4,11-12; 1Cor 12,4; Gal 5,22.

⁹ CONGREGAZIONE PER GLI ISTITUTI DI VITA CONSACRATA E LE SOCIETÀ DI VITA APOSTOLICA, Istruzione *Camminare sin da Cristo*, 10.

¹⁰ CEC, 687.

¹¹ A. CENCINI, *La vita al ritmo della Parola*, Milano, 2008, 8-9.

¹² FAVALE, *I presbiteri*, 248.

¹³ 1Cor 12,6.

¹⁴ 1Tm 2,5.

¹⁵ Rm 1,4.

¹⁶ San Francesco DI SALES, *Filotea: introduzione alla vita devota*. [Introduzione di Valentin VIGUERA ; traduzione e note di Ruggero BALBONI], I, 2009, 1-3.

¹⁷ J. Esquerda BIFET, *Espiritualidad sacerdotal, servidores del buen pastor*, Madrid, 2008, 101; Cf. CONGREGACION PARA LOS INSTITUTOS DE VIDA CONSAGRADA Y LAS SOCIEDADES DE VIDA APOSTÓLICA, *El servicio de la autoridad y la obediencia*, Ciudad del Vaticano, 2008, n. 18.

la manifestazione di Dio di multiple forme e, d'altra parte, la ricchezza della stessa famiglia ecclesiale che si compone di multipli membri che servono alla Chiesa di diverse maniere e che cercano la gloria di Dio, il bene della comunità e la meta della propria perfezione.¹⁸

In questo modo, tutti i credenti, attraverso il vissuto della spiritualità cristiana, devono cercare la perfezione nella carità,¹⁹ e dare testimonianza della chiamata comune alla santità.²⁰ Questa chiamata altro non è che vivere in pienezza le Beatitudini²¹ che il Concilio il Vaticano II ratificò e che sono il fondamento di una vita che non ha paura della santità. Pertanto, il ministro ordinato, prima nella sua condizione di battezzato e dopo, come ministro del Signore, ha una maggiore responsabilità di coltivare la vocazione alla santità.²² Da lì che la spiritualità sacerdotale deve essere espressione della «stessa perfezione della carità, non appena espressione e vissuto della carità del Buon Pastore di cui il sacerdote ministro è segno».²³ La spiritualità del sacerdote ha la sua ragione di essere nella missione alla quale è stato chiamato in mezzo alla Chiesa. Questo fu uno delle enfasi e novità che realizzò il Concilio Vaticano II, riconoscendo che il sacerdote esiste in funzione del servizio agli altri. Per ciò, il ministro ordinato identificandosi con Cristo Sacerdote, deve favorire «la costruzione ed edificazione di tutto il suo Corpo che è la Chiesa, come collaboratori dell'ordine episcopale»,²⁴ e, pertanto, deve vivere il suo ministero da una spiritualità chiara che faciliti una vita autentica di ascesi, sacrificio e disciplina come cammino alla santità. E questo sarà possibile solo «se sono docili allo Spirito di Cristo che dà loro la vita e mostra loro la strada.»²⁵

La santità sacerdotale, come fondamento del ministero ordinato è stata sviluppata, in primo luogo, dal *Decreto Presbyterorum Ordinis* nei seguenti punti: a. Vocazione alla perfezione (n. 12); b. Esercizio della santità nella *triamunera* (n. 13); c. Unità di vita (n. 14); d. Consigli evangelici (nn. 15-17), ed, e. Mezzi per fomentare la vita spirituale (n. 18). Come risultato del Sinodo dei

¹⁸ CONCILIO VATICANO II., Costituzione Dogmatica *Lumen Gentium*, sull'Ecclesia, (21.11.1964), Madrid, 2004⁵. Pubblicazione Ufficiale: *AAS* 57 (1965) 5-75, 41a. D'ora in poi *LG*.

¹⁹ 1Cor 12,6.

²⁰ FAVALE, *I presbiteri*, 248.

²¹ Mt 5,1-12.48.

²² *LG* 40 D; D. BONHOEFFER, *Le prix de la grâce*, Genève, 1985, 76-85.

²³ BIFET, *Espiritualidad sacerdotal*, 102.

²⁴ CONCILIO VATICANO II. Decreto sul ministero e la vita dei presbiteri *Presbyterorum ordinis*, 7 Dicembre 1965, 12a. D'ora in poi, *PO*.

²⁵ *PO* 12c.

Vescovi di 1990, si pubblicò l'*Esortazione Apostolica Pastores dabo Vobis*²⁶ che analizza il tema nel capitolo 3, con la seguente distribuzione: a. Vocazione alla santità (nn.19-20); b. Contenuto e specificità della vita spirituale dei presbiteri; c. Cristo, Capo e Servo (n. 21); d. Servo e Sposo (n. 22); e. Unità con la celebrazione dell'Eucaristia (n. 22); f. La carità pastorale (nn. 23.25); g. L'uomo salvato insieme ad un Salvatore (n. 26); h. I consigli evangelici (nn. 27-30) ed i. L'appartenenza e consacrazione ad una Chiesa particolare (nn. 31-33). Questo documento riprende i punti del Concilio e li amplia con una visione pastorale sottolineando fundamentalmente, l'aspetto della formazione.

Il decreto conciliare sviluppa il tema dalla realtà dal presbitero che si identifica con Cristo Sacerdote, come ministro e Capo della missione che deve realizzare nel suo nome. La santità è abordata come necessaria per un'autentica consacrazione ed esplicita gli elementi che la definiscono. L'*Esortazione Apostolica Pastores dabo Vobis*, riprende gli elementi iniziali che aveva presentato nella descrizione della natura del presbitero e ricorda che «lo Spirito è il principio della consacrazione della missione del Messia».²⁷ Pertanto, nell'opera che lo stesso Signore confidò a quelli che Egli volle, facendo che «tutti i membri del popolo di Dio siano “assorbiti” e “segnati” per lo Spirito [...], e chiamati alla santità»,²⁸ non è strano, pertanto, che si enfatizzi la centralità dello Spirito in questa costituzione spirituale del presbitero che si manifesta chiaramente come il fondamento della santità di ogni cristiano, perché «lo Spirito si fa in noi principio e fonte della sua realizzazione in lui».²⁹

Il presbitero e la chiamata alla santità

È una gran verità che, sin dal battesimo, tutti stiamo chiamati alla santità,³⁰ ma il sacerdote ha una gran sfida aggiunta che consiste in cercare la santità per poter essere forgiatore di nuovi santi nella comunità ecclesiale.³¹ Siamo chiamati, anche, a sviluppare una vita spirituale che c'aiuti ad ottenere quello che già di per sé è difficile, ma senza dubitare mai della presenza del Signore risorto e l'azione dello Spirito Santo. Così lo capì il Beato Papa

²⁶ GIOVANNI PAOLO II. *Esortazione apostolica post sinodale Pastores dabo Vobis*. 25 Marzo 1992. D'ora in poi *PDV*.

²⁷ *PDV*, 19a.

²⁸ *PDV*, 19b.

²⁹ *PDV*, 19c.

³⁰ S. FERDINANDI, *Radicati e fondati nella carità*, Bologna, 2006, 67.

³¹ E. ANCILLI (ed.), «Santidad cristiana», in *Diccionario de Espiritualidad*, (DE) III, Barcelona, 1984, 346-355.

Giovanni XXIII quando sentiva la chiamata alla santità come una necessità di mantenere la fiamma viva dell'amore per Cristo, oltre qualunque amore umano sulla terra perché, solo così, sarà possibile consegnare la vita in un ministero in che, molte volte, si deve soffrire, può viverci in solitudine e si hanno bisogno di molte forze per potere aiutare gli altri a caricare le sue pene e sofferenze.³² È precisamente per questa ragione che non ci risulti strano che il Concilio Vaticano II ricordi a tutti i presbiteri che dobbiamo avere presenti sempre questa prima chiamata alla santità e che dobbiamo cercarla con speciale attenzione, per essere «devoti di una forma nuova a Dio nell'accoglienza dell'Ordine».³³ Grazie a questo dono ricevuto, nonostante la nostra debolezza, dei nostri limiti, possiamo servire al popolo di Dio all'essere chiamati a trasformarci «in strumenti vivi del Sacerdote Eterno per potere proseguire, attraverso il tempo, la sua opera ammirabile, che restituì, con divina efficacia, tutto il genere umano».³⁴

Di nessuna forma affermiamo che raggiungere una vita di santità è facile, specialmente in questo tempo in cui la situazione non ci favorisce. Tuttavia, quando siamo davvero coscienti di questa chiamata, dell'esigenza che implica essere sacerdoti santi dobbiamo accettare la necessità di lottare contro le proprie debolezze umane, e cercare con tutti i mezzi per consegnare la nostra vita al servizio dei fratelli.³⁵ Questa vocazione alla vita della perfezione non è più che accettare la sfida di avere desideri di dare frutti abbondanti come nostro Padre Dio anela che tutti «Siano santi... perché il Signore, è Santo».³⁶ Ovviamente, la santità non è il risultato dello sforzo umano, delle nostre forze, della nostra volontà, bensì il riconoscimento che siamo creature limitate, bisognose di vivere un cammino di perfezione. Significa assumere che siamo chiamati a ricevere la grazia divina che trasforma tutto e tutto lo fa nuovo. È lasciarsi avvolgere, per il mistero divino che dona generosamente il suo amore e la sua misericordia.³⁷

³² GIOVANNI XXIII. *Breviario di Papa Giovanni*, Roma, 1966, 53.

³³ *PO*, 12.

³⁴ *PO*, 12a.; *PDV* 20; GIOVANNI PAOLO II, *Ezortazione Apostolica Christifideles laici*, Città del Vaticano, 1988, 55. D'ora in poi *CL*; CONGREGAZIONE PER IL CLERO, *Direttorio per il ministero e la vita dei presbiteri*, Città del Vaticano, 31 gennaio 1994, 18. D'ora in poi *DP*.

³⁵ *PO*, 12b; Mt 5,48.

³⁶ Lv 19,2; Mt 5,48.

³⁷ SAN AGUSTÍN, *Confesiones*, Madrid, 2004, L. XIII, 9.

