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THE EVOLUTION OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE AFTER THE DEATH OF EMPEROR CONSTANTINE THE GREAT UNTIL THE TENTH CENTURY

Călin Ioan Dușe[1]

Abstract: Constantine the Great considered himself the representative of God on earth, but also the fact that through his mind is transmitted "divine intelligence." This conception about the emperor manifested itself throughout the existence of the Byzantine Empire. The emperors who followed Constantine the Great intervened in problems that arose within the Church. Some of them supported it, and others who shared the heresies that appeared during this period, persecuted the important representatives of the Church who tried to defend the purity of Christianity.
Within the Byzantine Empire, numerous transformations will now take place in all fields, and these transformations will lay the foundations on which the Byzantine state developed.
Keywords: Byzantine Empire, Christianity, Church, emperors, council, heretics, culture, civilization.

Some historians agree that since the emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) laid the foundations of the "New Rome", the very existence of the Byzantine Empire began. Because it was in the place where Europe meets Asia, but especially due to its military and economic importance, Constantinople was the best place and thus, around it, the whole Eastern world could gather.

Greek culture and civilization, especially strong in this part of the Empire, but especially the superiority conferred by Christianity, made the new capital differ in a very special way from the old capital, being now both the fulfillment

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of aspirations, but especially of the tendencies of the new Eastern world, which will materialize in a new tendency and conception of a new monarchy. The Roman Empire had been preparing it for a long time, and now the time has come to realize this desire.

The beginning of the fourth century will be the one that in contact with the Middle East will complete this transformation, and the emperor Constantine the Great wanted to make the power of the Empire an absolute authority, but also a divine right. To fulfill this wish, Emperor Constantine the Great had to surround himself with all the splendor of the costume, but especially with the oriental splendor offered by it, but also with the ceremonies at the imperial palace.

In the new given situation, the emperor Constantine the Great considered himself the deputy of God on earth, but also the fact that through his mind is transmitted "divine intelligence." He began to emphasize as much as possible the sacred character of the emperor, surrounding him with many solemn formulas, taking him out of the world, and organizing the terrestrial world as a divine court.

To increase the strength and prestige of the imperial institution, Emperor Constantine the Great wanted a well-hierarchical organized and strict administrative monarchy and at the same time to be closely supervised, and the entire authority to be exercised with authority by the emperor. Also, the emperor Constantine the Great was very generous, he distributed gifts without distinction to the Churches, bishops, but also to the citizens. Because he promoted Christians in the administration and in the army, he attracted the sympathy of all Christians in the Empire, especially by declaring Sunday a holiday, but also by abolishing the fights of gladiators, restricting divorce grounds, punishing rape and adultery. Emperor Constantine the Great banned pagan sacrifices and divination and confiscated the riches of pagan temples, covering most of the expenses for the construction of Constantinople.

Although most of the Empire's population was pagan, they passively accepted a Christian emperor, and many pagans converted to Christianity because some of them wanted to win the favor of the government, most believed that the emperor's victories Constantine the Great over his rivals proved that this Christianity was a good thing. Many pagans also admired the morality of Christians, their concern for the poor, and the fact that during severe persecution they remained steadfast in the faith.[2]

Through the laws he promoted during his reign, Emperor Constantine the Great sought to achieve justice against all forms of deception, corruption, and theft that could be blamed on state officials. He wanted to create a strong state that would control all aspects of protecting citizens and their families.

By what he did during his life, Emperor Constantine the Great must be judged as one of the greatest political and military leaders, but also one of the most influential religious and cultural figures in human history. In his person, the cultural confluences of the fourth century managed to be equally embodied and the contradictions that cross it in places. His desire for unity means, without a doubt, the desire for a synthesis between *vetustas* and *innovatio*, between Latinism and Hellenism, mythology and faith, beauty and justice, taxes and generosity, between *hilaritas* and *gravitas,* a synthesis that surpassed them by rejection of bloody sacrifices, on all the previous Roman emperors and which embraces, in a universal way, a new form of Romanity, traditional, continuously founding and re-founding[3] within the universal civilization.

In the fourth century the most important moment in the history of the Byzantine Empire was the gradual immigration of barbarians, more precisely of the Germans (Goths).[4] Their presence in the Empire is not new, because the elite of the military troops will be recruited from among them. The barbarians will be received into the Empire as federates, receiving land, and their leaders will be quickly assimilated, thus coming to play an important political role.[5]

Thus, the most important events that marked the evolution of the Byzantine Empire in political and military terms during this period were the receiving of the Goths in 332, but also of the Visigoths in 382, as federates. The Persian invasions of Syria and Mesopotamia dominated the period between 337-363. At the borders of the Byzantine Empire, the Huns will appear, approximately in the year 375.

After the death of Emperor Constantine the Great, his three sons succeeded to the rule of the Empire. Unfortunately, the enmity that existed between the three

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2 W. Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului*, Editura Artemis București, 2003, 35-36.

3 B. Lancon, T. Moreau, *Constantin un împărat creștin*, Editura Basilica București, 2013, 285.

4 A. A. Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, Editura Polirom Iași, 2010, 107.

5 M. Kaplan, *Bizanț*, Editura Nemira București, 2010, 17.

brothers was amplified even more by the wars they had to wage against the Persians and the Germans. Constantine and Constans were followers of the Nicene Creed, but during the ensuing civil war Constantine was killed in 340, and his brother Constans suffered the same fate in 350. Thus, from now on Constantius (337-361) will remain the sole emperor of the Empire.

He was an ardent supporter of Arianism and pursued an Aryan politics that sought to suppress paganism. In the year 356 Constantius promulgated a law that provided for the closure of all pagan temples, forbidding entry into them, and stopping the offering of sacrifices in all localities of the Empire.[6] Whoever disobeyed these commandments was sentenced to death and confiscation of property. He also issued another edict sentencing to death all those who offered sacrifices and worshiped the gods. During his reign, paganism experienced some defeats, while Arianism gained ground. His Aryan policy created great divergences between him and the Nicene, who were supported by St. Athanasius the Great (295-373).[7]

After the death of Constantius, Julian the Apostate, the nephew of the emperor Constantine the Great, succeeded to the throne of the Empire. During his short reign between 361-363, Julian the Apostate wanted the restoration of paganism, and in this sense, he legalized paganism by reopening the temples and returned the lands that had been confiscated. He was aware of the advantage of a hierarchy of bishops for Christians and in this regard, he would create a parallel hierarchy of pagan priests. Also, Julian the Apostate overlooked some acts of pagan violence against Christians, and to encourage and deepen the division between Christians, he recalled St. Athanasius the Great and the other anti-Aryan bishops who were exiled by Emperor Constantius. In 363, Julian the Apostate started a war against the Persians, and died of a Persian arrow.[8]

The soldiers proclaimed Jovian king (363-364), who was a devoted follower of the Nicene Creed. He restored Christianity to its former form, and the church historian Philostorgius tells us that: *"Emperor Jovian restored the churches to their former good state, freeing them from all the persecutions to which [Julian] the Apostate had subjected them. He also recalled those sent into exile by him for*

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6 Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului,* 41.

7 Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 110-111.

8 Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului,* 41-42.

refusing to renounce righteous piety."[9] Emperor Jovian thus wished to restore the entire order of the Empire that existed before the reign of Julian the Apostate.

Emperor Valens (365-378) pursued a completely different politics, and after declaring himself a follower of Arianism, he became intolerant of all other Christian doctrines. He will also reconfirm Constantius' sentences of exile for St. Athanasius the Great and for the other Anitian bishops, which will arouse even greater opposition. Valens began the colonization of the Goths in Thrace, and when their numbers became too large, in 378 he attacked them at Adrianople. Thus, he and his army died as a result of a confused battle.[10] Throughout his reign, the inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire went through a period of great unrest and fear.

The reign of Emperor Theodosius the Great (379-395), who was a supporter and defender of the Nicene Creed, was of particular importance for the triumph of Christianity. He ordered that all the churches in Constantinople be handed over to the Nicene people. Ever since the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great, the *Ecclesia catholica* - Catholic (universal) Church has been delimited by *haeretici* - heretics, and during the reign of Theodosius the Great, the distinction between Catholic and heretic was definitively established by law. Thus, a Catholic became a follower of the Nicene Creed, and followers of other religious tendencies were considered heretics, while *pagani* - pagans were placed in a separate category.

By a decree of 380, only those who believed in the Holy Trinity, as preached in the Holy Gospels and the writings of the Holy Apostles, were considered *Catholici*, and the others were considered *"the foolish and reckless world,"* who adhered to *"the vile heretical doctrine."* According to the *Codex Theodosianus*, XVI, 1,2 they did not have the right to call their meeting place as churches, being liable to the harshest punishments. Emperor Theodosius the Great also issued other decrees banning heretics from meeting in public or private gatherings, and their civil rights were increasingly restricted, especially those related to wills and inheritances. Those who were followers of the Nicene Creed would receive all the churches in Constantinople and throughout the Empire.

The last step taken by Emperor Theodosius the Great against paganism was the decree of 392. Thus, according to the *Codex Theodosianus*, IX, 45, 1, the old

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9 Filostorgiu, *Istoria bisericească,* VIII, 5, Editura Polirom Iași, 2012, 245.

10 Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului,* 43.

religion was considered the *gentilicia superstition* - a pagan superstition, being strictly forbidden sacrifices, burning incense, burning garlands, libations, divinations, but also all pagan practices. All those who will violate these decrees, will be guilty of offense to the emperor and sacrilege being liable to the most severe punishments. Thus, from now on, all pagan temples will be closed, and all pagan rites will be banned.

During his reign, Emperor Theodosius the Great faced two difficult problems. Thus, he first had to restore unity within the Empire, which was torn apart by divergent religious parties, but also to defend himself from the attacks of the Goths, who threatened the very existence of the Empire,[11] thus managing to skillfully solve all internal and external problems.

After the death of Theodosius the Great, his son Arcadius (395-408) came to rule the Byzantine Empire, ascending the throne when he was only seventeen. Obviously, at such an age, he did not have the experience or the will to occupy this rank. Under these conditions, he will be dominated by his favorites, who will lead the Empire in such a way as to offer personal benefits to them and their parties.

The most important issue during the reign of Arcadius was the Germanics. At the beginning of Arcadius 'reign, Alaric, the leader of the Visigoths, launched a military campaign to Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia, but Rufinus' diplomatic intervention convinced him to abandon an attack on Constantinople. However, Alaric continued his military campaign in Greece as far as Athens, encircling the city walls. He gave up conquering it when he saw the goddess Athena Promachos in armor and the Trojan hero Achilles standing in front of the city wall. Alaric will plunder the cities of Corinth, Argos, and Sparta.

Arcadius died in 408 and was succeeded by his son Theodosius II the Younger (408-450), who was only seven years old. Theodosius II was not a gifted politician, nor was he particularly interested in matters of government. Throughout his long reign, he stayed away from the problems of the state, leading a solitary, monastic life, devoting most of his time to calligraphy, copying many old manuscripts. His sister, Pulcheria was one of the most influential people during his reign. She has written several works on religious topics, but also some in which she recounted certain political events.

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11 Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 119-122.

During the reign of Theodosius II, the Byzantine Empire was not so subject to military events, but nevertheless had to face the threat of the Huns, who advanced as far as the walls of Constantinople, and until relations were established. friendship, Theodosius II was forced to pay them a large sum of money, but also to cede the territory south of the Danube. However, the Huns under Attila (395-453), who was their strongest leader, continued their incursions into Illyricum and Thrace in 447. After defeating the imperial armies, they led the empire to evacuate the north Illyricum's, but also to pay a higher tribute.[12]

One of the important events during his reign was the construction of the walls of Constantinople in 413, which will protect the capital from the land and thus, the capital's area will double to now reach seven hundred hectares.[13]

The oldest collection of decrees, which were given by the Roman emperors, dates from the time of Emperor Theodosius II. The *Codex Theodosianus* was published in Latin in 438. The *Codex* contained decrees that were issued by Christian emperors, from Constantine the Great to Theodosius II. It is divided into sixteen books, which have been subdivided into an exact number of titles. Thus, each book deals with a certain aspect of government: about administration, military issues or those related to religious life, and in each title, the decrees are coordinated chronologically. *Codex Theodosianus* has a great historical importance because it is the most important source, which presents information from the IV and V centuries. Also, the *Codex* of Theodosius II, along with previous collections, will be an important source for the legal activities of Emperor Justinian (527-565). After the publication of the codex all the decrees that will appear will be called novele *leges novellae*.

Despite all his weaknesses, but also his lack of ability as a statesman, the long reign of Theodosius II was very important for later history, especially from a cultural point of view.[14]

Zeno (474-491) became emperor at the age of fifty and became a perfect intriguer, and for this he was disregarded by the people due to the combination of Isaurian harshness and non-Isaurian cunning.[15]

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12 Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului,* 48-49.

13 Kaplan, *Bizanț*, 17.

14 Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 128-140.

15 Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului,* 70.

During Zeno's reign, some changes took place within the Byzantine Empire. Thus, during this period, the Germanic influence at court will be replaced by that of the Isaurians, a wild race of which Emperor Zeno was also a part. From now on, the Isaurians will occupy the best positions, but also the highest positions in Constantinople.

Zeno's reign was marked by important strong events. From the second half of the fifth century, the importance of the leaders of German troops will increase significantly. It came to the situation that the will of these leaders was almost decisive in the appointment or removal of Roman emperors from the West.

Thus, on August 28, 476 Odoacer, removed Romulus Augustus, the last Western emperor, and became ruler of Italy. For the safety of his reign, Zeno will send ambassadors from the Roman Senate with the assurance that Italy will not need a separate emperor and that he will be able to rule the entire Empire. In this sense, Emperor Zeno will offer Odoacer the title of Roman patrician and the administration of Italy. After becoming the leader of Italy, Odoacer adopted a visible independence from Zeno. Aware that he will not be able to attack Odoacer, Zeno will adopt another strategy.

Because Theodoric, the king of the Ostrogoths organized devastating incursions into the Balkan Peninsula, threatening even Constantinople, Emperor Zeno managed to draw his attention to the rich provisions of Italy. Theodoric will head for Italy, defeating Odoacer and settling in Ravenna. After Zeno's death in 493, Theodoric established his Ostrogothic kingdom in Italy, with its capital at Ravenna.