In questo consiste la necessità di approfondire una vita spirituale che permetta l'unità di vita, un sano vissuto del nostro essere con il nostro ministero e lo sviluppo generoso della nostra missione apostolica che non

è un elemento estrinseco o giustapposto alla consacrazione, ma costituisce la sua finalità intrinseca e vitale: la consacrazione è per la missione. Di questa forma, non solo la consacrazione, ma anche la missione è sotto il segno dello Spirito, sotto il suo influsso santificatore.³⁸

Il fatto stesso di cercare questa unità di vita è già un segno di santità. Una santità che si vive e si contagia nella vita quotidiana, nel compimento gioioso della missione ricevuta dai superiori in comunione sacerdotale coi fratelli e tentando di favorire continuamente una relazione personale e profonda col Signore.³⁹

Il cammino di santificazione deve viverci con la sfida di stare nel mondo, senza essere del mondo. Non possiamo né dobbiamo isolarci, fuggire dei problemi, delle tentazioni, della sofferenza o del compromesso di trasformarci in fratelli dei nostri fratelli e, con essi, essere differenti.⁴⁰ Stare nel mondo, senza essere del mondo, ci permetterà di distinguerci, semplicemente perché abbiamo optato per vivere una vita differente.⁴¹ Abbiamo l'opportunità di lasciarci ispirare per le parole di San Gregorio Magno, nella sua regola pastorale quando, riferendosi allo stile di vita che il sacerdote deve portare in mezzo a tutti affermava che:

Deve essere pulito nei pensieri, il primo nell'operare [...], discreto nel silenzio, utile nel parlare [...], prossimo di ognuno nella compassione, dato alla contemplazione, più che un altro alcuno [...], umile compagno di coloro che operano il bene, fermo in proteggere la giustizia contro la quale delinquono [...], senza diminuire l'attenzione delle cose interne né smettere di provvedere all'esterno per il sollecito dell'interno.⁴²

Da una autentica vicinanza coi fratelli, la nostra testimonianza sacerdotale sarà sempre più credibile, sarà possibile di essere vissuta senza clericalismi, senza pose né atteggiamenti che c'allontanano dagli altri. Perché, come afferma Greshake, il sacerdote è inviato come «uomo di Dio» agli uomini, come qualcuno che è posseduto per il Regno di Dio e che si trova al servizio speciale di detto Regno, come qualcuno che, per essere amico di Cristo

³⁸ *PDV*, 24.

³⁹ *LG*, 41c.

⁴⁰ Gv 17,14-16; *PO*, 17. FERDINANDI, 67.

⁴¹ FAVALE, *I presbiteri*, 258; C. FOUCAULD, *Opere spirituali*, Milano, 1960, 484-485.

⁴² S. GREGORIO MAGNO, *Regla Pastoral*, II.1-7, 189-215.

e per il suo incarico, realizza la *caritas pastoralis* e si dà alle persone affidate a lui, di conformità piena con quelle parole della Scrittura:

Voi siete i miei amici, se fate quello che io vi comando. D'ora in poi, non vi chiamerò oramai servi, perché il servo non conosce quello che fa suo Signore. D'ora in poi vi chiamo amici, perché vi ho fatto conoscere tutto quello che ho sentito mio Padre. Non mi sceglieste voi a me; io fui chi vi scelsi. E vi ho destinati affinché andiate e diate frutto abbondante e duraturo.⁴³

Il popolo di non vuole titoli, gradi accademici, persone professioniste, esperti nella scienza, spera e merita sacerdoti che siano veramente uomini di Dio, cioè «un uomo rovesciato “verso Dio”, quello che vive per Dio ed organizza tutte le sue attività in funzione di Dio, quello che non smette di offrirsi a Dio».⁴⁴

La carità pastorale, cammino alla santità

Il lavoro frenetico in cui molti di noi viviamo e che, talvolta, arriva ad essere un pretesto per non riconoscere una vita isolata, solitaria ed egoista, ha ostacolato che arriviamo a stimare ed intendere la carità pastorale della sua giusta dimensione e significato. Ed è precisamente la carità pastorale quella che c'aiuta ad identificare il sacerdote pastore, capo ed amico del popolo di Dio. Molto più in là che una semplice funzione o un insieme di azioni con le quale si realizza il ministero sacerdotale, la carità pastorale è la relazione e testimonianza dell'amore col quale Cristo ama alla sua Chiesa. Questo amore ed questo servizio, così, diventano evidenti attraverso di essa che implica la donazione totale del ministro per la comunità e determina il modo di pensare e di agire da tutto il suo servizio ministeriale.⁴⁵ Capita come il totale dono di sé, la carità pastorale è stata considerata come la sintesi della spiritualità del sacerdote e la strada certa alla santità secondo il cuore di Cristo, secondo la teologia vissuta ed insegnata nel Concilio Vaticano II⁴⁶ e sviluppata, più tardi per il Direttorio per il Ministero e la Vita dei Presbiteri.⁴⁷

Il Concilio il Vaticano II assunse la centralità della carità pastorale alla quale definì come una virtù nello sviluppo del ministero sacerdotale e ricordò che i presbiteri «Svolgendo il ruolo del Buon Pastore, nello stesso esercizio della carità pastorale troveranno il vincolo della perfezione sacerdotale che riduce ad

⁴³ Gv 15,14s; G. GRESHAKE, *Ser sacerdote hoy*, Salamanca, 2003, 353.

⁴⁴ J. GALOT, «La formación sacerdotal según el Vaticano II», in *Ecclesia* 43, 1990, 59.

⁴⁵ GIOVANNI XXIII., 186.

⁴⁶ BIFET, *Espiritualidad sacerdotal*, 198.

⁴⁷ *DP*, 44.

unità la sua vita e la sua attività.»⁴⁸ Così riconosciuta come virtù, ha il suo fondamento nella dimensione cristologica e diventa evidente nella dimensione ecclesiologica e, ovviamente, nella sua esplicitazione pastorale. In questo modo, la carità pastorale permette la piena configurazione con Cristo Buon Pastore. È come uno strumento che favorisce l'unità di vita e la maturazione della fede e la vocazione,⁴⁹ semplicemente perché «costituisce il principio interno e dinamico capace di unificare le multiple e diverse attività del sacerdote».⁵⁰

La Chiesa Latinoamericana ha ribadito questa centralità ed insiste nell'invito a coltivarla seguendo l'esempio di Gesù, il Buon Pastore, dando la vita per i fratelli perché

il popolo di Dio sente la necessità di presbiteri – discepoli: che abbiano una profonda esperienza di Dio, configurati col cuore del Buon Pastore, docili alle mozioni dello Spirito che si nutrano della Parola di Dio, dell'Eucaristia e della preghiera; di presbiteri – missionari; mossi per la carità pastorale: che li porti a badare il gregge ad essi fiduciosi ed a cercare ai più lontani predicando la Parola di Dio, sempre in profonda comunione col suo Vescovo, i presbiteri, diaconi, religiose, religiosi e laici; di presbiteri – servitori della vita: che stiano attenti alle necessità dei più poveri, impegnati nella difesa dei diritti dei più deboli e promotori della cultura della solidarietà. Anche di presbiteri pieni di povertà, disponibili per amministrare il sacramento della riconciliazione.⁵¹

Più ancora, il presbitero, chiamato ad essere segno di Cristo Sposo, deve avere sempre presente che l'umanità vuole scoprire in Lui al buon Pastore ed lo sposo con gli stessi gesti ed atteggiamenti con che Cristo amò alla sua Chiesa. Il popolo di Dio ha diritto a chiedere che i sacerdoti vivano una vita coerente e caritatevole e questo solamente si riesce mediante una profonda esperienza di Dio.⁵²

L'unità di vita e la santità sacerdotale

Il ministero sacerdotale non può viverci in forma disintegrata, senza coesione e la centralità di Cristo che è Colui che struttura e determina il nostro essere e il nostro fare. C'è una chiamata urgente ad integrare adeguatamente

⁴⁸ PO, 14.

⁴⁹ PDV, 23e.

⁵⁰ PDV, 23g.

⁵¹ CELAM, *Documento Conclusivo de la VI Conferencia General del Episcopado Latinoamericano y del Caribe*. Aparecida, Brasil, mayo 2007. Bogotá: Celam, San Pablo, Paulinas, n. 199. D'ora in poi DA.

⁵² CONCILIO VATICANO II., Decreto *Optatum Totius*, sobre la formación sacerdotal, (28.10.1965). Madrid, 1966. Publ. Oficial: AAS 58, n. 2, 713-727,4; PDV, 72.

tutti i lavori pastorali, intellettuali, umani e spirituali in modo che stia facendo proprio un autentico atteggiamento di discernimento per cercare, trovare e fare la volontà di Dio. L'unità di vita ci spinge a vivere continuamente l'atteggiamento di uomini di preghiera, di continuo dialogo e discernimento di quello che Dio ci chiede qui e ora. L'unità di vita incoraggia a vivere il sacerdozio in armonia, coerenza ed il godimento profondo di chi ha consacrato la sua vita a Dio nel servizio al prossimo. Solamente l'unità di vita, l'integrazione di tutti questi aspetti con l'Eucaristia nel centro, potrà facilitare che il presbitero continui a configurare il suo cuore di pastore con quello del Buon Pastore che invita a stare con Lui e dare la vita in mezzo al popolo, in una società che ha bisogno della presenza di qualcuno che possa essere testimone capace di entusiasmare agli altri allo stesso servizio.⁵³ Unità di vita con una vicinanza filiale ed amorosa, piena di speranza ed animati con l'esempio di Maria, la Madre di Cristo e la Madre del sacerdote, la discepola fedele e testimone ubbidiente, la donna presente sin dalla grotta di Betlemme fino alla croce del calvario.⁵⁴

Possiamo affermare che l'unità di vita è già un segno di santità,⁵⁵ perché il sì del sacerdote si trasforma in testimonianza e motivo di speranza affinché altri credano. Perché

quando Dio prende persone al suo servizio e confida loro compiti, quando la parola di Dio vuole manifestarsi nell'uomo, allora non solo si esige il "sì" personale di colui che sia stato chiamato, ma anche una forma di vita che lasci tralucere in forma di segno visibile e, pertanto, con credibilità il fatto che "quella persona è stata presa in servizio".⁵⁶

A proposito dell'unità di vita, il Decreto *Presbyterorum Ordinis* afferma che

Anche i presbiteri, immersi e agitati da un gran numero di impegni derivanti dalla loro missione, possono domandarsi con vera angoscia come fare ad armonizzare la vita interiore con le esigenze dell'azione esterna. Ed effettivamente, per ottenere questa unità di vita non bastano né l'organizzazione puramente esteriore delle attività pastorali, né la sola pratica degli esercizi di pietà, quantunque siano di grande utilità. L'unità di vita può essere raggiunta invece dai presbiteri seguendo nello svolgimento

⁵³ PO, 18; PDV, 23f; J. MEDINA, *Vademecum per pastori*, Città del Vaticano, 2008, 13-15.