During Zeno's reign, the most important issue, which caused much unrest, was religion. Since in Egypt, Syria, but also to some extent in Palestine and Asia Minor the population was mostly Monophysite, and religious disputes led to numerous conflicts, the Patriarch of Constantinople Acacius (472-489), who was initially a follower of the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon, together with Peter Mong, the patriarch of Alexandria, decided to find a way to reconcile the religious parties. In this sense, they proposed to the emperor Zeno to try to make the opponents reach a mutual agreement through concessions made by the two parties.

Thus, in the year 482 at the proposal of the Patriarch Acacius, the emperor Zeno will issue an act of union, *Henoticon*, which addressed the Churches that were under the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Alexandria. The *Henoticon* tried to avoid any sign of the orthodox and Monophysite teaching on the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the person of the Savior Jesus Christ. The *Henoticon* recognized the decisions of the three Ecumenical Synods, anathematizing Nestorius, Eutychius, and their followers. The 12 Anathematisms of St. Cyril of Alexandria (370-444) were also accepted, but he stated that Jesus Christ was: "*deity with the Father after the Godhead and of the same nature with us after mankind.*" The use of the terms "*one nature*" or "*two natures*" was also avoided, and the decision of the Council of Chalcedon regarding the union of the two natures in the person of the Savior Jesus Christ was not mentioned.

Although at first the *Henoticon* seemed to improve the situation in Alexandria, in the long run it would displease the Orthodox and the Monophysites, and the number of religious parties would become even greater. Pope Felix III (483-492) will also protest the *Henoticon*, analyzing the complaints of the Eastern clergy dissatisfied with the decisions of the decree of union, through two synods that he held in Rome on July 28, 484 and October 5, 485. anathematized Peter Mong the Patriarch of Alexandria, Peter Fullo the Patriarch of Antioch and Acacius, the patriarch of Constantinople, the signatories of the document. In response, Patriarch Acacius will erase from the diptychs the name of Pope Felix III and break any ties with Rome, and thus the thirty-five-year-old Achaean schism will be unleashed.[16]

Consequently, this was the first serious rupture between the Eastern and Western Churches, which continued until 518, when Justin I (518-527) ascended the throne of the Byzantine Empire.[17] He will communicate to Pope Hormisda (514-523), on August 1, 518, his accession to the throne of the Byzantine Empire. Emperor Justin wanted to reconcile the two Churches and in this sense on September 7 a delegation led by the Gratus committees will leave for Rome with letters to the Ostrogothic king Theodoric and Pope Hormisda. He was invited to come to Constantinople, or if he could not come to send delegates to discuss the issue of the Achaean schism. The delegation also had a letter from Patriarch John II (518-520) and Caesar Justinian, asking Pope Hormisda to express his position about former Patriarch Acacius. In his response, Pope Hormisda said that Patriarch Acacius and his successors up to Patriarch John II were removed from diptychs. Emperor Justin also informed Pope Hormisda of the measures he had

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16 N. Chifăr, *Istoria creștinismului,* I, Editura Universității „Lucian Blaga", Sibiu, 2007, 199-201.

17 Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 142-144.

taken to restore the authority of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Pope Hormisda will positively appreciate the new situation created and, in this regard, he will send to Constantinople a delegation, which will consist of Bishops Ghermanos and Ioan, the priest Blandus and the deacons Felix and Dioscor. This delegation will be received on March 25, 519 by Justinian with great pomp, and the next day it will be received by Emperor Justin I and Patriarch John II. In the reconciliation formula, Pope Hormisda demanded the anathematization of Nestorius, Eutychius and Dioscorus, as well as the reading from diptychs of the patriarchs of Alexandria Timothy Elur and Peter Mong, the patriarch of Antioch Peter Fullo, the patriarchs of Constantinople Acacia (472-489), Fravitas (489- 490), Euphemia (490-496), Macedonia II (496-511) and Timothy I (511-518), who shepherded during the Achaean schism. Pope Hormisda also called for the acceptance of the dogmatic Epistle of Pope Leo I (440-461) to the Patriarch of Constantinople Flavian (446-449).

On March 28, 519, the reconciliation formula will be signed by Patriarch John II, the bishops present in Constantinople, the archimandrites of the monasteries and the senators. The reconciliation of the two Churches will be consecrated through a service in St. Sophia Cathedral in the presence of the signatories and the people. Pope Hormisda will thank Emperor Justin I and Justinian for their help in reconciling the two Churches.

Between 491-518 the Byzantine Empire was shaken by numerous popular uprisings, during which time the Slavs came to threaten the walls of Constantinople in 517.[18]

From the year 518, a brilliant new epoch will begin in the history of the Byzantine Empire, an epoch that will bear the name of the great emperor Justinian (527-565). The "Justinian era" was what marked the heyday of the Byzantine Empire, both politically, militarily, economically, but especially culturally. At the accession to the throne, Justinian had the ideals of a Roman and Christian emperor. Considering himself the successor of the Roman Caesars, he considered that he had a sacred duty in restoring the unity of the Empire, in the same borders that it had in the I-II centuries.

As a Christian emperor, Justinian considered that his mission was to spread the true faith among unbelievers, both among heretics and among pagans. With

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18 Chifăr, *Istoria creștinismului,* I, 199-202.

this ideology, Justinian as a statesman dreamed of conquering the whole known world.

Now it will be Emperor Justinian who will control the great legislative work, which will later bear his name. His theological culture gave him the opportunity to intervene in the problems that troubled the Church during this period.

From the beginning of his reign, the main goal of Justinian's church policy was to establish close relations with Rome and therefore he was the defender of the Council of Chalcedon, because the decisions of this synod were completely rejected by the eastern provinces. Thus, during the reign of Justinian, the Papal See of Rome enjoyed supreme ecclesiastical authority. In the letters that Justinian sent to the bishop of Rome, he addressed him with the nickname *"Pope"*, *"Pope of Rome"*, *"Apostolic Father"*, *"Pope and Patriarch"*. This title of pope was used exclusively for the Bishop of Rome. In one of the epistles, Emperor Justinian told the pope that he was: *caput omnium sanctarum ecclesiarum, "head of all the holy churches."*[19] Also in *Novella 131 ß* Emperor Justinian clearly decided that: "*it ranks second after the holy apostolic see of Old Rome.*"

During his reign, Emperor Justinian came into conflict with Jews, pagans, and heretics: Manichaeans, Aryans, Nestorians, Monophysites, but also with representations of other religious doctrines, which were less important. In 529, to completely eliminate the traces of paganism, he closed the famous philosophical school in Athens (Platonic Academy), which was founded by Plato (427-347 BC) in 387 BC. During the nine hundred years of the Platonic Academy, it trained the best philosophers, who influenced the thinking and spiritual life of the civilized world, even after it was abolished. After the reorganization of the University of Constantinople by Emperor Theodosius II in 425, the Platonic Academy declined. Emperor Justinian failed in his policy of eliminating paganism, as it would continue to exist in secret in more remote parts of the Empire.[20]

At the end of 541, an unforeseen disaster befell the Byzantine Empire. The bubonic plague, which had not been known in the Mediterranean until then, entered Egypt, from Ethiopia. This disease was transmitted by fleas to rats and thus, the epidemic will be brought by the ships that supplied Byzantium with wheat, which the rats ate. It hit Constantinople for four months, and the real impact of

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[19] A. Knecht, *Die Religions-Politik Kaiser Justinians* I, Würzburg, 1896, 2005, 62-68.

[20] Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 165-181.

the epidemic will remain controversial, so it will be able to weaken for a long time several cities that were already weak.[21]

Unfortunately, this disease spread quickly in the army, in rural areas and spread massively to cities, managing to include most of the cities in the East in early 542: Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem. The pandemic also spread to the Byzantine provinces of North Africa at Carthage in 543, to Arles in Gaul, after which it spread to Rome and Central Italy in 544, and from there to Illyria and Thrace in 545. The evolution of the pandemic was different depending on each province, with successive waves. Thus, in 558, the second wave of even greater intensity will come to Constantinople, and in 560 it will wreak havoc in Arabia and Mesopotamia, so that in 561 it will be present in Cilicia and Nisibis. In the year 589, the pandemic will reach Rome again, at the same time as the outpouring of the Tiber which will destroy the barns and thus trigger a famine that will weaken the immune system of the population. Pope Pelagius II (579-590), who during the pandemic was close to the sick through the health and spiritual care he provided them, became contaminated and died of the plague on February 7, 590.[22]

This disease produced a very high mortality rate, so that three quarters of those who contracted the disease died. According to some opinions, more than two hundred and thirty thousand people died in Constantinople alone, possibly more than half of the capital's inhabitants. Since the epidemic spread most in the cities, according to some opinions about a quarter of the population would have died, a proportion similar to the plague of the thirteenth century.[23]

The plague of the time of Emperor Justinian, called in time writings *pestis inguinaria* or *pestis glandularia*, was the first scientifically confirmed plague pandemic.

During his reign, Emperor Justinian was particularly interested in encouraging the construction of monuments of civil and religious architecture throughout the territory of his vast Empire. In this sense, his activity as a builder was not limited to the construction of fortifications and churches, but he also built many monasteries, palaces, bridges, cisterns, aqueducts, public baths, and hospitals.

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21 Kaplan, *Bizanț*, 20.

22 A. Buzalic, *Anatomia unei crize: 2019-2020. De la mutațiile unei culturi în criză spre Biserica de mâine*, Editura Galaxia Gutenberg Târgu-Lăpuș, 2020, 31-36.

23 Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului,* 79-80.

Also, his name is related to the construction of St. Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai.

Emperor Justinian left his name in the field of law. With the help of Trebonian, who was the quaestor of the Sacred Palace, he codified the law in 529. Thus, he will regroup the laws that were still in force in the *Codex Justinianus* - the Code of Justinian, reunite the jurisprudence in *Digesta* - Digeste, and endow law students with a textbook *Institutiones* - Institutes. All the laws that were promulgated after the Codex will be published in a collection called *Novellae* - Novele, which were written mostly in Greek, because during the reign of Justinian this language was spoken by most of the inhabitants of the Empire. Byzantine will also become the official language.[24]

Many of the wars that Justinian fought were for the recapture of lost territories, but also for defense. Building a powerful army that would be led by skilled generals such as Belizarie and Narses, he managed to reclaim the lost territories of the West. For Justinian, the main enemies of the Byzantine Empire were the Germans. Thus, he managed to recover from the vandals in 534 the territories of North Africa; from the Ostrogoths in 553 the territories of Italy, and from the Visigoths in 554 those from Spain.

Through these victories, Emperor Justinian managed to achieve for the last time and for a short time the Mediterranean unity of the Roman Empire, and the Mediterranean Sea was almost transformed into a Byzantine lake. Unfortunately, these wars brought great human, financial and military sacrifices to the Empire, which reduced the strength and resources of Byzantium. Over time, Justinian's foreign policy caused the Byzantine Empire a very severe domestic economic crisis. Due to the lack of means, followed by the reduction of the army, it made impossible the long-term occupation of the newly conquered provinces, and these consequences were seen under the reigns of the future emperors.

However, two great achievements during the reign of Justinian left a huge mark on the history of world civilization and rightly justifies its nickname of "the Great", and these are his *Codex* of Civil Law and St. Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople,[25] one of the most famous and visited monuments of universal heritage.[26]

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24 Kaplan, *Bizanț*, 19.

25 Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 213-214.

26 Kaplan, *Bizanț*, 8.

After the brilliant reign of Emperor Justinian, a period of regression will follow, because starting with the year 568 followed the gradual loss of the western regions that were recently conquered. Emperor Justin II (565-578) did nothing to defend the western provinces, which his uncle, Emperor Justinian, endeavored to conquer.[27]

Thus, the Lombards invaded and conquered most of Italy, succeeding in 640 in conquering Liguria, but also most of the Exarchate of Ravenna, and the northern part of Italy would be called Lombardy from then on. The Visigoths will also invade Byzantine Spain, and the Moors will attack the Byzantine provinces of Africa and thus, from 751, Byzantine rule will include only the southern regions of the Italian peninsula.

In addition, there was a long conflict with the Persians between 572-591, and the Avar-Slavs formed a coalition in the fight against Byzantium between 586-587. Numerous border wars also took place between 592-602, followed by the establishment of the Slavs south of the Danube in 602. Also, the Byzantine Empire will face a new invasion by the Avars, a warrior people, who in 586 will besiege Thessalonica, where they will return several times. From July 27 to August 10, 626 ruins would besiege Constantinople, looting the church of the Blessed Virgin (Theotokos) in Vlaherne, which was then outside the walls of the capital, but believers had time to save the most important relics.

Other invasions by the Persians between 605-609 followed. They will invade and conquer Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Armenia. In 611-612, Caesarea Cappadocia, the city of St. Basil the Great (330-379) will be on fire, along with other cities on the peninsula, panic reigns everywhere, and residents flee the streets with their icons and relics. The Persians will conquer Antioch in 613, after which in 614 they will conquer Jerusalem from which they will steal the Holy Cross that their king will give as a gift to one of his wives, who was a Christian. Egypt will also be conquered by the Persians in 619.[28]

Unfortunately, the regime of terror imposed by Phocas between 602 and 610 led to the weakening of the Byzantine Empire, which was to face an internal and external crisis as serious as that of the nearby third century.[29]

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27 Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului,* 86-87.

28 Kaplan, *Bizanț*, 21.

29 Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului,* 106.

During this period of transition, religious and cultural life was marked by events that will give a new image to Byzantine culture and civilization.[30]

Christianity has a very special development, because in 381 it was proclaimed by imperial edict as the official religion by Emperor Theodosius I (379-395), and in ten years all pagan cults in the Byzantine Empire will be banned. The great church of St. Sophia is now being built in Constantinople between 330-360, which will be destroyed during the great popular Nika uprising of 532. It will be rebuilt by Emperor Justinian between 532-537.

The cultural life of the Byzantine Empire will shine again with the founding of the University of Constantinople, which will be superior to the Latin one.

In the legislative field the Roman emperors of Constantinople and Ravenna will promulgate and publish the *Theodosian Code*, and in terms of construction now will be built the mausoleum of Galle Placidia (about 450), and in the next century - Neonian and Arian Baptistery, the basilicas of San Apolinarie Nuovo and San Apolinaire in Classe, followed by the church of San Vitale, which was decorated by Byzantine craftsmen with splendid mosaics.

In the legal field, the monumental *corpus juris civilis* now appears in Constantinople, including the Code of Justinian, the Institutes, the Pandects, and the Novels (529-565).

The classical period of Byzantine history was formed by the five centuries that separated the reign of Heraclius (Herakleios) from the coming to power of the Commen dynasty.

Asia Minor will be the center around which the entire Byzantine state will revolve, even though important provinces of the Empire have now been lost, such as Egypt, Syria, Palestine, and North Africa. Although it lost its eastern populations of Semitic origin, which were never fully Hellenized, but also the Thracian-Romans in the Balkans, Byzantium will gain great ethnic uniformity, as most of its population will consist of Greeks, or from peoples who will be in an advanced stage of Hellenization. From its splendor to the Byzantine Empire will remain three major elements, its faith, which was now only affected by the Monophysites of Syria and Egypt, its grandiose capital, which was considerably depopulated

30 O. Drimba, *Istoria culturii și civilizației,* vol. II, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică București, 1987, 142-144.

and the gold coin, *nomisma*,[31] created by Emperor Constantine the Great and which will have precedence in trade until the twelfth century.[32]

Byzantine unity will also crystallize at the religious level, because now Christianity will become the only cult professed in the Byzantine Empire, especially after the loss of the eastern provinces that were inhabited mostly by Monophysites.[33]

Within the Byzantine Empire, numerous transformations will now take place in all fields, and these transformations will lay the foundations on which the Byzantine state developed. During this period, the small property of a free peasantry was promoted, but from the ninth century it will be progressively enslaved to the large landowners. Also, now will appear the new structure of the theme, which will last until the end of the Empire.

Also, the army will be organized on new bases, the place of the mercenaries will be taken over by the peasants in the *theme*. With the loss of the territories in the western part of the Empire, its center will be taken over by Asia Minor, where all the impulses that have troubled the life of the Byzantine Empire for more than a century (726-843) came.

Emperor Heraclius (610-641) was the one who managed to defeat the powerful Persian armies between 622 and 628 and to regain for the Byzantine Empire the Monophysite provinces of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt and to recover from the Persians the Holy Cross, which will be erected. in Jerusalem on the Passover Day of 630.[34]

The recapture of the Monophysite provinces will bring back to the forefront the old problem of the state's attitude towards the Monophysites. Even during his campaigns, Emperor Heraclius began negotiations with the Monophysite bishops to achieve a way of church union through certain dogmatic concessions. This unity would have been possible in the context in which it would have been recognized that in the person of the Savior Jesus Christ, there would have been two natures, but one work / energy (ἐνέργεια) or one will (θέλημα). From these words will derive monoenergism and monothelitism, a new heresy. The Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, who were Monophysites and were appointed

31 Nomisma was an almost pure gold model weighing 4.5 grams.

32 Kaplan, *Bizanț*, 22-23.

33 S. Brezeanu, *O istorie a Imperiului Bizantin*, Editura Albatros București, 1981, 41.

34 Kaplan, *Bizanț*, 22.

by Emperor Heraclius, showed their willingness to work on an agreement, as did Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople (610-638).

The Palestinian monk Sofronie, who lived in Alexandria, protested this heresy. After becoming patriarch of Jerusalem, in late 633 or early 634, Sophronius sent a synodal letter, known as the *Synodicon*, to Patriarch Sergius of Constantinople (610-638), to Pope Honorius of Rome (625-638). and other bishops in whom he theologically argued the unfoundedness of monothelitism. Sophronius of Jerusalem (550-638) made a synthesis between the Christology of Pope Leo I the Great (440-461) and that of St. Cyril of Alexandria (370-444) and stated that the work is related to nature and not to the person or the hypostasis. Therefore, in the person of the Savior Jesus Christ, there are two natures and two natural works. They are united because one and the same is the worker or the operating subject. Thus, the Logos works the divine as God, and the human as a perfect man, since His humanity does not have its own hypostasis but is hypostasized by the Logos, that is, it is hypostasized. Accepting a divine-human (theandric) work, St. Sophronius of Jerusalem teaches that this is not a single work, but it relates to different genres. It is constituted at the same time and what belongs to divinity and humanity is perfectly manifested in the work of one's own nature or essence in a simultaneous action. St. Sophronius of Jerusalem seems to be the first to introduce the concept of synergism.

Patriarch Sergius was to compose the Christological part of this document, and so he drafted the text of *Ektesis*. He hold a synod in Constantinople, after which he published a synodal decree in November 638, which provided for the deposition of bishops, priests, deacons, and the excommunication of monks and laity in case of non-compliance with this dogmatic document. Patriarch Cyrus of Alexandria and Emperor Heraclius signed Ektesis, and Pope Honorius I (625-638), who died on October 12, 638, did not know of its existence.[35] The new Pope John IV (640-642) did not approve the *Ektesis* and tried to show the teaching of the existence of the two wills and works, in the person of the Savior Jesus Christ, and denounced the monothelite teaching as heresy, and this will it produces a great enmity between the emperor and the pope.

Seeing this situation, Emperor Heraclius, who anticipated the outbreak of great ecclesiastical disputes, will promulgate this *Ektesis* ἔκθεσις, that is, an exposition of faith, by which two natures and one will be recognized in the person

[35] Chifăr, *Istoria creștinismului,* I, 226-228.

of the Savior Jesus Christ. Although the emperor hoped that this *Ektesis* would lead to the reconciliation of the two camps, his hopes were not fulfilled, because the Arabs would conquer Syria in 636, Palestine and Jerusalem in 638, and Egypt in 642.[36]

After Heraclius' death, Emperor Constantius II (641-668) came to rule the Byzantine Empire. He remained attached to monotheism, although it lost its political importance since the eastern provinces were conquered by the Arabs, but especially because monothelism was an obstacle to the friendship between the emperor and the pope. Rome. Emperor Constantius II made a series of reconciliations with the pope and in this regard, he offered to make some changes in the monothelite teaching.

Thus, in 648, he promulgated the *Typos* (τύπος) or *Rule of Faith*, which annulled Heraclius' *Ektesis* of 638. It forbids all Orthodox subjects who are in the spotless Christian faith and belong to the Catholic / Universal Church, and apostolic to fight or quarrel with one another over a will or a work / energy, or two works / energies and two wills.[37] The *Typos* also forbade written debates on Heraclius' *Ektesis* in 638, which was displayed in the narthex of St. Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople. The publication of the *Typos* will produce an even greater division within the two Churches, and Pope Theodore (642-649) excommunicated Patriarch Paul II of Constantinople (641-653). Thus, after the apocryphal (representatives) of the pope in Constantinople were arrested, beaten, and exiled for refusing the *Typos*, Pope Martin I (649-655) will convene a council in Rome between October 5-31, 649. In the presence of representatives of the Greek clergy, Pope Martin I condemned the pre-elected *Ektesis* (the most impious Echtesis), and the villain *Typos* (scelerosus Typus). Through its twenty anathematisms, the Lateran Council condemned monoenergism and monothelism by rejecting *Ektesis* and *Typos*. Bishop Teodor de Faran and the Patriarchs Sergius and Pir of Constantinople were also anticipated and declared that in the person of the Savior Jesus Christ there are two natures that are unmistakably united, two natural wills, divine and human, and two natural works, divine and human, which they are in perfect harmony.

Emperor Constantius II became angry with Pope Martin I and ordered the exarch of Ravenna to be arrested and send to Constantinople. Thus, on June 17,

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36 Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 238-239.

37 K. J. Hefele, *A History of the Church*, Edinburgh, 1896, vol. 5, 95-96.

653, the exarch Calliopa, will enter Rome with the army and arrested Pope Martin I, and after keeping him in captivity for a year and three months, he sent him to Constantinople. Here he was subjected to terrible humiliations and was imprisoned and sentenced to death. A little later he will be sent into exile to the Tauric Kherson[38] where he will die on September 16, 655.[39] Also, here Saint Clement the Roman received martyrdom and in 101.[40] Against *Typos*, but also from the monothelite teaching, the great theologian Saint Maximus the Confessor (580-662), whose tongue and right hand were cut off so that he could not speak and write against Montelism.[41]

The emperor and Patriarch of Constantinople will continue negotiations with Pope Eugene I (657) and eventually succeed in making peace with Pope Vitalian (657-672), and thus the schism in the Church ceased. This reconciliation of the emperor with the Church of Rome was very important for the Byzantine Empire, since it strengthened the emperor's position in Italy.[42]

Three years after the death of Muhammad (570-632), the founder of Islam, the Arabs attacked the borders of the Byzantine Empire, succeeding in conquering Damascus in 635, and in 636 on the Yarmuk River, a tributary on the left bank of the Jordan, they inflicts a categorical defeat on the Byzantines. The conquests will continue and thus, Jerusalem will fall into their hands in 638, so that in 643 they will conquer Alexandria, and in 649 Carthage, followed by Cyprus in 670.[43]

After these conquests Constantinople was assaulted between 674-678, and 717-718 by Arab expeditions. In 718 they began the siege of the capital on the land side, but also on the sea. Emperor Leo III Isaurus (717-740) attacked the Arab fleet with Greek fire and frightened the Arabs so much that the ships returned to the shelter and remained there. After this devastating failure in which

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38 Tauric Kherson was a Greek colony founded in the 7th century BC, located on the Crimean Peninsula in southern Ukraine. From the middle of the 1st century BC. it will enter Roman rule.

39 Chifăr, *Istoria creștinismului,* I, 229-230.

40 C. I. Dușe, *Imperiul Roman și creștinismul în timpul Sfântului Clement Romanul,* Cluj-Napoca, 2020, 402-405.

41 C. Voicu, *Patrologie,* III, București, 2010, 35-53.

42 Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 239-240.

43 Kaplan, *Bizanț*, 22.

the Arabs suffered numerous losses, they will never again seriously attempt to attack Constantinople.[44]

The northern borders of the Byzantine Empire will be constantly attacked by the Slav-Avars, Russians and especially by the Bulgarians, who since 679 occupied Byzantine Dobrogea. In the seventh and eighth centuries, the Byzantine Empire changed profoundly, because now it will hold only a third of the territories it had in 602. After the loss of Syria, Egypt, Africa, Armenia, but also most of Italy and the Balkans, the Byzantine Empire will become a predominantly Anatolian power, where Greek was now spoken and where most of the inhabitants were Chalcedonian Christians. Now, in addition to Thrace and Anatolia, the Byzantines had only islands and parts of the coast in Greece, Dalmatia, Italy, and Crimea.

As the Byzantine Empire shrank, it became poorer, but much more vigorous and united. Although the Byzantine Empire became less centralized and more militarized than it was before, it remained a bureaucratic state, as was the Roman Empire. Thus, the central bureaucracy in Constantinople will continue to function even though its staff has decreased from about two thousand five hundred officials to about six hundred.[45]

Although the Arab domination of the Mediterranean caused for the time being an economic decline of the Byzantine cities, they managed to recover during the ninth and tenth centuries. Politically and militarily during this period, Byzantium will move to an expansionist policy that will head for the Balkans, after which the territories of Syria, Mesopotamia and Armenia will be recaptured. After these significant political and military successes and especially with the end of the Macedonian dynasty between 1025-1081, the Byzantine Empire will go through a great crisis, as the many battles for the throne will lead to Byzantine emperors who did not have was at the height of the forerunners being very weak in relation to them, and the usurpations were numerous. Now the free peasantry will be ruined, and the Byzantine state has lost the world power it once had.

Culturally, several great personalities have now appeared, such as the great profane poet Georgios Pisides (580-634) whose poetic genius was appreciated in

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44 Treadgold, *O scurtă istorie a Bizanțului,* 126-127.

45 Treadgold, 133-135.

the following centuries, and modern scholars consider him the best profane poet of the Byzantine period.[46]

Georgois Pisides was followed by the personality of Patriarch Photius (820-891), who was considered the most enlightened man of the century, and there are many important encyclopedic works from him remained.

At the legislative and legal level will appear in March 726 *Ecloga*, the Code of Laws of Emperor Leo III Isaurus (717-740), who was a capable legislator,[47] but also the Basilicas (887-893), the most representative Byzantine legal moment. Also, during this period there is a strong artistic renaissance in architecture, mosaic, but especially in monumental painting.

Byzantine literature had a special brilliance between the tenth and twelfth centuries, with the appearance of the novel in verse, Dighenis Akritas, the masterpiece of Byzantine literature, and intellectual life will develop even more reaching its climax by reorganizing the University of Constantinople, which led by the strong personality of the historian and scientist Michael Psellos (1018-1078).

Unfortunately for the Byzantine Empire there will be a period of about four centuries (1081-1453), in which the decline will be progressive and will acquire a general character,[48] followed by the painful defeat of Muhammad II on May 29, 1453 and which will mean the end of the brilliant Byzantine Empire.

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47 Vasiliev, *Istoria Imperiului Bizantin*, 234-237.