⁵⁴ JUAN PABLO II., «Maria es la madre del Sumo y Eterno Sacerdote», audiencia general, in *L'Osservatore Romano*, 30 junio 1993; PO, 18.

⁵⁵ J. Esquerda BIFET, *Spiritualità sacerdotale per una chiesa missionaria*, Vatican City, 1998, 135.

⁵⁶ GRESHAKE, *Ser sacerdote hoy*, 357.

del loro ministero l'esempio di Cristo Signore, il cui cibo era il compimento della volontà di colui che lo aveva inviato a realizzare la sua opera.⁵⁷

Questo costante confronto, tra quello che sono chiamati ad essere e quello che devono realizzare, fa che molti sacerdoti, non abbiano la capacità per realizzare questa integrazione adeguata.⁵⁸ Abbiamo, pertanto, la sfida di credere veramente che la

nostra vita sacerdotale è polarizzata per Cristo. La "dicotomia" e la tensione tra vita interna ed azione, si dà solo nella nostra persona quando è divisa per due amori che si opposti. L'unità di vita si conquista e costruisce tutti i giorni, come si conquista la libertà cristiana e si matura l'amore.⁵⁹

Perché, come l'ha affermato il Concilio il Vaticano II la «unità di vita non si ottiene con un'organizzazione puramente esterna delle opere del ministero, né con la pratica degli esercizi di pietà che, senza dubbio, contribuiscono molto a fomentarla».⁶⁰

L'integrazione dei differenti aspetti della nostra vita spirituale, il tentativo cosciente di superare i nostri limiti e debolezze umane, la centralità del Signore Risorto in tutta le nostre attività, fa possibile un ministero felice e pieno. Di non viverlo in questo modo, non sarà strano che arrivi il vuoto, la stanchezza, la disperazione, una vita senza senso ed una vita piena di frustrazione che, indubbiamente, possono portarci a perdere l'amore alla vocazione, la propria identità e la sfida ad essere veri testimoni.⁶¹ Unità di vita che ostacola che il ministero sacerdotale si trasformi in un servizio funzionale e che possa arrivare ad essere

“segno personale e sacramentale del Buon Pastore”,⁶² lontano all'attivismo⁶³ vuoto che ci raffredda ed allontana da quello che deve essere fondamentale. Unità di vita che ci permette di ricordare e vivere che fondamentale, pertanto, non è quello che il presbitero è chiamato a realizzare, i poteri o le attività che gli sono proprie, o che lo siano raccomandato, i servizi o funzioni che possa prestare, i compiti che possa realizzare. La cosa fondamentale è quella che è chiamato a significare e

⁵⁷ PO 14.

⁵⁸ J. Esquerda BIFET, *Nosotros somos testigos*, Salamanca, 1974, 340.

⁵⁹ BIFET, *Nosotros somos testigos*, 340.

⁶⁰ PO 14.

⁶¹ FOUCAULD, 484.

⁶² BIFET, *Espiritualidad sacerdotal*, 101.

⁶³ DP, 40.

come lo significa. Di ciò deriva l'imperiosa necessità che suo vivere, il suo modo "esistenziale", sia veramente una "icona" in che Lei trasparente, si veda, si rifletta, diventa visibile, palpabile perfino, il modo di esercitare Gesù il suo pascolo, la sua "carità pastorale".⁶⁴

Finalmente, l'unità di vita si trasforma in strada che ci facilita di non avere paura alla santità ed accettare come una sfida personale che «questa è la volontà di Dio, la vostra santificazione: che vi asteniate dalla impudicizia». ⁶⁵ Già la Costituzione *Lumen Gentium* del Concilio Vaticano II, ricordava che tutti siamo invitati a credere ed accettare la volontà di Dio che c'esige un continuo sforzo personale per riuscire a superare le proprie limitazioni e fare dell'esistenza propria una strada credibile di conversione, favorendo una vita santa come un dono ricevuto del Signore.⁶⁶ E questo non si potrà riuscire a lasciarci inzuppare per la grazia ricevuta dello Spirito Santo che continuamente aggiorna la grazia ricevuta nell'ordinazione.⁶⁷ Allo stesso modo, questo Spirito, è chi facilita che si costruisca e conservi detta unità di vita. Spingendolo, a fare in tutta la volontà dal Padre e a riconoscere, che il suo servizio, si costituisce in strada e mezzo per raggiungere la propria santificazione.⁶⁸ Perciò, possiamo affermare che «la spiritualità sacerdotale consiste in vivere autenticamente quello che il sacerdote è e fa, armonizzando la consacrazione, la missione ed il vissuto». ⁶⁹ Se si assume in questa maniera tale vocazione, si starà dando risposta a quello che la *Pastores dabo Vobis* ricordava di fronte alla nuova evangelizzazione; la quale «ha bisogno di nuovo evangelizzatore, e questi sono i sacerdoti che si impegnano a vivere il suo sacerdozio come strada specifica verso la santità». ⁷⁰

L'ascesi e la fraternità sacerdotale

Un altro elemento che germoglia del vissuto della carità pastorale come un segno di perfezione, è la coltivazione e pratica della comunione tra il

⁶⁴ L. RUBIO, «La vocación sacerdotal en el magisterio pontificio postconciliar», in *Seminarium* 46, 2006, 108.

⁶⁵ 1Tes 4,3; cf. Ef 1,4.

⁶⁶ *LG* 39; *PDV*, 20.

⁶⁷ Gal. 5,25; *PDV*, 19.

⁶⁸ *PO* 13; *PDV* 24.

⁶⁹ BIFET, *Espiritualidad sacerdotal*, 104; *PO*, 14.

⁷⁰ *PDV* 82.

presbitero ed il vescovo in tutto il lavoro pastorale.⁷¹ A questo proposito il Concilio Vaticano II afferma:

La carità pastorale esige, pertanto, che i presbiteri lavorino sempre in comunione coi loro vescovi e con gli altri fratelli nel sacerdozio per non correre in vano.⁷² Questa vita di comunione con tutti, è frutto della stessa identità della condizione cristiana perché la Chiesa non è una “comunione” in sé e per sé, ma in quanto è un popolo adunato nell’unità del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo. La comunione ecclesiale scaturisce dalla comunione di amore delle tre Persone divine, partecipata ai credenti attraverso il compimento del mistero pasquale.⁷³

È fondamentale per il presbitero di vivere in piena comunione con «la Chiesa nei suoi aspetti di mistero e di comunità ecclesiale»,⁷⁴ è un frutto della stessa unità che germoglia della Santissima Trinità. In questo modo, il presbitero nella sua attenta configurazione con Cristo, favorisce l’apertura e disponibilità allo Spirito che lo rinnova nel suo ministero e lo spinge a manifestare detta comunione con tutti. «Quindi la sua “comunione” non può limitarsi a una esperienza interiore, ma deve esplicitarsi in un incontro responsabile, solidale e fraterno con tutti i membri del Corpo mistico.»⁷⁵ Dunque, tutti i presbiteri «costituiti per l’Ordinazione nell’Ordine del Presbiterato, sono uniti tutti tra sé per l’intima fraternità sacramentale e formano un presbiterio speciale nella diocesi al cui servizio si dedica sotto il proprio Vescovo».⁷⁶ In conseguenza, questo ministero si basa in una «radicale forma comunitaria e può essere esercitato solo come un compito collettivo».⁷⁷

Il concilio Vaticano II e i documenti post conciliari, per insistere in questa comunione inerente tra i ministri ordinati, usano il termine «presbiteri», manifestando con ciò che per la grazia dell’ordinazione, i presbiteri fanno parte di una famiglia. Si costituisce una realtà comunitaria, alla quale devono rispondere con atteggiamenti di comunione. Detta comunione fraterna con tutti, la manifestano nella sua obbedienza, rispetto e fedeltà al Papa, al Collegio

⁷¹ PO 7-8; CONGREGACION PARA LOS INSTITUTOS DE VIDA CONSAGRADA Y LAS SOCIEDADES DE VIDA APOSTÓLICA, *Instrucción sobre el servicio de la autoridad y la obediencia*, Roma 2008, n. 22.

⁷² PO, 14.

⁷³ FAVALE, *I presbiteri*, 283.

⁷⁴ DP, 21.

⁷⁵ FAVALE, *I presbiteri*, 285.

⁷⁶ PO, 8a.

⁷⁷ PDV, 17; LG 28b.

Episcopale ed al proprio Vescovo.⁷⁸ Della stessa forma, nella loro fraternità coi fratelli nel sacerdozio e l'appartenenza al presbiterio, esteriorizzata nell'accettazione dell'altro, la cooperazione mutua, la corresponsabilità e nella solidarietà davanti alle necessità dell'altro.⁷⁹

D'altra parte, anche il presbitero vive questa comunione attraverso il riconoscimento dei diversi carismi che hanno i suoi fratelli nella fede, incoraggiandoli, accompagnandoli ed aiutandoli, a mettere al servizio degli altro, questi carismi per la costruzione della Chiesa.⁸⁰ Di questo insieme di relazioni, motivate su vincoli di comunione, si deduce che il fondamento teologico di questa fraternità è di tre tipi: remoto, ontologico e teologico. C'è un fondamento remoto, perché proviene dalla vocazione che ognuno riceve da parte del Signore. C'è un fondamento ontologico, per l'aspetto sacramentale e di carattere che imprime l'ordinazione ad ognuno dei consacrati. E c'è un fondamento teologico, per l'annuncio della salvezza che ognuno deve portare, come compito proprio del ministero, per mezzo della sua vita.

La radicalità evangelica.

La vita degli Apostoli fu un inseguimento radicale a Gesù Cristo; una vita di donazione piena e un vissuto di certi imperativi evangelici che li aiutavano nella configurazione col Signore. In diversi documenti della Chiesa, si constatano le virtù primordiali che devono caratterizzare al ministro ordinato in questa radicalità evangelica. Il Decreto *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, enfatizza la necessità della mortificazione, la docilità allo Spirito Santo ed il compimento della volontà di Dio in tutto.⁸¹ La *Pastores dabo Vobis*, insiste nella fede, l'umiltà, la povertà e la prudenza.⁸² Della stessa forma, il Direttorio per la Vita e il Ministero dei Presbiteri, presenta la preghiera come l'elemento unificatore che mantiene vivo il ministero.⁸³ Ma la pienezza di questa radicalità si dà nell'esercizio dei consigli evangelici: *la povertà, l'obbedienza e la castità*. Soltanto trasformandosi attraverso essi i presbiteri potranno essere segni per questo mondo. Questa radicalità era frutto di quello che Gesù stesso realizzò per mezzo della sua esistenza che fece della sua «propria vita un dono totale secondo i piani salvifici del Padre, nell'amore dello Spirito Santo: dando se

⁷⁸ DP, 22.

⁷⁹ PO, 7c. 8; DP, 25-26.

⁸⁰ PO 9; PDV 74; DP, 30.

⁸¹ PO, 12.15.

⁸² PDV, 27.73

⁸³ DP, 38-42

stesso (povertà), senza appartenersi (obbedienza), come sposo o consorte della vita di ogni persona umana (verginità o castità)».⁸⁴

Questo stile di vita di Gesù e dei suoi discepoli, si costituì – grazie alla Tradizione –, in segno a seguire, da parte di tutti i successori degli Apostoli, i vescovi, e dei suoi immediati collaboratori, i presbiteri. Quindi, il presbitero, ha ricevuto la vocazione a vivere la radicalità evangelica, dalla sua incorporazione alla famiglia di Dio per il battesimo. Ma per la consacrazione ricevuta nell'ordinazione il presbitero è chiamato a condividere in maniera più diligente e generosa questa radicalità.⁸⁵ Rivelando in questo modo «la superiorità del Regno soprattutto quello creato e le sue esigenze radicali». Mostrando così «la grandezza straordinaria del potere di Cristo Re e l'efficacia infinita dello Spirito Santo che realizza meraviglie nella sua Chiesa».⁸⁶ In conseguenza, il presbitero all'essere configurato con Cristo Capo e Pastore, dimostra per la sua carità pastorale, che vive l'unità di vita che è animata per le virtù che si seguono. Per ciò, è necessario che il sacerdote sia diligente

nell'ordinare la tendenza a sviluppare la propria libertà e volontà: seguendo il piano salvifico di Dio Amore sull'umanità (obbedienza). Ordinare la tendenza all'amicizia, intimità e fecondità: condividendo sponsalmente con Cristo la storia umana (castità e verginità). Ordinare la tendenza a servirsi delle creature: apprezzandole come doni di Dio, per orientarle a Dio stesso e condividere i beni con i fratelli (povertà).⁸⁷

A queste virtù che aggiornano la carità pastorale, la Chiesa le ha denominate consigli evangelici, perché aiutano nella ricerca della santità e sono mezzi che manifestano la configurazione con Gesù buon Pastore. Portando al devoto a darsi pienamente per Cristo ed i fratelli.⁸⁸ Queste virtù non sono frutto di un fattore esterno alla persona; germogliano dell'amore che esiste nel cuore del ministro e che condivide generosamente per gli altri. Pertanto, il presbitero, cosciente della missione al che il Signore l'ha chiamato, riconosce che «l'inseguimento evangelico [...], è un atteggiamento di consegna totale [...] che implica rinunce concrete “per il nome” o per amore alla persona di Cristo (Mt 19,29), per il Regno dei “cieli” (Mt 19,12).»⁸⁹

⁸⁴ BIFET, *Spiritualità sacerdotale per una Chiesa missionaria*, 133.

⁸⁵ M. COSTA, *Tra identità e formazione. La spiritualità sacerdotale*, Roma, 2003, 147.

⁸⁶ LG, 44; PDV, 20.

⁸⁷ BIFET, *Spiritualità sacerdotale per una Chiesa missionaria*, 134.

⁸⁸ CELAM, *Documento de Puebla*, Bogotá, 1979, n. 696.

⁸⁹ BIFET, *Espiritualidad sacerdotal...*, 114.

L' obbedienza

Il vissuto dell'obbedienza, come frutto della fede e della carità, diventa reale nel riconoscimento dell'altro e dell'ALTRO che accompagnano e guidano al presbitero nel processo di docilità e disponibilità di fronte alle diverse esigenze che possano provenire, per il bene personale e comunitario, da parte di questi. Mi riferisco all'altro, nel caso del superiore, il vescovo, la persona che governa al presbitero. Ed all'Altro, nel caso di Dio, come Capo e fondamento della vocazione e missione affidata al ministro. Di questa maniera, il ministro uscendo da sé ed impiegandosi liberamente e totalmente nella volontà di Dio, scopre le necessità dei fratelli e l'aiuta a crescere nella capacità di compassione, distacco ed umiltà. In questo modo, il presbitero si trasforma in un vero strumento di Colui che ebbe povertà con tutti.⁹⁰ «Conoscendo, dunque, la propria debolezza, il vero ministro di Cristo lavora con umiltà, cercando quello che è gradito a Dio, e come incatenato per lo Spirito è portato in tutto per la volontà di chi desidera che tutti gli uomini si salvino.»⁹¹ Questa obbedienza è frutto della testimonianza di consegna e donazione totale che Cristo ebbe attraverso la sua vita, tutto per amore e per la salvezza dell'umanità. Così, lo descrive l'Apostolo Paolo, nel conosciuto cantico ai Filippesi dove li invita a che: «Abbiate in voi gli stessi sentimenti che furono in Cristo Gesù il quale, pur essendo di natura divina, [...] ma spogliò sé stesso, assumendo la condizione di servo [...] umiliò se stesso facendosi fino obbediente fino alla morte e alla morte di croce».⁹²

Questo collocarsi sotto la volontà del Padre, per fare con umiltà e piena disponibilità il suo progetto di salvezza, permette al presbitero di riconoscere che da «Cristo Sacerdote l'obbedienza rappresenta l'essenza della redenzione».⁹³ Il Magistero della Chiesa, dopo il Concilio Vaticano II, riferendosi all'obbedienza, ha ricordato i due pilastri in cui si basa: il cristologico e l'ecclesiologico: «Essi giustificano quel radicalismo evangelico di cui l'obbedienza è espressione privilegiata insieme agli altri due consigli evangelici».⁹⁴ In primo luogo, l'ambito cristologico fa riferimento all'invito che

⁹⁰ PO, 12.

⁹¹ PO, 15.

⁹² Fil 2,5-11. CONGREGACION INSTITUTOS DE VIDA CONSAGRADA. *Instrucción El servicio de la autoridad y la obediencia*, n. 8.

⁹³ Eb 5,7-9; Fil 2,5-11. BIFET, *Spiritualità sacerdotale per una Chiesa missionaria*, 136.

⁹⁴ COSTA, 150.

Cristo ha fatto ai suoi discepoli di seguirlo ed imitarlo in tutto.⁹⁵ In altre parole «*L'obéissance est attachement au Christ; egli Christ est, c'est pourquoi il faut que l'obéissance soit*».⁹⁶ Quindi, il presbitero «Ad imitazione di Cristo ed imparando di Lui, con gesto di suprema libertà e con fiducia senza condizioni, la persona consacrata ha messo la sua volontà nelle mani del Padre per offrirgli un sacrificio perfetto e gradevole».⁹⁷

In quanto all'ambito ecclesiologico, l'Esortazione Apostolica *Pastores dabo Vobis* ci ricorda che il ministro ordinato non sta solo nella Chiesa, ma sta di fronte alla Chiesa, per la configurazione acquisita dal giorno della sua ordinazione. Quindi, la sua obbedienza si costruisce attraverso la comunione coi fedeli cristiani, ma specialmente in «la comunione col Sommo Pontefice e con il Collegio Episcopale, particolarmente col proprio Vescovo diocesano».⁹⁸ In conseguenza, questa obbedienza, deve essere vissuta in mezzo alle diverse mediazioni: le regole della comunità, le norme della Chiesa, i piani pastorali, la realtà gerarchica, la vita concreta di una comunità parrocchiale, la quotidianità con le sue bontà e difficoltà, tra altre. Per ciò, «alla persona consacrata può succedergli che 'impari l'obbedienza' pure a base di sofferenza, in situazioni particolari e difficili: per esempio, quando gli è chiesto di abbandonare certi progetti ed idee personali...».⁹⁹

In mezzo a questa diversità di realtà che mettono alla prova la capacità di obbedienza da parte del consacrato, il presbitero deve avere presente che, indipendentemente delle diverse manifestazioni che dà di questa virtù, quello che interessa è in fondo per chi sta offrendo questa obbedienza. Così lo scrive Sant'Ignazio di Loyola nelle sue Costituzioni quando afferma: «la vera obbedienza non considera a chi si obbedisce, ma per chi si obbedisce; e se si fa per il solo nostro Creatore e Signore, proprio a lui, che è Signore di tutti, si obbedisce».¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Cf. *PDV* 27b. Il Direttorio per la Vita e il Ministero dei presbiteri afferma perfino che l'obbedienza che si deve dare a Dio Padre, il credente può trovarla nello stesso cuore di Gesù. Cf. *DP*, 61.

⁹⁶ BONHOEFFER, 34.

⁹⁷ CONGREGACION INSTITUTOS DE VIDA CONSAGRADA, *Instr. El servicio de la autoridad y la obediencia*, n. 8.

⁹⁸ *PDV* 28; *PO* 15c; *LG* 28; *DP*, 61; *C.I.C.*, can. 273.

⁹⁹ CONGREGACION INSTITUTOS DE VIDA CONSAGRADA, *Instr. El servicio de la autoridad y la obediencia*, n. 10.

¹⁰⁰ Sant'Ignazio DI LOYOLA, *Costituzioni della Compagnia di Gesù*, 84.