48 Drimba, *Istoria culturii și civilizației,* 144 -146.

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UN PRECURSORE DELLA SPIRITUALITÀ ECOLOGICA IN ROMANIA: IL SERVO DI DIO MIHAI NEAMȚU OSBM[1]

Cristian Barta[2]

Abstract: *A Precursor of the Ecological Spirituality in Romania: God's Servant Mihai Neamtu OSBM*
The encyclical letter *Laudato Sì* approaches the topic of the integral ecology in order to inspire a unitary strategy to deal with the challenges of the social – environmental crisis. In this context, it emerges the necessity for the human person to live in a certain way of *being in the nature and in the society*, that would lead to specific actions meant to care for the *common home*. For the Christians and not only, the way of being is linked to spirituality. This paper aims to interpret some of the essential elements of the ecological spirituality from the theological perspective and place them in the context of the life of Mihai Neamtu (1924-2000), a Romanian Greek-Catholic monk of the Order of St. Basil the Great.
Posterity remembers God's Servant Mihai Neamtu as an example of responsible living in the common home. His humble, sober and generous way of life was the expression of a profoundly Christian and prophetic way of being, anchored in the Catholic faith and the Eastern spirituality. His relation with the Creator modelled his interaction with the nature and his fellows. He used his charismas heroically for the spiritual and fleshly good of all, proving that there is a natural link between the care for the nature and the care for the persons affected by spiritual or physical pathologies or by poverty.
Key-words: Ecological spirituality, integral ecology, conversion, common home, Mihai Neamtu OSBM, The Romanian Grek-Catholic Church

Gli inquietanti cambiamenti ambientali che si manifestano sempre più intensamente in tutta l'umanità preoccupano, già da tempo, non solo l'attenzione

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degli scienziati e dei promotori dell'ecologia, ma anche la dottrina sociale della Chiesa Cattolica. Il Santo Padre Papa Francesco ha il merito di aver proposto attraverso l'Enciclica *Laudato Sì*[3] (24 maggio 2015) un'ecologia integrale per ispirare una strategia unitaria nell'affrontare la crisi considerata non solo ambientale, ma socio-ambientale. La molteplicità, la diversità e la complessità delle cause di questa crisi spiega l'inefficienza degli approcci di tipo settoriale, rivendicando l'impegno di tutte le forme di razionalità: "Se si vuole veramente costruire un'ecologia che ci permetta di riparare tutto ciò che abbiamo distrutto, allora nessun ramo delle scienze e nessuna forma di saggezza può essere trascurata, nemmeno quella religiosa con il suo linguaggio proprio"[4]. In questo contesto emerge, per la persona umana, la necessità di *un modo di essere in natura e nella società*, che stimolerà anche un *modo di agire*. Per i cristiani e non solo, il modo di vivere è legato alla spiritualità, e Papa Francesco propone a tutti noi una spiritualità ecologica.

Lo scopo di questa presentazione è quello di interpretare alcuni elementi essenziali della spiritualità ecologica da una prospettiva teologica e illustrarli nella vita del fratello Mihai Neamțu, un monaco greco-cattolico romeno dell'Ordine di San Basilio il Grande.

1. Spiritualità ecologica e casa comune

La spiritualità può essere generalmente intesa come un orizzonte significativo dell'esistenza umana, ma in modo specifico può essere pensata oggi in termini di esperienza personale e comunitaria di Dio ed allo stesso tempo di coinvolgimento nel mondo[5]. Vivere la presenza di Dio trasforma la vita della persona, ed allo stesso tempo modella le sue relazioni con il prossimo e con la natura in modo incompatibile con l'indifferenza o l'irresponsabilità. Papa Francesco rivolge un invito per la cura della casa comune, che evoca esplicitamente sia all'inizio[6] che nella parte finale dell'Enciclica[7]. La casa comune, una chiave di lettura dell'in-

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3 Papa Francesco, *Lettera Enciclica Laudato Sì sulla cura della casa comune*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano, 2015.

4 *Laudato Sì* 63.

5 S. De Fiores, "Spiritualità contemporanea", in S. De fiores, t. Goffi (eds.), *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano), 1985, 1525-1523.

6 *Laudato Sì* 1.

7 *Laudato Sì* 243.

tero testo, non è una metafora e, nonostante il suo carattere comune a livello di espressione, condensa l'intera teologia della creazione e l'antropologia teologica.

a. Il concetto di casa comune è ricco di significati e molto suggestivo in termini di responsabilità. Alcuni significati derivano dall'esperienza umana naturale perché la casa è relazionata alla famiglia, essendo un progetto realizzato con amore e spirito di sacrificio, con rispetto della dignità reciproca e paritaria, con l'educazione dei nuovi membri, con progetti sostenibili, con la cura per il bene di tutti. L'idea di una casa comune tiene conto dell'umanità nel suo insieme, della famiglia composta e definita dalla dignità di tutte le persone che vivono nel nostro mondo. Questi significati antropologici svelano, tuttavia, la loro profondità e portata delle implicazioni nella misura in cui sono evidenziati i loro fondamenti teologici. Possiamo identificare nella casa comune il punto di convergenza dei principali significati teologici riguardanti la realtà del mondo.

Papa Francesco presenta prima di tutto la concezione biblica del mondo inteso come creazione e progetto di amore di Dio per l'umanità. *L'Antico Testamento,* tuttavia, non usa i concetti astratti di universo o di cosmo. Il mondo creato, designato da espressioni come *cielo e terra* o *tutto* (*hakkōl*), non è per il pensiero ebraico veterotestamentario una realtà a sé stante, ma in relazione a Dio Creatore[8]. L'enfasi è quindi posta principalmente sul Creatore, e l'universo è visto dalla prospettiva dell'atto creatore. Il valore dell'uomo all'interno della creazione è unico a causa della sua immagine e somiglianza a Dio che gli conferisce quella alta dignità di essere qualcuno e non qualcosa, di essere una persona capace di conoscere e amare. La bontà e la bellezza di tutta la creazione rimangono parole che Dio rivolge ad ogni uomo, manifestando la sua esistenza e le sue perfezioni. La creazione si presenta, quindi, come un dono di Dio in cui Lui stesso si rispecchia, essendo effettivamente un *Vangelo* che intercede sia la rivelazione naturale che l'accesso alla persona di Dio. Negli At 17,24 notiamo che San Paolo usa il termine greco *κόσμος* per indicare l'intera creazione, il mondo che riassume tutti gli esseri: "Il Dio che ha fatto il mondo e tutte le cose che sono in esso, essendo Signore del cielo e della terra".

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8 J. Guhri, "Mondo", in L. Coenen, E. Beyreuther şi H. Bietenhard (eds.), *Dizionario dei concetti biblici del Nuovo Testamento*, traduzione italiana di A. Del Bianco, B. Liverani e G. Massi, Bologna, [6]2000, 1018.

Il secondo senso fondamentale del concetto di mondo, incontrato specialmente in San Paolo ed in San Giovanni Apostolo[9], riguarda il mondo degli uomini, il mondo che ogni uomo e tutti insieme costruiscono quotidianamente attraverso azioni, relazioni e reti, strutture sociali, politiche, economiche e culturali. Di conseguenza, *il Nuovo Testamento* presuppone il fondamento della creazione, ma cristallizza una categoria antropologico-teologica sul mondo[10]. Questa prospettiva è osservabile anche in *Laudato Sì,* dove Papa Francesco sottolinea che le narrazioni bibliche sulla creazione illustrano il fatto che al centro dell'esistenza della persona ci sono tre relazioni strettamente unite e interdipendenti: con Dio, con il prossimo e con la terra. L'uomo, possedendo un'interiorità ed essendo consapevole di sé, vive queste relazioni non solo nella sua esteriorità, ma anche interiormente. Il peccato ha ferito e sconvolto l'armonia iniziale di questo vissuto relazionale, trasformandole in relazioni conflittuali[11]. Il mondo degli uomini si presenta oggi problematico e conflittuale, essendo caratterizzato dalla globalizzazione del paradigma tecnocratico con effetti negativi sullo stile di vita, dall'antropocentrismo moderno, dal relativismo dei valori e pratico, dallo spirito consumistico e, non per ultimo, dal distacco del progresso scientifico dalla responsabilità morale ed etica[12].

Ma il mondo degli uomini è anche il luogo in cui Dio svolge la sua opera salvifica (Gv 1,10-14; Gal 4.4). Gli ingressi di Dio nella storia, culminati nell'incarnazione di Suo Figlio Gesù Cristo, evidenziano l'armonia e la continuità tra il piano della creazione e il piano salvifico. In Cristo ed attraverso di Lui è presente il Regno di Dio, che fa sorgere un misterioso processo di rinnovamento che raggiungerà al compimento escatologico evocato da San Pietro e dall'Apocalisse attraverso "nuovi cieli e nuova terra" (2 Pt 3,13; Ap 21,1-4). Il progetto di amore di Dio rivelato attraverso la creazione non è stato abbandonato, ma è proseguito attraverso il sacrificio sulla Croce e attraverso la collaborazione degli uomini con lo Spirito Santo. La casa comune mette allora in evidenza la realizzazione definitiva della creazione e del mondo degli uomini:

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9 Guhri, "Mondo", 1020.

10 A. Rizzi, *Dio in cerca dell'uomo. Rifare la spiritualità*, Cinisello Balsamo (Milano), 1987, 104-105.

11 *Laudato Sì* 63.

12 *Laudato Sì* 101-136.

> [...] alla fine ci incontreremo faccia a faccia con l'infinita bellezza di Dio (cfr 1 Cor 13,12) e potremo leggere con gioiosa ammirazione il mistero dell'universo, che parteciperà insieme a noi della pienezza senza fine. Sì, stiamo viaggiando verso il sabato dell'eternità, verso la nuova Gerusalemme, verso la casa comune del cielo. [...] Nell'attesa, ci uniamo per farci carico di questa casa che ci è stata affidata, sapendo che ciò che di buono vi è in essa verrà assunto nella festa del cielo[13].

Il concetto di casa comune include tutti questi tre significati del mondo che sono indissolubilmente legati. La creazione e la natura non sono semplicemente un palcoscenico casuale dove si svolge l'esistenza umana a livello personale e sociale, economico e culturale. Al contrario, la natura e l'uomo formano un'unità essenziale, che, lontano da ogni forma di dualismo gnostico o di monismo, significa anche un intreccio dello spirito con la materia. Per questi motivi, la crisi ambientale non può essere separata dalla crisi economico-sociale e la ricerca di soluzioni richiede un cambiamento nel modo di essere della persona in vista di una trasfigurazione morale-spirituale del mondo degli uomini secondo il *Vangelo* della creazione e della salvezza.

b. La spiritualità è una risorsa preziosa per l'ecologia integrale.

La spiritualità ecologica, secondo Papa Francesco, è un modo di vivere l'esperienza religiosa definita dal rapporto interpersonale con Dio, che porta all'aumento della passione per la cura della casa comune[14]. Come in ogni tipologia di spiritualità cristiana, la spiritualità ecologica è condizionata *sine qua non* dalla conversione, in termini concreti da una conversione ecologica. In questo caso non si tratta di una *conversio ad creaturas,* che equivarrebbe all'antropocentrismo radicale e alla chiusura nell'orizzonte fisico dell'universo. *Laudato Sì* propone la riscoperta della creazione attraverso il ritorno al Creatore, attraverso una *conversio ad Deum* e tramite l'assunzione consapevole del suo progetto di amore e salvezza: "Non possiamo sostenere una spiritualità che dimentichi Dio onnipotente e creatore. In questo modo, finiremmo per adorare altre potenze del

[13] *Laudato Sì* 243-244.

[14] *Laudato Sì* 216.

mondo, o ci collocheremmo al posto del Signore, fino a pretendere di calpestare la realtà creata da Lui senza conoscere limite”[15].

Il linguaggio biblico-patristico si riferisce alla conversione con il termine greco metanoia (μετάνοια), che enfatizza la trasformazione interiore della persona, della mente e del cuore intesa come profondità dell’essere umano. La metanoia si sviluppa nella dinamica dell’incontro della grazia di Dio con la libertà dell’uomo che la accetta, lasciandosi trasformato e personalmente coinvolto nel rinnovamento della propria vita. Questo processo interiore, accompagnato dal pentimento dei peccati e degli effetti che questi creano nella vita personale, sociale e naturale, costituisce la premessa della liberazione dai rifiuti esterni e interni che inquinano la casa comune: “i deserti esteriori si moltiplicano nel mondo, perché i deserti interiori sono diventati così ampi”[16].

Incontrare Dio ha quindi delle conseguenze sul modo in cui viviamo nella casa comune, essendo chiamati a prenderci cura di essa generosamente e amorevolmente perché la riconosciamo come un dono offerto dall’amore del Padre[17]. L’amore infonde slancio e coraggio, creatività e responsabilità nell’affrontare i problemi che affliggono la casa comune, e la comunione con Dio sostiene lo sforzo di vivere in una comunione universale, con gli altri e con tutta la creazione. In questo modo conosciamo “[...] che ogni creatura riflette qualcosa di Dio e ha un messaggio da trasmetterci, o la certezza che Cristo ha assunto in sé questo mondo materiale e ora, risorto, dimora nell’intimo di ogni essere, circondandolo con il suo affetto e penetrandolo con la sua luce”[18].

Papa Francesco coglie anche altre valenze della spiritualità ecologica: lo spirito contemplativo e profetico che ci aiuta a superare lo spirito consumistico del presente; sobrietà e umiltà; serenità e affidamento alla Divina Provvidenza; la pace del cuore che conduce alla pace della comunità; l’amore e la compassione che contribuiscono all’edificazione di una società dell’amore, congrua della dignità umana; solidarietà e responsabilità verso la casa comune[19]. Inoltre, i Santi Misteri, che sostengono l’esistenza cristiana, costituiscono una profonda motivazione per il rispetto del creato perché “sono un modo privilegiato in cui la natura

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15 *Laudato Sì* 75.

16 *Laudato Sì* 217.

17 *Laudato Sì* 220.

18 *Laudato Sì* 221.

19 *Laudato Sì* 222-232.

viene assunta da Dio e trasformata in mediazione della vita soprannaturale”[20]. La vita sacramentale, particolarmente il Mistero dell’Eucaristia, ci fa capire che non possiamo separare la vita nello spirito dalla vita in natura perché “tutte le creature dell’universo materiale trovano il loro vero senso nel Verbo incarnato, perché il Figlio di Dio ha incorporato nella sua persona parte dell’universo materiale, dove ha introdotto un germe di trasformazione definitiva”[21].

Non per ultimo, la trinità personale dell’unico Dio creatore ha impresso la sua traccia strutturale sull’uomo e sull’intera creazione. La Comunione Trinitaria e le Persone Divine, interpretate dalla teologia medievale come relazioni sussistenti, spiegano perché la casa comune è “una trama di relazioni”, rileva Papa Francesco:

> non solo ci invita ad ammirare i molteplici legami che esistono tra le creature, ma ci porta anche a scoprire una chiave della nostra propria realizzazione. Infatti la persona umana tanto più cresce, matura e si santifica quanto più entra in relazione, quando esce da sé stessa per vivere in comunione con Dio, con gli altri e con tutte le creature. Così assume nella propria esistenza quel dinamismo trinitario che Dio ha impresso in lei fin dalla sua creazione. Tutto è collegato, e questo ci invita a maturare una spiritualità della solidarietà globale che sgorga dal mistero della Trinità[22].