D'altra parte, questo consiglio evangelico si presenta in quattro livelli: ascetico, mistico, apostolico - missionario e comunitario.¹⁰¹ Quattro livelli che si integrano attraverso il processo di crescita spirituale, e della stessa missione che il presbitero ha in rapporto alla carità pastorale. Come «aggiornamento della fedeltà e vissuto [...] di Cristo rispetto al progetto o “volontà” del Padre».¹⁰²

Il celibato

Esistono diversi documenti del Magistero della Chiesa, dai primi secoli fino ai nostri giorni, dedicati a riflettere la genesi, i fondamenti e gli elementi che sostengono il celibato. Molte di queste fondazioni bibliche, teologiche, spirituali, antropologiche ed ecclesiologiche, sono state accettate o respinte per molti, tanto per laici come per i ministri ordinati, in differenti momenti della storia. Questo fatto ha generato diverse conseguenze all'interno della stessa vita ecclesiale. Non pretendo fare un percorso storico dello stesso; neanche dare tutti i fondamenti che fanno del celibato un valore, in mezzo alla Chiesa di Occidente. Semplicemente svilupperò le principali enfasi che la Chiesa ha dato negli ultimi tempi.

Nella Sacra Scrittura troviamo alcuni importanti testi che c'apportano elementi per comprendere l'importanza del celibato del discepolato. In questi testi, benché non si manifesti esplicitamente la chiamata ad essere celibe da parte del Signore verso i suoi Apostoli, si riflette il valore di arrendersi pienamente per il regno dei cieli. A questo proposito, i discepoli in un'opportunità domandano a Gesù: che cosa corrisponderà loro per seguirlo? Il Signore rispose «E chiunque avrà lasciato case, o fratelli, o sorelle, o padre, o madre, o figliuoli, o campi per amor del mio nome, ne riceverà cento volte tanti, ed erederà la vita eterna».¹⁰³ Ed in un altro posto dice: «Vi sono infatti eunuchi che sono nati così dal seno della madre; ve ne sono alcuni che sono stati resi eunuchi dagli uomini, e vi sono altri che si sono fatti eunuchi per il regno dei cieli. Chi può capire capisca».¹⁰⁴ Allo stesso modo, attraverso il Vangelo, si nota la relazione di Cristo Sposo e del suo amore pieno verso la Chiesa, sua moglie. In questa relazione, si constata la consegna generosa e disinteressata verso tutta l'umanità fino a consegnare la propria vita nella croce. Questa donazione non significò per Cristo una dipendenza ad una sola persona, ma il suo amore era universale. Di uguale forma, il presbitero essendo invitato a

¹⁰¹ COSTA, 155.

¹⁰² BIFET, *Espiritualidad sacerdotal*, 115.

¹⁰³ Mt 19,29; Cf. Mc 10,29-30; Lc 18,29-30.

¹⁰⁴ Mt 19,12.

cercare questa donazione dall'amore universale a tutta la Chiesa, sviluppa quello «significato spozalizio» del corpo mediante una comunione ed una donazione personale a Gesù Cristo e la sua Chiesa che prefigura ed anticipa la comunione e la donazione perfetta e definitiva dell'al di là. Nella verginità l'uomo sta all'attesa, perfino corporalmente, delle nozze escatologiche di Cristo con la Chiesa, dandosi totalmente alla Chiesa con la speranza che Cristo si dia a questa nella piena verità della vita eterna.¹⁰⁵

Dalla stessa forma, la Chiesa trova un'altra ragione per il vissuto del celibato nei suoi ministri, nella relazione che il celibato ha con l'ordinazione che configura il sacerdote con Gesù Cristo, Capo e Sposo della Chiesa. La Chiesa, come Sposa di Gesù Cristo, desidera essere amata dal sacerdote di modo totale ed esclusivo come Gesù Cristo, Capo e Sposo, l'ha amata. Per quel motivo il celibato sacerdotale è un dono di sé stesso in e con Cristo alla sua Chiesa ed esprime il servizio del sacerdote alla Chiesa in e col Signore.¹⁰⁶ Da parte sua, il Decreto *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, non si trattenne ad affermare se la vita celibe è migliore che la vita matrimoniale, semplicemente ricordò la chiamata che tutti i cristiani abbiamo alla vita di santità, la quale si ottiene per mezzo di certi carismi specifici e di complementarietà nell'insieme del popolo di Dio. Da qui che il celibato, tra gli altri consigli evangelici, sia visto con gran stima per la Chiesa, come «segno e stimolo della carità pastorale e fonte privilegiata di fecondità spirituale nel mondo».¹⁰⁷ Orbene, l'uomo che accetta la chiamata di Dio alla vita ministeriale e quindi, ad assumere una vita di celibato e verginità, è un: Uomo come tutti, che avverte come gli altri quella logica con tutta la sua pressione istintuale, ma che scopre a un certo punto l'amore di Dio e decide che tale amore «gli basti», al punto di fare a meno dell'affetto d'una donna e del calore d'una famiglia, per essere completamente dedito all'annuncio del regno.¹⁰⁸

D'accordo a questa comprensione «i presbiteri si consacrano a Cristo in una maniera nuova ed eccellente ed a Lui si uniscono più facilmente con un cuore indiviso».¹⁰⁹ In questo modo, i presbiteri possono consacrarsi unica e

¹⁰⁵ *PDV*, 29.

¹⁰⁶ *PDV*, 29; Per approfondire questo argomento si può vedere Raimondo FRATTALLONE, «Celibato sacerdotale e voto di castità», in S. CIPRESSA (ed.), *Celibato e sacerdozio*, Roma, 2008, 85–123.

¹⁰⁷ *PO* 16; *LG* 42; *OT* 10; PAOLO VI. *Lettera Enciclica Sacerdotalis Caelibatus*. Lettera enciclica ai Vescovi, ai Sacerdoti e a tutti i fedeli del Mondo Cattolico, 24 giugno 1967, 20. D'ora in poi *SC. CELAM, Documento de Puebla*, n. 692.

¹⁰⁸ Amedeo CENCINI, *Per amore, libertà e maturità affettiva nel celibato consacrato*, Bologna, 1994, 39.

¹⁰⁹ *PO* 16; Cf. *LG* 42; 1Cor 7,32-34.

totalmente, senza nessun ostacolo, all'opera dell'annuncio del Vangelo. Perché «Garantisce la libertà apostolica per darsi con cuore integro e come sposo agli interessi di Cristo e al servizio ecclesiale [...] Perciò, “è in molteplice armonia con il sacerdozio” [...] ed è parte integrante della sequela evangelica dei dodici Apostoli...».¹¹⁰ Il Sinodo dei Vescovi del 1990 ratificò il valore e necessità del celibato nella vita dei presbiteri e la *Pastores dabo Vobis* è stata una risposta alle diverse controversie sullo stesso argomento. Ugualmente, enfatizzò il vincolo intimo tra celibato e sacerdozio, riconoscendolo non come un'imposizione della Chiesa, bensì come un dono di Dio. Pertanto, vivendo il celibato sacerdotale come una grazia del Signore, si sta riconoscendo che, «il celibato è amore di Dio che attraverso il celibe e la sua capacità affettiva raggiunge ogni uomo [...]. È memoria delle pretese di esclusività e totalità dell'amore di Cristo sul cuore umano».¹¹¹

Per la radicalità che implica questo consiglio evangelico e di fronte alla missione che deve realizzare il presbitero in mezzo al mondo, il «sacerdote richiede un buon fondamento di equilibrio umano. Bisogna aiutare i candidati a conoscere bene le proprie condizioni e i propri condizionamenti psichici».¹¹² Quindi, la Chiesa ha riconosciuto l'attenzione e l'urgenza che deve esistere in tutti i seminari di formare idoneamente in questa dimensione ai futuri sacerdoti. Questa formazione integrale, non può rimanere solo nell'ambito intellettuale, bensì, deve abbracciare tutti gli altri livelli della persona umana, perché

le motivazioni e dimensioni della castità verginale si mantengono soprattutto grazie alla vita eucaristica, alla meditazione della parola, all'intimità con Cristo, alla devozione o atteggiamento mariano, allo spirito di sacrificio, alla fraternità sacerdotale, anche per vincere la solitudine morale, al consiglio o direzione spirituale.¹¹³

In questo modo, la Chiesa manifesta che tutti i candidati al presbiterato devono comprendere necessariamente che colui che è chiamato al sacerdozio, deve essere chiamato al celibato. Perché «il celibato, scelto per il regno, dimostra più chiaramente quella fecondità spirituale, ossia quella potenza generatrice della nuova legge, per la quale l'apostolo sa di essere, in Cristo, il padre e la madre delle proprie comunità».¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ BIFET, *Spiritualità sacerdotale per una chiesa missionaria*, 137.

¹¹¹ CENCINI, *Per amore, libertà*, 30.

¹¹² CENCINI, *Per amore, libertà*, 76.

¹¹³ BIFET, *Spiritualità sacerdotale per una chiesa missionaria*, 138; Cf. OT 10; CIC, can. 224.

¹¹⁴ CENCINI, *Per amore, libertà*, 33.

Per finire, vorrei semplicemente aggiungere che il Magistero della Chiesa presenta quattro dimensioni che compongono la castità verginale.

1. La dimensione cristologica fa riferimento alla piena intimità che deve esistere con Cristo, attraverso la risposta che il ministro dà, costantemente, per la sua consegna ed amore totale verso Lui. Questa intima relazione ha come fine che il sacerdote si delinei con Cristo Sacerdote Pastore e Sposo della Chiesa, per compiere la missione che lo stesso Signore gli affidò, di portare a tutti l'annuncio del Regno dei cieli. Quindi, riconoscendo che il celibato è una grazia data da Dio, solo da questa unione potrà essere compresa ed vissuta.¹¹⁵

2. La dimensione ecclesiale mediante la quale il ministro ordinato, è chiamato ad essere testimone dello stesso amore sponsale che Cristo ha manifestato a tutti, per mezzo della carità pastorale. Di questa forma

*Preso da Cristo Gesù fino all'abbandono totale di tutto se stesso a lui, il sacerdote si configura più perfettamente a Cristo anche nell'amore col quale l'eterno Sacerdote ha amato la Chiesa, o Corpo, offrendo tutto se stesso per lei, al fine di farsene una sposa gloriosa, santa e immacolata. La verginità consacrata dei sacri ministri manifesta infatti l'amore verginale di Cristo per la Chiesa e la verginale e soprannaturale fecondità di questo connubio, per cui i figli di Dio né dalla carne né da sangue sono generati.*¹¹⁶

3. La dimensione antropologica che ci fa capire che il ministro ordinato, essendo uomo in mezzo agli uomini, vive le stesse debolezze degli altri. Pertanto, il presbitero, in mezzo a dette fragilità, deve assumere uno stile di vita adeguato al suo ministero. Coltivando i mezzi che favoriscano il vissuto dei doni che ha ricevuto e facilitando la perfezione cristiana nella sua vita.¹¹⁷

4. E, finalmente, la dimensione escatologica che ci ricorda che il celibato dei ministri ordinati è testimonianza dei valori che trascendono l'umanità e che ricorda che l'uomo, continua a camminare verso realtà che superano il benessere di questo mondo e dei sensi.¹¹⁸

La povertà

D'accordo al Magistero della Chiesa, la virtù della povertà è capita come la capacità di crescere in libertà, in «sottomissione di tutti i beni al bene

¹¹⁵ SC., 19; PO 16; PDV 29.