2. Un precursore della spiritualità ecologica in Romania: il frate Mihai Neamțu OSBM

San Francesco si ritrova nella *Laudato Sì* con le caratteristiche di un modello di conversione e spiritualità ecologica che può ispirare e motivare un’ecologia integrale. La lettura dell’Enciclica nello spazio religioso romeno trova la sua riconferma nel modello di vita del frate Mihai Neamțu, monaco dell’Ordine di *San Basilio il Grande* della Chiesa Romena Unita a Roma, Greco-Cattolica. La sua causa di beatificazione e canonizzazione si è svolta nell’Arcieparchia di Alba Iulia e Făgăraș tra il 14 settembre 2018 ed il 14 dicembre 2020. Gli Atti della Causa si trovano attualmente nella fase romana, alla Congregazione per le Cause dei Santi.

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[20] *Laudato Sì* 235.

[21] *Laudato Sì* 235-236.

[22] *Laudato Sì* 240.

Mihai Neamțu, nato il 13 ottobre 1924[23] a Prilog (regione di Satu Mare), in una famiglia greco-cattolica di contadini con un'intensa vita religiosa, con il padre cantore in chiesa ed insegnante[24], diventerà un simbolo della resistenza della Chiesa Unita Romena durante il periodo del regime comunista, ma anche un esempio di pentimento e spiritualità impegnato nell'umanizzazione della casa comune.

Seguendo la vocazione alla vita monacale entrò nel monastero dei monaci basiliani di Bixad il 3 settembre 1943, ma ulteriormente, dopo due anni, fu respinto a causa di una paralisi che ha in parte compromesso il lato sinistro. L'esperienza monastica ebbe un forte impatto sulla spiritualità di Mihai Neamțu, che, ritornato a casa di suo padre, continuò a vivere da monaco, guadagnandosi la sussistenza attraverso la sartoria e il lavoro della terra, ma soprattutto coltivando la preghiera, rendendosi disponibile alla Chiesa, che dal 1° dicembre 1948 entrò nelle catacombe, e servendo i suoi prossimi. Nel 1981 Neamțu Mihai fu reintegrato nell'Ordine Basiliano[25] e nel 1986 prenderà i voti permanenti. Dopo il 1989 è riuscito a costruire una chiesa sul terreno della propria casa, che diventerà poi monastero; ritornò alla casa del Padre il 23 giugno 2000.

Descrivere la spiritualità del frate Mihai Neamțu costituisce una sfida complessa perché non ha lasciato scritti spirituali o teologici e, inoltre, era una personalità carismatica. Tuttavia, le testimonianze di coloro che lo hanno conosciuto, e il dossier di indagine informativa realizzato dalla *Securitate*[26] che lo ha monitorato durante il periodo del regime comunista, ci danno rilevanti indizi per ricostruire le linee fondamentali della sua spiritualità.

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[23] Arhiva Ordinului Sfântul Vasile Cel Mare – Provincia "Sfinții Petru și Pavel" – România [in seguito citato AOSBM-Provincia ROMANIA], Dosar *Varia. Diverse acte de stare civilă și documente de serviciu. Contracte comerciale,* file non numerato, fascicolo 2. Vedi anche Arhiva Biroului Județean Satu Mare al Arhivelor Naționale, *Parohia Greco-Catolică Prilog-Registru de stare civil,* f. 82.

[24] *Șematismul veneratului cler al eparhiei greco-catolice române a Maramureșului pe anul 1932,* Baia Mare, 1932, 70.

[25] AOSBM-Provincia ROMÂNIA, *Dosar Varia, Catalogus Ordinis Basiliani S.ti Iosaphat,* Romae 1994 (Nr. 18), fascicolo 1; I. Vida-Simiti, *Ordinul Sfântul Vasile cel Mare în timpul regimului comunist*, București, 2020, 282.

[26] *Securitatea* è il nome romeno usuale per designare il Dipartimento per la Sicurezza della Romania, ossia il Servizio segreto di informazione fondato il 28 agosto 1948, il quale divenne un potente strumento di terrore del Partito Comunista Romeno.

a. In armonia con Dio

Il rapporto del frate Mihai Neamțu con Dio era il filo rosso e la forza portante di tutta la sua vita. La preghiera[27] e la fede, la pratica dei Sacramenti e le virtù morali hanno strutturato la sua coscienza e hanno formato il suo carattere fin dall'infanzia, valori coltivati per tutta la sua vita in modo particolarmente intenso. Lo spirito di preghiera e l'atteggiamento contemplativo lo hanno aiutato a vivere permanentemente alla presenza di Dio. La modesta casa di Prilog fu trasformata durante la persecuzione comunista in una cappella, dove monaci basilitani e sacerdoti clandestini greco-cattolici celebravano la Santa Messa o altri Santi Misteri per i cristiani rimasti fedeli alla Chiesa Romena Unita a Roma. Mentre la gente del villaggio e le persone che lo frequentavano lo percepivano come un uomo di Dio[28], le autorità comuniste e soprattutto gli agenti della Securitate lo vedevano come un fanatico religioso[29], promotore del misticismo e militante per la restaurazione della Chiesa Romena Unita[30], il che equivaleva, all'epoca, ad un grave crimine contro l'ordine politico-sociale. La sua resistenza spirituale di fronte alle pressioni permanenti e le vessazioni esercitate nei suoi confronti da parte delle autorità durante i primi decenni comunisti, come anche la sua fedeltà alla fede cattolica, non sono state piegate dal regime comunista. Il primato di Dio, la fiducia nella Divina Providenza e la devozione verso la Santa Vergine Maria hanno sostenuto la sua vita di fede, mentre la sua disabilità e le sofferenze da essa causate lo unirono più profondamente al Creatore, che gli offrì carismi che usò per il bene dei suoi prossimi. Sembra che alcuni carismi gli siano stati dati in seguito ad un'esperienza mistica, quando gli è stato chiesto se preferiva essere

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27 Vedi F. Copil, *Călugărul Mihai Neamțu.* Tesi di laurea coordinata da proff. assoc. A. Buzalic, presso l'Università *Babeș-Bolyai* Cluj-Napoca, Facoltà di Teologia Greco-Cattolica. Dipartimento di Oradea, Specializzazione di Teologia Pastorale, Oradea, 2018, Allegato 1, p. 55.

28 Uno degli informatori, con la nota redatta il 25 ottobre 1955, dichiara che Mihai Neamțu "è molto ricercato da persone provenienti da molti villaggi vicini, che parlano di lui come di un santo". Arhiva Consiliului Național de Studiere a Arhivelor Securității [in seguito ACNSAS], *Dosar de urmărire informativă nr. I 5374 (9 VII 1964 -12 I 1966)*, f. 14.

29 Durante il periodo di apprendistato alla scuola di sartoria nel villaggio Orașul Nou, Mihai Neamțu è stato descritto da un informatore come "un fanatico religioso che si segnava con il segno della croce quando delle persone entravano nel laboratorio, ma anche in altre circostanze". ACNSAS, *Dosar de urmărire informativă*, f. 5.

30 ACNSAS, *Dosar de urmărire informativă, ff.* 6, 10.

curato dalla sua disabilità o ricevere il dono di guarire gli altri. Scelse il dono di intercedere la guarigione degli altri[31].

b. In armonia con la creazione

Il frate Mihai Neamțu ha interpretato la creazione attraverso la luce della fede. Affermando questo, non consideriamo solo l'armonia con Dio e con la natura che i contadini di Prilog vivevano nel loro paese, oppure la spiritualità orientale a cui San Basilio Il Grande ha impresso la ricerca delle caratteristiche di Dio attraverso la creazione[32]. L'intima comunione con Dio procurò al frate Mihai una conoscenza concreta degli elementi della natura fisica, che non rimanevano più opachi davanti a lui, bensì rivelavano la propria intelligibilità ed il proprio scopo nell'armonia universale. Le piante svelavano le loro proprietà e utilità nella cura delle malattie di cui gli esseri umani e gli animali soffrivano. Inoltre, guardando per qualche istante i malati che venivano a cercarlo, era in grado di vedere la causa della patologia corporea[33], che spesso veniva confermata anche dai medici. A quanto pare, poteva identificare i problemi di salute di una persona semplicemente guardando la sua foto[34]. Questa sua abilità lo espose all'attenzione dell'opinione pubblica durante il comunismo, suscitando al contempo stupore ma anche critiche; questo suo dono fu segnalato, finalmente, in maniera positiva nella pubblicazione *Almanahul Revistei Flacăra* attraverso un articolo dal titolo: *L'uomo che vede attraverso le persone*[35].

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31 T. Mihiș, *Crâmpeie din viața călugărului Neamțu Mihai*, Baia Mare, 2017, 6.

32 Parlando della spiritualità orientale Tomáš Josef Špidlík nota questo: "L'intellettualismo mistico non favoriva l'uso dei sensi e dell'immaginazione nella preghiera. Le realtà visibili devono essere considerate come distrazione dalla devozione. Ma un fatto si verifica. Il contemplativo che ha purificato il suo sguardo si sente capace di incontrare Dio nella natura visibile, di esercitarsi nella *theoria physiké,* contemplazione della natura, essendone ricompensato con la *gioia pasquale*". T. J. Špidlík, S.J., "Spiritualità orientale", in E. G. Farrugia S.J. (eds.), *Dizionario Enciclopedico dell'Oriente Cristiano*, Pontificio Istituto Orientale, Roma, 2000, 728.

33 Copil, *Călugărul Mihai Neamțu*, Anexa 6, 70.

34 Copil, *Călugărul Mihai Neamțu*, 9, 28-29.

35 D. Sălăjan, *Omul care vede prin oameni*, in *Almanahul Revistei Flacăra*, 1984, 77-78. L'autore presenta il frate Mihai Neamțu come esperto di medicina tradizionale, ma, probabilmente a causa della censura comunista, non ricorda nulla del programma di preghi-

Un altro carisma che lo ha reso famoso, forse il più importante, era la *cardiognosia*, la conoscenza del cuore del prossimo, dei pensieri e dei segreti dell'anima di coloro che gli domandavano sostegno o consiglio. Considerati passi del discernimento spirituale, la *chiaroveggenza* e la *cardiognosia,* chiamate anche *Diorasis,* rivendicano la purezza d'animo del padre spirituale, ma questi carismi sono esclusivamente il dono di Dio[36]. Le cure a base di piante erano integrate dal frate Mihai Neamțu in un programma spirituale adattato a ogni persona, che in tal modo veniva messa in relazione con il Dio Creatore, il Dottore delle Anime e dei Corpi[37]. La guarigione era soprattutto di ordine spirituale e le cure a base di infusioni e tè accompagnavano in maniera terapeutica il percorso spirituale portando anche alla guarigione della patologia fisica. Il suo insistere sull'intensificazione della preghiera nella vita dell'ammalato è stata attestata anche dagli informatori della Securitate[38] che lo sorvegliavano quotidianamente. I malati erano esortati a confessarsi, a fare la comunione e a chiedere le preghiere dei sacerdoti[39].

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era che proponeva ai malati. Va ricordato che Dorin Sălăjan dichiara di averlo sottoposto ad un esperimento: la diagnosi stabilita da Mihai Neamțu a sette persone fu confermata dai medici. L'articolo sarà ripubblicato con piccole modifiche, una delle qualli riferendosi al consulto accordato a Nicolae Ceaușescu. Si veda D. SĂLĂJAN, *Omul care vede prin oameni*, în *Flacăra Bis*, nr. 4, 1990, 6-7.

36 I. HAUSHERR, *Paternitatea și îndrumarea duhovnicească în Răsăritul creștin*, trad. M. VLADIMIRESCU, Sibiu, ^{2}2012, 130-131, 372; I. ENĂȘOAE, *Teologie spirituală. Teme fundamentale*, Iași, 2008, 387-388.

37 Padre Leon, monaco basiliano che per lunghi anni si è trovato assieme al frate Mihai Neamțu, afferma che questo le confesso una volta l'obbiettivo della sua attività: "*Il mio scopo era aiutare l'uomo a capire chi lo ha creato e per quale scopo l'ha creato, e poi essere sempre vicino a Dio, e che non si separi mai da Lui, in nessun momento della propria vita*". apud I. ȚIPROC, *Mihai din Prilog*, Satu Mare, 2009, 33.

38 "Nel 1955 il tale Neamțu Mihai durante il mese di aprile iniziò nuovamente la propaganda greco-cattolica, in quanto si occupava della guarigione e del trattamento di malattie con varie erbe, esortando i cittadini a pregare il più possibile perché guariscano". ACNSAS, *Dosar de urmărire informativă)*, f. 6.

39 COPIL, *Călugărul Mihai Neamțu*, Allegato 2, pp. 59-60.

c. Con Dio nel mondo degli uomini, prendendosi cura della casa comune

Mihai Neamțu svolse gran parte della sua attività durante il regime comunista istituito dal potere sovietico in Romania dopo la seconda guerra mondiale. Il "mondo degli uomini" in Romania era profondamente turbato, attraversando un drammatico processo di trasformazione ispirato dal materialismo-dialettico, dall'utopia che sognava la creazione di una società perfetta e di un uomo nuovo (*homo sovieticus).* Predicando l'uguaglianza e la giustizia sociale, le autorità hanno sfigurato la società romena eliminando le élite e negando i valori spirituali, incoraggiando la delazione e l'impostura. Il sistema comunista voleva un mondo senza Dio, e proprio per questo motivo, si è rivelato essere contro l'uomo; una realtà confermata dallo sviluppo, dalla mostruosità e dalla crudeltà degli spazi carcerari. Niente importava nella realizzazione di questa utopia: né la natura, che sarà degradata dall'industrializzazione intensiva, né l'uomo, soggetto a distorsioni ideologiche.

Con la convinzione che Dio può trasformare il cuore dell'uomo e il mondo degli uomini, il frate Mihai si è coinvolto con una straordinaria energia nella predicazione della fede cattolica e nell'umanizzazione della società. Epicentro di un focolaio di fede e spiritualità della Chiesa Romena Unita a Roma, "liquidata" nel 1948, ma anche di amore cristiano, Mihai Neamțu rappresentò un segno di speranza nell'onnipotenza liberatrice e misericordiosa di Dio.