¹¹⁶ SC, 26.

¹¹⁷ PDV 29e; PO 16c.

¹¹⁸ SC, 33-34; GRESHAKE, *Ser sacerdote hoy*, 378-380.

supremo di Dio e del suo regno».¹¹⁹ Si capisce che non parliamo solamente di quei beni che possono comprarsi materialmente, ma anche dei beni che possono arricchire la persona e che la portano a collocare il suo cuore in realtà altrui al Vangelo, per esempio, il desiderio di ricevere incarichi importanti, assumere alcuni onori e privilegi in mezzo alla comunità, la preferenza pastorale per le persone ricche o significative nell'ambito sociale, l'uso disordinato dell'autorità o del potere, ecc. Questa chiamata nella vita del sacerdote, proviene dallo stesso Cristo, che si offrì liberamente in tutto e visse con umiltà e povertà la sua esistenza, essendo vicino in maniera speciale ai poveri, dimenticati e bisognosi. Il ministro è invitato necessariamente ad essere testimonianza di questa stessa povertà con fatti concreti e come un segno chiaro della sua configurazione col Signore.¹²⁰ In conseguenza, se il ministro ordinato vuole vivere questo consiglio evangelico, è necessario che prima assuma un cuore povero che sia capace di capire e sentire compassione verso i poveri e bisognosi. Perché, come si è detto ed annuncia il Vangelo

Gesù è stato povero, poiché la povertà è la clausura dell'umile e del piccolo, poiché la povertà è la prima espressione delle Beatitudine, poiché chi s'è dedicato all'apostolato dei popoli poveri e abbandonati non può essere altro che povero, poiché la povertà conserva all'anima la fede nell'efficacia della grazia di Dio, è soprattutto in tal modo che "griderà il Vangelo con la sua vita".¹²¹

Il Decreto *Presbyterorum ordinis* afferma

Perciò, usando del mondo come se non se usassero possono giungere a quella libertà che riscatta da ogni disordinata preoccupazione e rende docili all'ascolto della voce di Dio nella vita di tutti i giorni. Da questa libertà e docilità nasce il discernimento spirituale, che consente di mettersi nel giusto rapporto con il mondo e le realtà terrene. Tale rapporto è estremamente importante nel caso dei presbiteri, dato che la missione della Chiesa si svolge in mezzo al mondo e i beni creati sono del tutto necessari per lo sviluppo personale dell'uomo.¹²²

Pertanto, devono coltivare le virtù che favoriscono la povertà evangelica nella sua quotidianità: libertà di cuore, distacco, umiltà, obbedienza, semplicità

¹¹⁹ PDV, 30.

¹²⁰ Mt 6,24-25; Mc 6,8-9; 2 Cor 8,9.

¹²¹ FOUCAULD, 44.

¹²² PO, 17.

di vita, disponibilità ministeriale, vita profonda spirituale, carità pastorale, comunione ecclesiale, fraternità sacerdotale...¹²³

La povertà evangelica ha pure alcune dimensioni che la caratterizzano e sostengono e sono:

1. La dimensione cristologica: ad esempio di Cristo, i sacerdoti

sono invitati ad abbracciare la povertà volontaria, con cui possono conformarsi a Cristo in un modo più evidente ed essere più disponibili per il sacro ministero. Cristo infatti da ricco è diventato per noi povero, affinché la sua povertà ci facesse ricchi. Gli apostoli, dal canto loro, hanno testimoniato con l'esempio personale che il dono di Dio, che è gratuito, va trasmesso gratuitamente e hanno saputo abituarsi tanto all'abbondanza come alla miseria. Ma anche un certo uso comune delle cose -sul modello di quella comunità di beni che vanta la storia della Chiesa primitiva - contribuisce in misura notevolissima a spianare la via alla carità pastorale; inoltre, con questo tenore di vita i presbiteri possono mettere lodevolmente in pratica lo spirito di povertà raccomandato da Cristo.¹²⁴

Questa radice cristologica è coesistente ad una vocazione che va vissuta nell'oblio di vantaggi economici e sociali: «[...] povertà e celibato spogliano veramente il Clero d'ogni cosa temporale, d'ogni vincolo terreno, per farlo libero e schiavo per l'unico e sommo e straripante amore di Cristo». ¹²⁵ È sempre una risposta ad una chiamata, vissuta nell'amore e nell'imitazione di Cristo, nell'abbandono fiducioso al Padre.

2. La dimensione ecclesiale: guardando il servizio agli altri, per il Regno dei cieli.

3. La dimensione sociale che ci aiuta a sentire con i poveri e vivere dai poveri. Consiste in un adeguamento alla loro vita, si deve imparare a vivere con gli altri nelle loro realtà. Liberamente, per amore

Mossi perciò dallo Spirito del Signore, che consacrò il Salvatore con l'unzione e lo mandò ad evangelizzare i poveri i presbiteri -come pure i vescovi- cerchino di evitare tutto ciò che possa in qualsiasi modo indurre i poveri ad allontanarsi, e più ancora degli altri discepoli del Signore vedano di eliminare nelle proprie cose ogni ombra di vanità. Sistemino la propria abitazione in modo tale che nessuno possa ritenerla inaccessibile, né debba, anche se di condizione molto umile, trovarsi a disagio in essa.¹²⁶

¹²³ PDV, 30.

¹²⁴ PO, 17.

¹²⁵ PAOLO VI. Discorso alla Federazione dell'Associazione del Clero Italiano, 30 giugno 1965. In *Insegnamenti*, Vol. III, 385.

¹²⁶ PO, 17.

4. La dimensione escatologica che è quella che dà la speranza nella terra nuova. Per tutto questo, possiamo affermare, senza dubbio che

nel celibato, nell'obbedienza e nella povertà viene a cristallizzarsi un modo di vivere alla sequela convinta di Gesù, quella imitazione a cui il sacerdote è tenuto in modo particolare per la stessa unità che esiste fra la vocazione e la condotta di vita, fra mistero ed esistenza. Nel rito dell'ordinazione si invita il candidato a "porre la propria vita sotto il mistero della croce".¹²⁷

Fedeltà di Cristo, fedeltà del sacerdote

Sappiamo bene che oggi, la testimonianza del presbitero come buon pastore non è facile. Così disse il Santo Padre:

Ci sono, purtroppo, anche situazioni, mai abbastanza deplorate, in cui è la Chiesa stessa a soffrire per l'infedeltà di alcuni suoi ministri. È il mondo a trarne allora motivo di scandalo e di rifiuto. Ciò che massimamente può giovare in tali casi alla Chiesa non è tanto la puntigliosa rilevazione delle debolezze dei suoi ministri, quanto una rinnovata e lieta coscienza della grandezza del dono di Dio, concretizzato in splendide figure di generosi Pastori, di Religiosi ardenti di amore per Dio e per le anime, di Direttori spirituali illuminati e pazienti.¹²⁸

Sappiamo bene che ogni cristiano è chiamato a prestare ascolto alle esigenze del vangelo, in vista della santificazione alla sequela del Maestro da veri discepoli, in maniera radicale cioè senza riserve, liberi dalle attrattive che tendono a portare l'uomo l'ontano da Dio.¹²⁹ Precisamente per questa ragione, l'esistenza sacerdotale è presentata come chiamata da parte di Cristo per essere a Lui congiunti mediante una speciale consacrazione che è il sacramento dell'ordine che abilita a un servizio nella chiesa quello di perpetuare il regno di Dio nella storia con la stessa autorità di Cristo per far crescere santificare e governare il Corpo che è la Chiesa.¹³⁰ Abbiamo ribadito che il sacerdozio si radica nella persona di Cristo e abilita ad operare *in persona Christi*, al punto che la persona del ministro viene assunta dalla persona di Cristo. Essendo il sacerdozio un servizio in Cristo, tanto più il ministro assume, fa proprie le caratteristiche comportamentali di Gesù, tanto più potrà risplendere attraverso

¹²⁷ G. GRESHAKE, *Essere preti in questi tempi*, Brescia, 2008, 425.

¹²⁸ BENEDETTO XVI. Lettera per l'indizione dell'anno sacerdotale in occasione del 150° anniversario del *dies natalis* di Giovanni Maria Vianney. Città del Vaticano, 16 giugno 2009.

¹²⁹ *PDV*, 27.

¹³⁰ *PO*, 2.

di lui la luce di Cristo. In virtù della missione sacerdotale, il presbitero è tenuto a un maggiore radicalismo evangelico rispetto a tutti i cristiani.

Per raggiungere la forza di essere veri testimoni della presenza di Dio in questo mondo, non basta la scienza, nelle capacità umane. È fondamentale cercare l'unità di vita riuscita dai grandi testimoni come San Giovanni Maria Vianney, proposto dal Santo Padre come modello di tutti i preti. Il Papa, lo ha presentato come modello cosciente di che

Fu proprio l'adesione senza riserve a questo "nuovo stile di vita" che caratterizzò l'impegno ministeriale del Curato d'Ars [...] ne presentava la fisionomia ascetica con particolare riferimento al tema dei "tre consigli evangelici", giudicati necessari anche per i presbiteri: "Se, per raggiungere questa santità di vita, la pratica dei consigli evangelici non è imposta al sacerdote in virtù dello stato clericale, essa si presenta nondimeno a lui, come a tutti i discepoli del Signore, come la via regolare della santificazione cristiana."¹³¹

I consigli evangelici, come un cammino verso alla santità, sintetizzano le esigenze del radicalismo evangelico a cui è chiamato il presbitero.

L'obbedienza è propria di Cristo che spogliò se stesso fino alla morte di croce nella totale obbedienza alla volontà del Padre. Il sacerdote nell'obbedienza ai superiori incarna nella propria vita l'atteggiamento che Gesù ha avuto nel compiere la volontà del Padre. Con la castità il presbitero opera con cuore indiviso, è testimone del regno di Dio, con questo voto si ha il dono della propria vita ad immagine dell'amore trinitario del Padre e del Figlio nello Spirito Santo. Questo permette al sacerdote di avere una fecondità spirituale così da incarnare il Cristo nella nostra esistenza simile a Maria che ha generato l'unigenito per opera dello Spirito.¹³² Con la povertà, il sacerdote considera sua ricchezza l'eredità promessa da Cristo a coloro che si mettono alla sua sequela, sapendo bene di operare nel mondo ma di non appartenere al mondo,¹³³ usando i beni della terra come strumenti per l'edificazione del regno, e mai come fine per accrescere il potere di dominio, schiavi del proprio orgoglio. La povertà apre il presbitero verso una autentica carità pastorale fondata unicamente sull'amore alla Chiesa, senza perdere mai di vista che tutto ciò che abbiamo è dono di Dio, elargitoci per il bene degli altri. Nessuno si è mai fatto sacerdote

¹³¹ BENEDETTO XVI, Lettera per l'indizione dell'anno sacerdotale

¹³² PO, 16. SC, 30. GIOVANNI PAOLO II. Esortazione Apostolica Post-Sinodale *Vita Consecrata* All'episcopato e al Clero agli Ordini e Congregazioni Religiose alle Società di Vita Apostolica agli Istituti Secolari e a tutti i fedeli circa la Vita Consacrata e la sua missione nella Chiesa e nel mondo. 25 Marzo 1996, n. 21.

¹³³ Gv 17,14-16.

semplicemente o innanzitutto per il piacere e per la gloria di vivere casto, povero e ubbidiente. Ogni sacerdote viene conquistato dall'immenso amore di Cristo che lo provoca alla sequela radicale. Come ogni inizio, anche questo è carico della forza vitale, questa è necessaria, ma deve essere anche duratura.¹³⁴

In una società secolarizzata come la nostra, bisogna abituarsi a uno stile di vita che non è presentato come l'ideale ed è, precisamente per questa ragione che i consigli evangelici assunti con l'ordinazione presbiterale devono diventare lo stile di vita.¹³⁵ Questo passaggio non è un puro meccanismo, ma è una sincera disposizione d'animo che porta un presbitero non alla ricerca della sua volontà, ma della volontà di Dio. In questo senso l'obbedienza, il celibato e la povertà sono la costellazione interiore che guida il presbitero alla totale donazione di sé: una donazione di sé nel rapporto con le cose, mediante un impegno di povertà; una donazione di sé con gli affetti umani, mediante un impegno di castità; una donazione della propria volontà, mediante un impegno di obbedienza.¹³⁶ Il mondo di oggi è un mondo dei profondi mutamenti. Le relazioni umane si basano spesso nello scambio dei beni materiali. Questi, spesso, fanno incurvare lo spirito umano rendendolo incapace all'apertura verso Dio. Anche qui la vita materialmente povera dei presbiteri deve diventare un segno che parla senza le parole. La povertà evangelica porta il presbitero alla

sottomissione di tutti i beni al bene supremo di Dio e del suo Regno. In realtà, solo chi contempla e vive il mistero di Dio quale unico e sommo bene, quale vera e definitiva ricchezza, può capire e realizzare la povertà, che non è certamente disprezzo e rifiuto dei beni materiali ma è uso grato e cordiale di questi beni.¹³⁷

Il senso della povertà sacerdotale si trova fuori di essa. La povertà ci porta alla radicalità evangelica attraverso la quale si giunge al servizio dei fratelli, in maniera speciale di quelli più deboli. Questa strada prima di tutti l'ha fatta Gesù stesso facendosi povero pur essendo ricco.¹³⁸ Come l'obbedienza e il celibato così anche la povertà non è qualcosa che mostra che un prete è perfetto, ma vuol mostrare che Gesù Cristo è il centro della sua vita e che la

¹³⁴ PO, 15.

¹³⁵ Queste idee sono state proposte dagli studenti Corrado Caroli, C.S., Ivan Grbešić, Luca Paoloni, Nicolò Sebastiano Praxolu e Giacomo Minutella, O.S.B., nel corso ARV 201 *Spiritualità sacerdotale rinnovata* della Pontificia Università Gregoriana nell'anno accademico 2009-2010.

¹³⁶ A. FAVALE (ed.), *Vocazione comune e vocazioni specifiche. Aspetti biblici, teologici e psico-pedagogici-pastorali*, Roma, 1993, 355.

¹³⁷ PDV, 30.

¹³⁸ 2 Cor 8, 9.

Patria dell'uomo non è sulla terra, ma nei cieli. Il presbitero, come ogni battezzato, è chiamato a vivere una vita d'imitazione di Cristo e pertanto anche ad imitarne il distacco interiore dai beni e dalle comodità terrene. Come diceva Giovanni Paolo II

Lo spirito di povertà è necessario per tutti, in ogni luogo e in ogni tempo; venirvi meno sarebbe tradire il Vangelo. La fedeltà allo spirito non comporta però, né per i cristiani in generale né per i sacerdoti, la pratica di una povertà radicale con la rinuncia ad ogni proprietà, o addirittura con l'abolizione di questo diritto dell'uomo.¹³⁹

Il presbitero, vivendo libero da attaccamenti disordinati, cercando di scegliere e usare solamente quelle cose che sono veramente indispensabile per la sua missione, può disporre «per quei fini ai quali possono essere destinati, d'accordo con la dottrina di Cristo Signore e gli orientamenti della Chiesa» quali «l'ordinamento del culto divino, il dignitoso mantenimento del clero, il sostenimento delle opere di apostolato e di carità, specialmente per i poveri».¹⁴⁰ A tale necessità va sempre accompagnata l'attenzione a ciò che l'uso di beni può suscitare nelle persone, soprattutto i più piccoli e poveri, evitando occasioni di scandalo che possano «in qualsiasi modo indurre i poveri ad allontanarsi».¹⁴¹ Lo spirito di povertà per un presbitero si tradurrà dunque in

disinteresse e distacco nei riguardi del denaro, nella rinuncia ad ogni avidità di possesso dei beni terreni, in uno stile di vita semplice, nella scelta di un'abitazione modesta e accessibile a tutti, nel rifiuto di tutto quello che è o anche solo appare come lussuoso, in una tendenza crescente alla gratuità della dedizione al servizio di Dio e dei fedeli.¹⁴²

La libertà manifesta tramite la povertà deve essere unita a quella che favorisce una vita libera degli affetti umani, cioè, mediante la scelta del servizio totale ai fratelli con la vita celibataria. C'è un'autentica chiamata a vivere il celibato come una forma specifica di una più generale e universale chiamata alla santità.¹⁴³ Il celibato riguarda la propria personale vocazione, diviene risposta, adesione personale alla chiamata che il Signore rivolge ad alcuni dei suoi figli. Nonostante sia una scelta della Chiesa, che non dipende da una prescrizione di Gesù stesso, emerge chiaro il legame tra santità e celibato nella vita del presbitero. Quella universale vocazione «alla pienezza

¹³⁹ GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udienda generale del 21 luglio 1993.

¹⁴⁰ *PO*, 17.

¹⁴¹ *PO*, 17.

¹⁴² GIOVANNI PAOLO II, Udienda generale del 21 luglio 1993.

¹⁴³ Karl RAHNER, *Lettera aperta sul celibato*, Brescia, 1967, 27.

della vita cristiana e alla perfezione della carità»,¹⁴⁴ trova particolare forma in una vita celibataria, espressione di quell'amore che è proprio di Cristo, dono totale di se fino al dono della propria vita. Il celibato, ancora prima di venire considerato una disposizione canonica e un semplice dovere collegato al ministero sacerdotale, è un dono di Dio alla sua Chiesa; è un'espressione dell'identità del presbitero che caratterizza la sua dedizione totale al Signore. Pur distinguendo tra disciplina celibataria dei secolari e l'esperienza religiosa della consacrazione e della professione dei voti, è indiscutibile che non ci sia altra opportuna interpretazione e giustificazione del celibato ecclesiastico al di là della totale dedizione al Signore, in una relazione che sia, anche nel punto di vista affettivo, esclusivo ed unico; questo richiama ad una germinale e forte relazione personale e comunitaria con Cristo, che trasforma i cuori dei suoi sacerdoti.

La scelta celibataria della Chiesa cattolica latina si è sviluppata, avendo come grande icona la frase che Gesù Risorto rivolse a Pietro «Mi ami tu più di costoro?».¹⁴⁵ Le ragioni trinitarie, cristologiche in specie, ecclesiologiche ed escatologiche del celibato, tutte fondate nella comunione con Cristo a cui il presbitero è eletto, sono pertanto riscontrabili in diverse modalità secondo quanto affermato autorevolmente dalla Lettera Enciclica *Sacerdotalis cælibatus*. Innanzitutto il celibato è «segno e stimolo della carità pastorale».¹⁴⁶ Questa è il criterio sommo per individuare il contesto, l'esperienza, la riflessione, l'azione e la valutazione della vita cristiana in tutti i suoi aspetti; il celibato è una via dell'amore, anche se lo stesso Gesù, come sottolinea l'evangelista Matteo, dice che non tutti possono comprendere questa realtà: «Non tutti possono capirlo, ma solo coloro ai quali è stato concesso».¹⁴⁷ Una tale esperienza di carità, si esprime nel classico aspetto di amore verso Dio e verso i fratelli, come l'ha affermato il Decreto *Presbyterorum ordinis*: «Con la verginità o il celibato osservato per il Regno dei cieli i presbiteri si consacrano a Dio con un nuovo ed eccelso titolo, aderiscono più facilmente a Lui con cuore non diviso».¹⁴⁸

Già san Paolo presenta l'unità di vita raggiunta tramite il celibato e la verginità come «via per piacere a Dio»,¹⁴⁹ senza divisioni: è quindi una via dell'amore che certamente presuppone una vocazione particolare, e in questo senso è un carisma, e che è in se stessa eminente sia per il cristiano che per il

¹⁴⁴ *LG*, 40.

¹⁴⁵ Gv 21,15.

¹⁴⁶ *SC*, 24.

¹⁴⁷ Mt 19,11.

¹⁴⁸ *PO*, 16.