Mihai Neamțu coniugò il suo amore per Dio e per il creato con la cura per il prossimo afflitto da sofferenza o povertà. Sperimentò la sofferenza nella propria vita affetta dalla paralisi e la visse nel senso cristiano della Croce. Per questo motivo la sofferenza personale non ha influito negativamente sulla comunione con il prossimo, ma al contrario l'ha aperta a tutte le persone attraverso la compassione e il desiderio di aiutarle spiritualmente e fisicamente. Possiamo individuare tre caratteristiche della sua attività spirituale e taumaturgica, che sono ben attestate dalle informazioni contenute nel suo dossier realizzato dalla Securitate.

Prima di tutto, ricordiamo la gratuità dell'attività del frate che mai ha preteso alcun onorario per gli incontri con i malati. In un rapporto di un ufficiale, datato il 28 novembre 1955 ed indirizzato alla Direzione Generale del Ministero per gli Affari Interni, si nota che "per le erbe che dà a queste persone non prende soldi, invece riceve una ricompensa in natura ma senza che lui la chiedesse per le medicine, ed in tal modo sostiene che ha ricevuto il dono della "guarigione" da dio, e che, se accettasse soldi questo dono le sarà tolto”[40]. Infatti, gli agenti, per perseguire il frate Mihai, hanno cercato di coglierlo in flagrante quando prendeva soldi. Non solo hanno fallito, ma a seguito della causa intentata contro di lui sotto il pretesto della sua attività “politica” nella resistenza greco-cattolica, fu anche assolto[41].

Impressiona anche la generosità del frate Mihai Neamțu, rilevata dalla disponibilità illimitata del suo tempo e dalla sua casa per gli ammalati. Se nel 1955 i rapporti delle autorità comuniste segnalavano che ogni giorno era visitato da 5-8 persone che cercavano la loro guarigione o dei loro cari[42], ulteriormente il numero di coloro che lo frequentavano è cresciuto moltissimo, a volte raggiungendo più di 100 persone al giorno[43]. Alcuni malati hanno trovato per diversi giorni ospitalità nella sua modesta casa[44], mentre altri che non erano trasportabili erano visitati personalmente. Espressione della sua generosità è anche il fatto che dal poco che possedeva, o dagli alimenti donati da alcuni malati aiutava le persone in difficoltà economiche[45], i sacerdoti cattolici[46]. Vale anche la pena ricordare il suo coinvolgimento nella ristrutturazione della chiesa ortodossa di Prilog, chiesa greco-cattolica all’origine, per la quale donò le finestre e le porte[47].

Infine, seguendo il modello di Gesù Cristo che si è sacrificato per tutta l’umanità e che si identifica con ogni persona in difficoltà, l’orizzonte dell’attività del frate Mihai aveva un carattere universale, accogliendo tutte le persone indipendentemente dall’appartenenza etnica, dalla religione o dallo statuto economico, sociale e politico. Tra i suoi pazienti si ritrovano anche sacerdoti e monaci ortodossi[48]. Secondo alcune testimonianze di Suor Ana, il giorno di venerdì era riservato per il consulto delle “autorità”[49]. Stando ad altre testimonianze tra le autorità

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[40] ACNSAS, *Dosar de urmărire informativă*, ff. 6, 84.

[41] A proposito del processo del 1966, vedi ACNSAS, *Dosar de urmărire informativă*, ff. 43-93.

[42] ACNSAS, *Dosar de urmărire informativă*, f. 7.

[43] Copil, *Călugărul Mihai Neamțu*, 30. Vedi anche Allegato 6, 70-71.

[44] ACNSAS, *Dosar de urmărire informativă*, ff. 81, 88.

[45] ACNSAS, *Dosar de urmărire informativă*, f. 69. Vedi anche Copil, *Călugărul Mihai Neamțu*, Allegato 6, 70.

[46] ACNSAS, *Dosar de urmărire informativă*, f. 47.

[47] Copil, *Călugărul Mihai Neamțu*, Allegato 6, 72.

[48] I. Vida-Simiti, *Ordinul Sfântul Vasile cel Mare în timpul regimului comunist*, 318.

[49] Copil, *Călugărul Mihai Neamțu*, Allegato 1, 57.

di alto livello e funzionari statali che lo hanno cercato si trovano anche ministri, e persino il presidente Nicolae Ceaușescu con sua sorella[50].

La gratuità, la generosità e la totale dedizione della vita a Dio e a tutti coloro che lo hanno cercato rimangono determinanti per Mihai Neamțu fino alla fine della sua vita.

Conclusioni

Il servo di Dio Mihai Neamțu rimane nella coscienza dei posteri un esempio di vita responsabile nella casa comune. Il suo stile di vita umile, sobrio e generoso era l'espressione di un modo di essere profondamente cristiano e profetico, ancorato nella fede cattolica e nella spiritualità orientale. Il suo rapporto con il Creatore ha plasmato il suo rapporto con la natura e col prossimo, e i suoi carismi usati con eroismo per il bene spirituale e corporeo di tutti, dimostrano che esiste una connessione naturale tra prendersi cura della natura e prendersi cura delle persone colpite da patologie spirituali, fisiche o dalla povertà.

Il suo spirito mistico e contemplativo, congiunto alla pace del cuore datagli dal Signore, ci rivela una persona che ha vissuto nel mondo degli uomini senza appartenergli interamente. Era infatti nel mondo degli uomini con lo status di cittadino del Regno di Dio, confessando il *Vangelo* della creazione e della salvezza attraverso un impegno sereno e pieno di speranza nella società.

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DELITTI CONTRO LA SANTITÀ DELL'EUCARISTIA E LA SIMULAZIONE DELL'AZIONE LITURGICA (CANN. 1367; 1378 §2, 1°; 1379)

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Abstract: The present article addresses two groups of delicts from the sixth book of the current Code of Canon Law *(Sanctions in the Church),* i.e. *Delicts against the sanctity of the Eucharist and the simulation of the liturgical action*. The content of this book is debated among theologians and canonists, raising a variety of questions: Does the Church have the right to coerce the faithful with penal sanctions? Should penal law exist in the Church, or do certain organizing measures suffice? Based on the first canon of the sixth book (can. 1311), this article shows that using sanctions is a native right of the Church. Since sacraments, in particular the Eucharist, belong to the essence of the Church, the delicts against the sanctity of the Most Holy Sacrament and the simulation of the Sacraments have a great impact on the life of the Church. Therefore, although there are many open questions and several ambiguities around this issue, the present article argues that the Church needs an adequate legal order in the case of sacraments.
Keywords: eucharistic sacrifice, consecrated species, sacerdotal order, simulation of a sacrament, sanctions in the church, penal law, *latae sententiae* excommunication, *latae sententiae* penalty of interdict.

1. Introduzione

Il presente articolo cerca di presentare *due delitti* o possiamo anche dire *due gruppi di delitti* dal Codice di Diritto Canonico (CIC) vigente. Il nostro tema fa parte del sesto libro del CIC: *Le sanzioni nella Chiesa*. Tutto il contenuto di questo libro è oggetto di dibattito fra vari teologi e canonisti. Molti pongono la domanda: La chiesa ha davvero il diritto di costringere i fedeli con sanzioni penali? È davvero necessario avere un diritto penale nella Chiesa o basterebbero

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alcuni provvedimenti di organizzazione? Dunque, il tema che stiamo per affrontare, è un tema attuale e vivo[2]. Alle domande riguardo al diritto penale risponde il primo canone dello stesso sesto libro: «*Nativum et proprium Ecclesiae ius est christifideles delinquentes poenalibus sanctionibus coercere*» (can. 1311). Speriamo tuttavia, che anche il nostro piccolo contributo riesca a sottolineare questo diritto nativo della Chiesa.

I delitti, che ora stiamo per affrontare, hanno come fonte primario anzitutto il diritto sacramentale. Perciò nel presente articolo dobbiamo accennare anche il fondamento sacramentale-canonico dei delitti, cioè i sacramenti stessi, contro i quali possono venir commessi i delitti. Abbiamo detto, che i delitti sono di fatto *due gruppi di delitti*, perché non riguardano solo un fatto, ma una moltitudine di diverse azioni.

Già nel canone 1367 il delitto «*qui species consecratas abicit*» non concerne solo l'atto di gettare via il Santissimo Sacramento, ma qualunque azione volontariamente e gravemente spregiativa nei confronti del sacramento è da considerarsi inclusa nel termine *abicere*[3].

2. Collocazione e stesura dei canoni

In un primo punto possiamo costatare, che la *collocazione* e la stesura dei canoni sembrano interessanti. Anche se si tratta di delitti molto simili (siamo in materia sacramentale), il can. 1367 non si trova nella stessa sezione con gli altri due canoni (cann. 1378 §2, 1°; 1379). Il can. 1367 è collocato sotto il primo titolo della seconda parte: *Delitti contro la religione e l'unità della Chiesa*. La ragione

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2 «Negli ultimi decenni il diritto penale canonico è stato oggetto di profondi ripensamenti, oltre che di attacchi frontali provenienti da indirizzi radicali che ne hanno contestato la legittimità. [...] Con l'adozione di un'ecclesiologia diversa – quella proposta dal concilio Vaticano II – e con il superamento della visione apologetica del diritto pubblico ecclesiastico, il sistema penale della Chiesa è stato messo in questione nella sua stessa esistenza, come se si trattasse di un prodotto generato da un modello ecclesiale sorpassato, tipico di un'epoca ormai giunta al tramonto e quindi privo di senso». B. F. Pighin, *Diritto penale canonico*, 27; cf. inoltre il manuale di P. Erdő, *Egyházjog*, 599-600.

3 «*D. Utrum in can. 1367 CIC et 1442 CCEO verbum «abicere» intelligatur tantum ut actus proicendi necne. R. Negative et ad mentem. Mens est quamlibet actionem Sacras Species voluntarie et graviter despicientem censendam esse inclusam in verbo "abicere"*». Pontificium Consilium de Legum Textibus Interpretandis, *Resp.*, 4 iun. 1999.

per questa collocazione del canone la troviamo nell'ultima enciclica di Giovanni Paolo II (*Ecclesia de Eucharistia*), in cui tratta dell'Eucaristia nel suo rapporto con la Chiesa e viceversa: «La Chiesa vive dell'Eucaristia» (n. 1)[4]. «Il Papa afferma che il Sacrificio eucaristico, "mistero della fede", è il dono per eccellenza offerto alla comunità dal suo fondatore (cf. n. 11); esso edifica e consolida la comunione dei fedeli (cf. nn. 21-23); […] è "il supremo Sacramento dell'unità del popolo di Dio" (n. 43)»[5]. Si vede chiaramente, che questo delitto riguarda sia la religione che l'unità della Chiesa. Possiamo costatare inoltre, che si cambia anche l'oggetto: il can. 1367 parla delle specie già consacrate (oggetto statico), i cann. 1378 §2, 1° e 1379 riguardano invece l'azione liturgica (oggetto dinamico).

I due canoni seguenti invece di avere una collocazione straordinaria hanno una *stesura* un po' strana. Tutti i due canoni regolano la disciplina dei sacramenti, ma fanno questo con un elenco particolare. Se leggiamo i due canoni, vediamo che il §1 del can. 1378 regola il sacramento della confessione indicando anche il can. 977. Il 1° del §2 dà norme riguardo al sacramento dell'Eucaristia, il 2° dello stesso §2 regola di nuovo il sacramento della confessione fuori del caso trattato nel §1. Il §3 è di fatto solo una chiarificazione penale, che rende possibile aggiungere anche altre pene a seconda della gravità del delitto. Il can. 1379 tratta in generale di tutti gli altri sacramenti «fuori del caso del can. 1378», quindi: battesimo, cresima, Eucaristia, unzioni degli infermi, ordine sacro e matrimonio.

Di fronte a questo «disordine» possiamo domandarci, perché non vengono trattati tutti i sacramenti uno dopo l'altro? C'è qualche filo rosso che spiega il disordine? La risposta è sì. L'ordine dei sacramenti in questi due canoni non è disordinato, ma dipende dalla natura della pena, che viene applicata per i delitti. Seguendo le pene possiamo fare l'elenco seguente:

- **Scomunica, *l.s.***:
    - *Eucaristia* (profanare, asportare, conservare) ed eventuale altra pena → can. 1367
    - *Penitenza* (can. 977, assoluzione del complice nel peccato contro il sesto comandamento) → can. 1378 §1
- **Interdetto, *l.s.*** (+ sospensione ed eventuale giusta pena):
    - *Eucaristia* (attentata celebrazione [+ chierico: diacono])

4 Cf. JOANNES PAULUS II, encycl. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 17 apr. 2003.

5 B. F. PIGHIN, *Diritto penale canonico,* 345.

    - *Penitenza* (attenta assoluzione [+ chierico: diacono]) → can. 1378 §2
- **Giusta pena**:
    - Simulazione: *battesimo, cresima, (Eucaristia) unzione degli infermi, ordine sacro e matrimonio* → can. 1379.

3. Uno sguardo generale teologico (l'importanza della materia)

Conoscendo già i canoni, in questa parte gettiamo uno sguardo sull'importanza teologica dei delitti e dei sacramenti. La rilevanza enorme dei sacramenti la troviamo nelle parole di Gesù: «*Andate dunque e ammaestrate tutte le nazioni, battezzandole nel nome del Padre e del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo*» (Mt 28, 19-20). L'importanza (anche giuridica) di questa materia deriva, quindi, dall'imperativo formulato da Gesù Cristo, che non si impone solo per la sua formalità, ma fa soprattutto riferimento a un contenuto e a un fine che ne danno la giustificazione: la salvezza dell'umanità (cf. can. 1752)[6]. Si possono constatare l'importanza dei sacramenti e il loro rapporto con la Chiesa anche nel can. 840. Il canone sottolinea, infatti, che i sacramenti, «istituiti da Cristo Signore e affidati alla Chiesa», sono «azioni di Cristo e della Chiesa»[7]. Anche questo canone risponde alla domanda, che ci abbiamo posto all'inizio dell'articolo, se la Chiesa ha oppure non ha diritto di sanzionare i fedeli. In queste due formule sopraindicate troviamo un fondamento della giuridicità dei sacramenti. I sacramenti sono azioni della Chiesa in quanto ad essa affidati e perciò sulla Chiesa incombe il diritto (e anche il dovere) di disporre queste azioni in modo conforme alla loro natura. Il fatto che i sacramenti sono stati istituiti da parte di Cristo limita e dirige la normativa della Chiesa. Perciò è imprescindibile, che la Chiesa obbedisca al mandato di Cristo e resti fedele a ciò che egli ha istituito[8].

In conclusione, possiamo dire, che i sacramenti sono giuridicamente rilevanti, perché sono stati affidati alla Chiesa da parte di Cristo, hanno una funzione

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6 Cf. B. F. Pighin, *Diritto sacramentale*, 17.

7 Cf. GRUPPO ITALIANO DOCENTI DI DIRITTO CANONICO, ed., *Il diritto nel mistero della Chiesa*, II, 47.

8 «Noi siamo convinti invece dell'esistenza di un rapporto intrinseco tra i sacramenti e l'ambito canonico, poiché quest'ultimo ha una radice sacramentale tanto rilevante da assurgere addirittura a valore fondante per il diritto della Chiesa». B. F. Pighin, *Diritto sacramentale*, 24; per la dimensione giuridica dei sacramenti in dettaglio, vedi inoltre le pagine 22-31 dello stesso volume.

costitutiva nella Chiesa e perciò richiedono un adeguato ordinamento che ne assicura la celebrazione, l'amministrazione e la ricezione secondo la giustizia (cf. inoltre il can. 213)[9].

4. Fondamenti giuridici

Avendo visto i fondamenti teologici di questi due gruppi di delitti nella sezione precedente, analizziamo ora brevemente i fondamenti giuridici dei delitti contro l'Eucaristia e della simulazione liturgica[10].

4.1. I delitti contro l'Eucaristia (can. 1367)

Abbiamo visto nella parte teologica, che il Sacramento dell'Eucaristia va tutelato, poiché è ritenuto come il bene più prezioso che la Chiesa possiede[11]. Questa importanza enorme dell'Eucaristia mette in rilievo anche D. Cito nel suo articolo:

> L'Eucaristia è il sacramento dell'unità della Chiesa ed è direttamente collegato con la fede creduta e vissuta. Si comprende perché anche da un punto di vista penale la legislazione della Chiesa voglia sottolineare tale rilevanza anche giuridica e invocare nei fedeli un sacro rispetto per tale sacramento[12].

Leggendo il canone 1367[13] ci rendiamo conto che il delitto contro la santità dell'Eucaristia si configura in tre modi, attraverso i tre verbi utilizzati dal canone:

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9 Cf. GRUPPO ITALIANO DOCENTI DI DIRITTO CANONICO, ed., *Il diritto nel mistero della Chiesa*, II, 48-49.

10 «La Chiesa non potrebbe in alcun modo lasciare al diritto secolare la protezione della fede e dei sacramenti nei quali si racchiude la sua identità e la sua missione di salvezza. Non si tratta infatti di delitti cosiddetti *misti*, ossia rilevanti sia per la Chiesa, come stabilisce il can. 1041 CIC, ha un diritto ed anche un dovere proprio ed esclusivo ad intervenire». D. CITO, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 33.

11 Vedi sull'importanza dell'Eucaristia: SACRA CONGREGATIO SANCTI OFFICII, decr. *Cum ex expresso*, 21 iul. 1934.

12 D. CITO, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 39.

13 «Qui species consecratas *abicit* aut in sacrilegum finem *abducit* vel *retinet*, in excommunicationem latae sententiae Sedi Apostolicae reservatam incurrit; clericus praeterea alia poena, non exclusa dimissione e statu clericali, puniri potest» (can. 1367). Il corsivo è nostro.

abicere, abducere e *retinere*[14]. Abbiamo già visto, che il verbo *abicere* non significa solo gettare via l'Eucaristia, ma varie azioni[15]. Vediamo, allora, questo delitto sulle orme dei tre verbi.

4.1.1. Profanare (*abicere*)

Secondo l'interpretazione autentica *abicere* significa, quindi, qualunque azione volontariamente e gravemente spregiativa verso le specie eucaristiche. Il significato del termine non è solo una chiarificazione linguistica, ma è una chiarificazione importante dal punto di vista interpretativa delle norme penali (cf. can. 18). Secondo quanto indicato nell'interpretazione autentica sembra, che non vi sia necessità di un contatto fisico con le specie consacrate («qualunque azione volontariamente e gravemente spregiativa»), così dovrebbe rientrare nella fattispecie dilettosa anche il fare oggetto di insulto il Santissimo Sacramento esposto (per esempio) all'adorazione dei fedeli[16].

4.1.2. Asportare (*abducere*)

Asportare (*abducere*) la specie consacrate fa colui, che le toglie dal posto ove normalmente sono custodite e le porta in un altro luogo (non appropriato) e fa tutto questo con intenzione sacrilega. Possiamo parlare di scopo sacrilego, se le specie consacrate diventano oggetti di atti osceni, per esempio: messe nere, riti satanici o massonici, magie e diverse superstizioni. Abitualmente l'asportazione per fine sacrilegio segue la conservazione per lo stesso scopo[17].

4.1.3. Conservare (*retinere*)

Commette delitto solo colui, che conserva (*retinet*) le specie eucaristiche da sé stesso (in tasca o nel borsello), oppure a casa o altrove con intenzione sacrilega[18].

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14 Cf. A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 271-275.

15 Vedi riguardo al verbo *abicere* il *responsum* del Pontificio Consiglio per i Testi Legislativi citato nella nota 2.

16 Cf. D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 40.

17 Cf. A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 272-273.

18 «Il Codice del 1917 diceva "ad malum finem", il nuovo "ad finem sacrilegium". Non sembra che vi sia differenza. Con la nuova terminologia si vuole sottolineare che si tratta

Interessante (ma anche ovvio), che tale intenzione è presunta dalla stessa conservazione illecita, perché conservare le specie consacrate in un posto indegno è illecito e fa presumere che sia fatto per intenzione sacrilega. Ovviamente un sacerdote che porta con sé le particole consacrate per essere sempre pronto a dare il viatico in qualche urgente situazione, non commette delitto, perché non conserva l'Eucaristia con intenzione sacrilega (comunque cf. can. 935)[19].

4.1.4. Le pene previste

La pena prevista per questo delitto è la scomunica *latae sententiae* riservata alla Sede Apostolica. Il canone menziona inoltre il caso, in cui il delitto viene commesso da un chierico. In questo caso alla scomunica si possono aggiungere anche altre pene inclusa anche la dimissione dallo stato clericale. Se il fedele è di rito orientale le pena è la scomunica maggiore (*ferendae sententiae*, perché il CCEO non prevede le pene *latae sententiae*), se il reo è chierico, allora c'è la possibilità della deposizione[20].

4.2. La «simulazione» dell'azione liturgica (cann. 1378 §2, 1°; 1379)

Nel CIC la simulazione dell'azione liturgica si trova sotto il titolo *Usurpazione degli uffici ecclesiastici e delitti nel loro esercizio*. A questo titolo corrisponde perfettamente la definizione della simulazione, che riportano diversi autori in modo molto simile:

> La simulazione consiste nella deliberata posizione di un atto, ma senza la corrispondente intenzione di compierlo. Affinché vi sia simulazione occorre che l'atto sia posto integro in tutti i suoi elementi essenziali, tali che se non vi fosse la deliberata mancanza di intenzione esso sarebbe valido e produttivo di effetti. Si tratta di una peculiarità delle celebrazioni sacramentali che, per diritto divino necessitano dell'intenzione del ministero di «fare ciò

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anche di un sacrilegio». D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 40.

[19] Cf. A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 274; cf. inoltre C. Dezzuto, «Delicta riservata contro la fede e contro i sacramenti», 51-53.

[20] Cf. D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 40-41.

che fa la Chiesa», e che non possono essere sanate neppure con il decorso del tempo[21].

Riguardo al *termine simulazione* è da sottolineare, che alcuni autori usano questo termine sia nel can. 1378 §2, 1° che nel can. 1379[22], altri invece nel can. 1378 §2, 1° usano il termine *tentare la celebrazione* e solo nel can. 1379 il termine *simulare*[23]. Noi, per presentare la questione, seguiamo adesso la seconda possibilità.

4.2.1. La tentata celebrazione (can. 1378 §2, 1°)

La tentata celebrazione dell'Eucaristia significa una *celebrazione invalida* da parte di chi non è ordinato sacerdote. Sappiamo dal diritto sacramentale che il ministro della Celebrazione Eucaristica è solo il sacerdote (cf. can. 900 §1), quindi il vescovo e il presbitero validamente ordinato[24]. L'assenza di questo requisito (ontologico-sacramentale) è il fondamento giuridico del primo delitto. Questo delitto tocca quindi la validità dell'atto e non la liceità, per la liceità occorre, che il sacerdote non sia impedito per legge canonica (cf. can. 900 §2)[25]. Si può realizzare il delitto anche in una concelebrazione (in cui la celebrazione è vera), nella quale

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21 D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 42; per la definizione della simulazione vedi inoltre i seguenti articoli: B.F. Pighin, *Diritto penale canonico*, 412-413; Gruppo Italiano Docenti di Diritto Canonico, ed., *Il diritto nel mistero della Chiesa*, II, 540; P. Erdő, *Egyházjog*, 651-652; C. Dezzuto, «Delicta riservata contro la fede e contro i sacramenti», 54-55; H. Schmitz, «Delicta graviora Congregationi de Doctrina Fidei Reservata», 300; A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 303-306.

22 Cf. A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 301, 305.

23 Cf. D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 41-42; Gruppo Italiano Docenti di Diritto Canonico, ed., *Il diritto nel mistero della Chiesa*, II, 539-540; B.F. Pighin, *Diritto penale canonico*, 402, 412; vedi inoltre: Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, *Normae de Gravioribus Delictis*, 21 mai. 2010, art. 3.

24 Cf. M. Mingardi, «L'Eucaristia: la celebrazione e la custodia», 106-107; cf. D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 41; per l'approfondimento della legislazione particolare sul sacramento dell'Eucaristia vedi M. Mingardi, «L'Eucaristia: la celebrazione e la custodia» 109-114, 115, 117 e D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti» 42-43.

25 Cf. B. F. Pighin, *Diritto sacramentale*, 234.

uno dei «concelebranti» che non è sacerdote gioca il ruolo compiendo i gesti e pronunciando le parole. Le ragioni, che spingono a compiere questo delitto, possono essere diverse: ad esempio candidati al presbiterio (ritenuti non idonei ad essere ordinati), fedeli di sesso femminile che lo commettono come contestazione contro la lettera *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*[26].

La pena prevista per questo delitto è l'interdetto *latae sententiae*, ma se si tratta di un chierico, allora la sospensione sempre *latae sententiae*. Per i rei di rito orientale è stabilita questa pena dal CIC, seguendo la procedura prevista nelle *Normae de Gravioribus Delictis*[27]. La tentata celebrazione dell'Eucaristia (senza la valida ordinazione sacerdote) comporta anche l'irregolarità di ricevere gli ordini sacri (cf. can. 1041, 6°).

La *Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei* ha tipizzato inoltre il delitto di attentare l'ordinazione sacra di donne, di competenza dello stesso dicastero, punendo con scomunica *latae sententiae* sia il ministro che attenta detto conferimento che le donne che tentano di ricevere l'ordine sacro. Questo ultimo delitto sembra essere tra i due canoni, da un lato si parla «attenta celebrazione» (can. 1378 §2, 1°), dall'altra però il sacramento dell'ordine viene trattato nel can. 1379[28].

4.2.2 La simulazione (can. 1379)

Quest'ultimo delitto si collega con i precedenti, poiché riguarda sempre la celebrazione dei sacramenti e si aggiunge sempre alla serie dei *delicta graviora* contro i sacramenti. Questo collegamento lo dimostrano anche le prime parole del canone: «oltre ai casi del can. 1378». Il canone riguarda genericamente i sacramenti, e perciò anche la scelta della pena, anche se è obbligatoria per sottolineare

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26 Cf. Joannes Paulus II, litt. apost. *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, 22 mai. 1994.

27 Cf. P. Erdő, *Egyházjog*, 651-652; D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 41; A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 301-302; J.A. Renken, «Normae de gravioribus delictis: 2010 Revised version Text and Commentary», 62-68; per la procedura vedi invece Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, *Normae de Gravioribus Delictis*, 21 mai. 2010, art. 8.

28 «Firmo praescripto can. 1378 *Codicis Iuris Canonici*, tum quicumque sacrum ordinem mulieri conferre, tum mulier quae sacrum ordinem recipere attentaverit, in excommunicationem latae sententiae Sedi Apostolicae reservatam incurrit». Congregatio pro Doctrina Fidei, decr. gen. *De Delicto Attentatae Sacrae Ordinationis Mulieris* , 19 dec. 2007.

la necessaria protezione dei sacramenti, è lasciata alla discrezionalità del superiore. Il superiore, dunque, è chiamato a intervenire nella forma *ferendae sententiae*. In questo canone il soggetto punibile è il ministro del sacramento («chi simula l'amministrare un sacramento»). In questa fattispecie rientrano tutti i riti liturgici richiesti per la valida celebrazione di un sacramento, che di fatto non si realizzano: o per una *volontà interna* che esclude fare ciò che intende fare la Chiesa o per *uso di una materia*, che solo sembra essere valida ma effettivamente non lo è, per esempio l'uso di camomilla al posto del vino nella Messa, oppure *per l'incapacità o inabilità* dell'autore della simulazione, che funge come «ministro»[29].

5. Questioni controverse riguardo ai delitti (domande aperte)

In questa parte dell'articolo accenniamo alcune domande aperte, alcune questioni controverse riguardo ai delitti visti in precedenza:

- Per diminuire i delitti contro l'Eucaristia (attentata celebrazione/ simulazione) può essere uno strumento efficace il *celebret*[30]? Come potrebbe essere in campo internazionale?
- La comunione in mano o nella bocca[31]? Cosa fare contro il delitto dell'asportazione?
- Specie ritenute ma in realtà non consacrate (cf. can. 1367)[32]?