¹⁴⁹ 1Cor 7,32-33.

presbitero. Il radicale amore verso Dio assume, attraverso l'esercizio della carità pastorale, le caratteristiche dell'amore verso i fratelli. Nella *Presbyterorum Ordinis* leggiamo che i sacerdoti «si dedicano più liberamente a lui e per lui al servizio di Dio e degli uomini, servono con maggiore efficacia il suo Regno e la sua opera di rigenerazione divina e in tal modo si dispongono meglio a ricevere una più ampia paternità in Cristo».¹⁵⁰ Certamente è più facile parlare del celibato soltanto in un senso negativo, quando stiamo vivendo alcuni dolorosi scandali nella Chiesa, ma a questo riguardo, possiamo anche dire che il celibato, quando si vive coscientemente come un dono, è diverso e significa una gioia e una possibile e testimonianza di vivere in speranza. L'esperienza di tanti conferma come sia più semplice ed efficace aprire il cuore ai fratelli totalmente e pienamente per chi non è vincolato da altri affetti, per quanto legittimi e santi, oltre a quello del Signore Gesù. Il celibato è il modello che Cristo stesso ci ha lasciato in eredità, lui ha voluto essere celibe. Spiega ancora la *Sacerdotalis cælibatus*:

Cristo rimase per tutta la sua vita nello stato di verginità, il che significa la sua totale dedizione al servizio di Dio e degli uomini. Questa profonda connessione tra la verginità e il sacerdozio di Cristo si riflette in quelli che hanno la sorte di partecipare alla dignità e alla missione del Mediatore e Sacerdote eterno, e tale partecipazione sarà tanto più perfetta, quanto più il sacro ministero sarà libero da vincoli di carne e di sangue.¹⁵¹

Approfondendo il senso dei consigli evangelici e l'unità di vita, il rapporto fra sacerdozio, vita cristiana, virtù evangeliche, dimensione escatologica e santità in genere, sembra opportuno dire una parola sul modo in cui si vivono i consigli evangelici nel sacerdozio secolare e in quello regolare.¹⁵² Rispetto al sacerdote diocesano, che opera in una realtà praticamente parrocchiale, il religioso sacerdote è chiamato a vivere la sua vocazione all'interno di una famiglia religiosa, che si caratterizza con il proprio carisma, e non in un presbitero diocesano. I voti professati in un istituto e successivamente l'ordinazione presbiterale, conferiscono all'eletto una particolare grazia che si concretizza nel vivere in fedeltà il carisma dei fondatori e nel vivere attraverso un taglio più radicale dato dai suoi voti, la vita sacerdotale. Maurizio Costa, riprendendo una espressione di Giovanni Paolo II, afferma che in forza della

¹⁵⁰ *PO*, 16.

¹⁵¹ *SC*, 21.

¹⁵² Queste idee sono state proposte dagli studenti Corrado Caroli, C.S., Ivan Grbešić, Luca Paoloni, Nicolò Sebastiano Praxolu e Giacomo Minutella, O.S.B., nel corso ARV 201 *Spiritualità sacerdotale rinnovata* della Pontificia Università Gregoriana nell'anno accademico 2009-2010.

propria vocazione, il religioso presbitero è per la Chiesa universale, attraverso la sua missione in una determinata chiesa locale.¹⁵³ Per questo anche il voto di castità riceve una valenza differente dalla promessa di celibato espressa dal presbitero diocesano. Il religioso presbitero ha emesso un voto, che ha una caratteristica escatologica, e che un sacerdote diocesano vive in un modo differente. Il religioso presbitero è testimone dell'Invisibile, di una realtà futura, e lo fa come profeta. La sfumatura del celibato e del voto di castità è sottile; ma accenniamo che nel presbitero diocesano la sua sponsalità si realizza in Cristo sposo, che ama la Chiesa sua Sposa. La sponsalità del religioso presbitero invece si realizza nella Chiesa Sposa, che si trova di fronte a Cristo Sposo.¹⁵⁴ In conclusione possiamo affermare che il religioso sacerdote, si trova innanzi ad un mistero duplice: quello di vivere la dimensione dei voti e quella della ministerialità consacrata, in modo da rendere presente in modo pressoché perfetto la figura di Cristo, autore e perfezionatore della nostra fede. Il decreto *Perfectae Caritatis* descrive così la vita comune:

La vita in comune persevera nella preghiera e nella comunione di uno stesso spirito, nutrita della dottrina del Vangelo, della santa liturgia e soprattutto dell'eucaristia (cfr. At 2,42), sull'esempio della Chiesa primitiva, in cui la moltitudine dei credenti era d'un cuore solo e di un'anima sola (cfr. At 4,32).¹⁵⁵

La vita comune, dunque, è la forma classica della Chiesa. Essa stessa nasce in un determinato momento nel quale sono riuniti gli Apostoli e Maria nel Cenacolo.¹⁵⁶ Il ruolo della vita fraterna, o meglio di una vita vissuta in un modo fraterno è condensata in quelle parole che i Padri conciliari hanno trasmesso alla Chiesa tutta. La vita fraterna per un sacerdote religioso può diventare il luogo dove esercitare maggiormente il suo ministero di apostolo e di operatore di carità, dove la carità si manifesta nelle cose più semplici e a volte anche più umili. Il presbitero, che vive nel cenobio, in un particolare stato di vita oltre quello ministeriale, è chiamato a vivere

in fraterna comunanza di vita in modo che si prevengano gli uni gli altri nel rispetto scambievole (cfr. Rm 12,10), portando gli uni i pesi degli altri (cfr. Gal 6,2). Infatti con l'amore di Dio diffuso nei cuori per mezzo dello Spirito Santo (cfr. Rm 5,5), la comunità come una famiglia unita nel

¹⁵³ COSTA, 139.

¹⁵⁴ COSTA, 184-185.

¹⁵⁵ PAOLO VI. Decreto sul rinnovamento della Vita Religiosa *Perfectae Caritatis*. 28 ottobre 1965, 15. D'ora in poi *PC*.

¹⁵⁶ At 2,1.

nome del Signore gode della sua presenza (cfr. Mt 18,20). La carità è poi il compimento della legge (cfr. Rm 13,10) e vincolo di perfezione (cfr. Col 3,14), e per mezzo di essa noi sappiamo di essere passati dalla morte alla vita (cfr. 1 Gv 3,14). Anzi l'unità dei fratelli manifesta l'avvento di Cristo (cfr. Gv 13,35; 17,21), e da essa promana grande energia per l'apostolato.¹⁵⁷

La fedeltà al sacerdozio è possibile, solamente se crediamo che Cristo sia fedele. Mi riferisco a una fedeltà che considera il sacerdozio come un frutto della scelta libera e definitiva. Oggi più che mai abbiamo bisogno di essere fedeli assumendo che nella società odierna le scelte definitive sono veramente difficili. Oggi, quando gli scandali hanno ferito seriamente la nostra credibilità, occorre approfondire la nostra fede nelle promesse fatte e rafforzare l'unità della nostra vita. Sarà sempre buono ricordare che grazia e libertà, amore preveniente e libero assenso all'azione di Dio sono i poli che, confluenti nell'unità della persona, costituiscono e determinano la fedeltà del sacerdote alla fedeltà di Cristo. Questa solo potrà essere raggiunta nel ministero vissuto in preghiera, con disciplina, austerità di vita, prudenza, generosità e la pratica dei consigli evangelici. Tutte queste cose sono strutture spirituali che, impegnando la libertà del presbitero e convergente nell'unità di vita, costruiscono la fedeltà al sacerdozio. Costituiscono, pure, aiuti per mantenere vivo il fuoco delle promesse e il fervore del primo giorno dell'ordinazione. A questo proposito, Sua santità Paolo VI diceva

Noi vi domandiamo in questa ora che sembra diventare critica per la chiesa. Vi domandiamo la fedeltà, la fedeltà a Cristo, alla Chiesa, alle anime, al popolo di Dio. Chi abbandona il sacerdozio non abbandona soltanto la propria missione, la propria promessa. Abbandona i poveri, abbandona quelli che hanno bisogno di istruzione, abbandona quelli che domandano i sacramenti. Diserta il posto di prima linea che è nella Chiesa. Quindi a voi domandiamo, figli carissimi: siate generosi. Il Signore vi domanda, sì, grandi sacrifici e grande dedizione, non vi darà riposo in questa vita. Ma avrete certamente il premio più grande che può essere dato a chi è veramente servitore del Vangelo, della Chiesa e di Gesù Cristo.¹⁵⁸

I consigli evangelici nella vita dei presbiteri sono coniugabili solo alla luce di un'esperienza di fede del sacerdote in Cristo, in una sequela imitativa, solo per amore, di Lui che diventa per la persona, orientamento che fonda le scelte, i pensieri e le azioni. Sono anche un'espressione di libertà della persona,

¹⁵⁷ PC, 15.

¹⁵⁸ PAOLO VI. Udienza generale del 4 agosto 1971, in *Insegnamenti*, Vol. IX, 670-671.

perché non vengono percepiti solo dentro della categoria di obbligatorietà o dei doveri, ma come il frutto di un movimento interiore spontaneo e autenticamente liberante. Vivere i consigli evangelici per approfondire l'unità di vita sacerdotale è sempre una questione di fede e non soltanto di ascesi pratica pura e semplice. Sono l'espressione esterna di una radice interiore che è un atto positivo ed esclusivo di amore personale e profondo a Cristo e di un senso credibile dell'appartenenza alla Chiesa. Perché come diceva Paolo VI:

[...] solo la fede può dirci chi siamo e quali dobbiamo essere: e cioè, dicevamo, dei chiamati e degli apostoli. Per corrispondere al pensiero di Cristo, il sacerdote è *obbediente* al Vescovo, come Gesù è stato obbediente al Padre, ed è venuto per compiere la Sua volontà; il sacerdote è *povero*, come Cristo è stato povero, perché questa testimonianza gli dà la vera libertà di spirito e l'interesse per gli altri, e la credibilità davanti agli altri; il sacerdote vuole vivere il *suo celibato* come un atto di esclusivo amore a Cristo e di totale offerta, che lo renda disponibile a tutti, e consumato nell'esercizio del suo ministero.¹⁵⁹

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¹⁵⁹ PAOLO VI. Discorso ai partecipanti alla IX Assemblea generale della Conferenza Episcopale Italiana. 17 giugno 1972, in *Insegnamenti*, Vol. X, 652-653.