29 Cf. B. F. Pighin, *Diritto penale canonico*, 412-415.

30 «È doveroso ribadire l'importanza che ogni sacerdote, soprattutto quando si reca fuori diocesi, si procuri questo documento (che utilmente indicherà, oltre all'idoneità alla celebrazione dell'Eucaristia, anche la facoltà di ricevere le confessioni sacramentali), e quindi che la curie siano attrezzate per la sua emissione, anzi che sollecitino i sacerdoti ad esserne sempre provvisti». M. Mingardi, «L'Eucaristia: la celebrazione e la custodia», 107.

31 «L'asportazione è più facile quando la particola si dà nella mano». A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 273.

32 «Una profanazione di specie ritenute consacrate ma che in realtà non lo sono, costituisce sempre dubbio un gravissimo peccato, tuttavia non rappresenta delitto ai sensi di questo canone». D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 39.

- Per commetter delitto contro il can. 1367 ci serve la fede nelle specie consacrate[33]?
- La simulazione è possibile anche nella concelebrazione[34]?
- C'è una differenza tra 1378 e 1379. I due canoni parlano della stessa cosa: *simulatio*[35]?
- Esiste una differenza tra la *simulazione* e la *dissimulazione*[36]?
- Come si può rubare la pisside e il vaso, così che non sia un delitto, ma soltanto un peccato[37]? (cf. can. 1367).

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33 «Tuttavia perché vi sia dolo non è necessario che il soggetto possieda la fede nella presenza reale di Gesù Cristo nelle specie consacrate, ma è sufficiente che sappia che lo siano, o meglio che la Chiesa ritenga tali». D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 40.

34 «Il delitto si può realizzare anche all'interno di una "vera concelebrazione eucaristica", ad esempio in una concelebrazione […]. D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 41-42.

35 Cf. A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 301-306; cf. Gruppo Italiano Docenti di Diritto Canonico, ed., *Il diritto nel mistero della Chiesa*, II, 539-540.

36 «Essa (la simulazione) consiste in una falsificazione del segno sacramentale, frutto della volontaria pretesa di manifestarlo esteriormente nella sua integrità, escludendo deliberatamente la realtà significata dalla celebrazione stessa; o comunque mettendo in atto intenzionalmente il rito in tutti i suoi aspetti percettibili, sapendo che non possono prodursi *ex opere operato* gli effetti soprannaturali previsti. Altra cosa è la dissimulazione, che consiste nel fingere di compiere un'azione, in realtà non posta». B.F. Pighin, *Diritto penale canonico*, 413-414; «La simulazione consiste nella posizione di un atto, ma senza la corrispondete intenzione di compierlo. Essa differisce dalla dissimulazione, che consiste nel fingere di porre un atto, che in realtà non si pone». Gruppo Italiano Docenti di Diritto Canonico, ed., *Il diritto nel mistero della Chiesa*, II, 540.

37 «Non commette quindi delitto il ladro della pisside e del vaso sacro, il quale depone prima le ostie consacrate sull'altare o dentro il tabernacolo, luoghi consacrati o propri. Ma commette delitto il ladro che per rubare il calice prezioso getta sul pavimento o in qualsiasi altro posto non adeguato il vino consacrato. Non commette delitto se sparge il vino sull'altare oppure se lo versa in altro vaso decente, per esempio in un bicchiere, e lo depone sull'altare. […] Chi poi profana le specie non consacrate, credendo che lo siano, commette peccato, non delitto». A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 272.

- Commette delitto colui, che dopo aver ricevuto con buone intenzioni la santa Comunione, si toglie di bocca la particola e per devozione la ripone nel libro delle preghiere[38]?
- Riguardo al can. 1378 §2, 1° quando si comincia il delitto[39]?
- La simulazione in un matrimonio entra nelle fattispecie del can. 1379 come «simulazione di un sacramento»[40]?
- La cresima conferita da un presbitero è un delitto (cf. can. 1379)[41]?
- Cosa succede, quando il ministro che distribuisce intenzionalmente ai fedeli ostie non consacrate per la comunione[42]? Questo fatto entra nelle fattispecie del can. 1379?

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38 «[…] sebbene ciò sia per sua natura peccato grave, salva sempre la buona fede». A. Calabrese, *Diritto penale canonico*, 273.

39 Il delitto si comincia con il primo atto di esecuzione: autore, vestito con i parimenti liturgici, va verso l'altare in modo che sembri apprestarsi a celebrare.

40 «Il can. 1379, utilizzando il termine "sacramento" senza specificazioni, si riferisce a tutti i sette i misteri della grazia istituiti da Cristo». B. F. Pighin, *Diritto penale canonico*, 413. Più avanti il medesimo autore scrive il seguente: «Pure problematica, secondo alcuni commentatori – ma, a nostro parere, meno del caso illustrato in precedenza –, è l'integrazione nella fattispecie delittuosa in esame dell'esclusione del consenso compiuto nella celebrazione del matrimonio, ai sensi del can. 1101, §2. Non vi è dubbio che gli sposi siano i ministri del patto irrevocabile elevato da Cristo alla dignità del sacramento. Ma la condotta simulatoria eventualmente posta in essere da ambedue o da uno di essi può configurarsi come delitto soltanto se è di natura dolosa, che appare in teoria possibile, ma in pratica molto remota». B. F. Pighin, *Diritto penale canonico*, 415.

41 «[…] come può avvenire per la cresima conferita da un presbitero conscio di essere privo della relativa facoltà, non supplita dalla Chiesa a norma del can. 144, §2». B.F. Pighin, *Diritto penale canonico*, 414.

42 «La risposta sembra positiva per più motivi. Il verbo "amministrare" del can. 1739 richiede che l'autore […] si un ministro […] ai sensi del can. 910. In secondo luogo, il canone in esame esige che oggetto dell'amministrazione sia non un sacramentale istituito dalla Chiesa, ma un sacramento; questo carattere appartiene certamente alle specie distribuite per la comunione con Cristo realmente presente nell'Eucaristia. È anche vero, però, che la comunione è una parte o un prolungamento (se distribuita fuori della Messa) del Sacrificio divino». B.F. Pighin, *Diritto penale canonico*, 414-415.

6. Conclusione

All'inizio di questo articolo ci abbiamo posto la domanda: ha la Chiesa il diritto di costringere con sanzioni penali i fedeli? È davvero necessario avere un diritto penale nella Chiesa? È necessario anche nel campo sacramentale?

Abbiamo visto che i delitti contro la santità del Santissimo Sacramento e la simulazione dei Sacramenti hanno una portata molto importante nella vita della Chiesa. Tutti i sacramenti e in modo speciale l'Eucaristia fanno parte dell'essenza della Chiesa[43].

Quest'importanza enorme dei sacramenti ha un solido fondamento teologico-giuridico: i sacramenti sono affidati alla Chiesa da parte di Cristo. Nell'ultima parte dell'articolo abbiamo visto, che ci sono molte domande aperte e diverse ambiguità intorno a questa materia. Perciò alla domanda posta all'inizio possiamo rispondere con un chiaro sì, la Chiesa ha bisogno di un adeguato ordinamento giuridico anche in questo campo. La Chiesa ha il diritto-dovere di tutelare l'amministrazione dei sacramenti, perché tutti i fedeli conforme al can. 213 possano accedere a questi Santi Misteri secondo la volontà di Gesù Cristo.

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[43] Cf. H. Schmitz, «Delicta graviora Congregationi de Doctrina Fidei Reservata», 299-300; D. Cito, «Delicta Graviora contro la fede e sacramenti», 39; C. Dezzuto, «Delicta riservata contro la fede e contro i sacramenti», 51.

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PASTORAL PRACTICE OF THE ACADEMIC PARISH OF PRAGUE

Adela Muchova[1]

Abstract: This paper examines pastoral practice of the Academic Parish of Prague in compliance with its specific character – service to people from academia. Data analysis from qualitative interviews and document-based research identified two major areas of ministry – pastoral care (ad intra) and public engagement (ad extra) – and positioned the community somewhat between a parish ministry and chaplaincy. Specifically, empirical research suggested that people opt for this parish because it acknowledges their social, spiritual and intellectual needs seriously and relevantly, and addresses its members with respect. Theologically, it maintains there is a compatibility between the parish offer and expectations of people, and argues that the parish interpreted and handled its specific mission – addressing urban and educated people – relevantly and authentically.
Keywords: Parish ministry, chaplaincy, specific pastoral care, Academic Parish of Prague, Tomáš Halík, qualitative research, choice, acknowledgement

1. Introduction

> I just know that it attracts people who are, of course, somehow tuned in, and that's different than if you are locally destined to meet people somewhere; it's not the location, it's the spirit (Blanka, 42).

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Many people today claim to be spiritual rather than religious, and not looking for a religious community to affiliate with.[2] Due to various psychological, sociological, personal, historical and political reasons, their search for faith does not often bring them to a particular religion or religious community. For the church, whose mission is to serve people, this is a major pastoral challenge – how to address and attract people in a pluralistic society relevantly and reasonably.

In the opening quote, Blanka, a long-term parishioner, speaks about "a spirit" of the Academic Parish of Prague that makes it different from other places she has visited. In this paper, therefore, we shall examine this spirit – which pastoral approaches and methods are specific and pertinent for this particular church community.

The Academic Parish of Prague [Akademická farnost Praha], which was renewed after the fall of communism, is one of the few congregations in the Czech Republic that still attracts high numbers of newcomers – it signals a certain interest in a relevant faith community among believers and non-believers. Moreover, this Catholic parish with a clear ecumenical and interfaith stance has become a social phenomenon with its access to the public and cultural spheres over the past three decades. Today, it is one of the most-frequented parishes with a high rate of adult baptism, which makes it an increasingly important case of specific pastoral practice. So far, however, there has been no reliable qualitative analysis of this phenomenon, either sociological or theological.[3] This explorative paper, which is based on a recent empirical research, therefore examines various ministries of the parish and reviews them theologically, in order to identify its specific mission within Czech church (ad intra) and society alike (ad extra).[4]

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[2] B. J. Zinnbauer, et al., "Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzying the Fuzzy", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, 4, 1997, 549–564.

[3] P. Fassatiová examined the Academic Parish quantitatively in her master's thesis "Městská posttradiční religiozita" [Urban Post-traditional Religiosity: Catholic Faith of Academic Parish Visitors' in Post-optimistic Perspective] in 2008.

[4] H.-J. Sander cit. N. Mette, *Einführung in die katholische Praktische Theologie*, Darmstadt, 2005.

1.1. Method

This study, which was carried between 2016 and 2019, employed methods of social science and practical theology to examine the subject interdisciplinary.[5] First, empirical research took place in the fall 2016, when eleven qualitative interviews with parish members of various gender, age and affiliation with the faith community were conducted; all personal names and possible identification markers were anonymized throughout the process. The qualitative interviews were later coded and analyzed with regards to grounded theory methodology.[6] Second, a document-based research was carried out to complement the data from the interviews; published materials and online presentations of the Academic Parish were also reviewed. Both empirical steps eventually allowed for a third procedure, theological analysis of this pastoral case study. Eventually, a classical method of practical theology, *see-judge-act*, was adopted for a pastoral theological examination of the phenomenon.[7]

2. Research results

This part outlines result from empirical research in detail. First, an exploratory observation of the Academic Parish of Prague and its characteristics is provided. This document-based research presents a brief study of the main activities,

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[5] This study was a part of my dissertation research of which I take full responsibility. My personal engagement in the Academic Parish of Prague made me aware of potential advantages and conflicts throughout the process. I therefore decided to explain my contexts, methods and research steps clearly to ensure all data for a possible validation.

[6] The method was originally developed by B. Glaser and A. L. Strauss, later adaptations and approaches followed. In this research, positions of A. L. Strauss and J. Corbin, as well as K. Charmaz were mainly applied: J. Corbin, A. Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory,* Thousand Oaks, 2008; K. Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, 2006.

[7] On grounded theory methodology in theology S. Klein, *Erkenntnis und Methode in der Praktischen Theologie*, Stuttgart, 2005, 239. On methodology in practical theology N. Mette, *Einführung in die katholische Praktische Theologie*, on empirical methods O. Fuchs, “Relationship Between Practical Theology and Empirical Research”, *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 2, 2001, 5–19.

themes and challenges, which were systematized into two main categories. Under "pastoral work" I positioned a typical pastoral ministry, such as sacraments, catechesis and groups, and under "public engagement," I positioned political and art-related activities. Having described some specific activities that seem to differentiate the parish from other congregations in the region, I drew especially on themes of education, liturgy, spiritual exercises, art, and political involvement. Second, research results from qualitative interviews are communicated to illustrate expectations of people participating in parish life.

In practical theology, empirical research serves as the first step of observing reality – reading the signs of the times. Its attempt to delineate both context and variables strives for an as accurate as possible description of studied phenomenon – i.e., a particular church community – to provide reliable material for further theological analysis. Identification of spiritual demands of people on the one hand, and actual pastoral practices of the church on the other hand, thus constitutes valuable material for understanding their mutual relation and, possibly, for outlining new pastoral models and approaches.[8]

2.1. Document-based research: Parish as a platform

The primary role of Christian parishes and congregations is to serve its members in deepening their spiritual life by providing sacramental and societal support, and, thus, enabling Christians to evangelize – to be a salt of the earth (Matthew 5,13). Historically, Catholic parishes operated on a territorial basis and thus provided benefit for a local community of Christians and non-Christians within their reach. With the massive urbanization of the 20th century and globalization of the 21st century, this concept has been challenged in many ways, and numerous alternative communities rise, such as special pastoral care, personal parishes and chaplaincies:

> As a general rule, a parish is to be territorial, that is, one which includes all the Christian faithful of a certain territory. When it is expedient, however, personal parishes are to be established, determined by reason of

[8] GS 4.

> the rite, language or nationality of the Christian faithful of some territory, or even for some other reason.[9]

The Academic Parish of Prague was given its legal status within the church law as a personal parish serving university students and staff: the official pastoral care to students was restored at St. Salvátor Church in February 1990 with Tomáš Halík as the church rector; it continued as such until 2004, when the personal parish was established there for the same purpose and with the same pastor.[10] There have thus been almost three decades of continuous pastoral work under the same parish priest. This may seem unusual in pastoral circumstances, but it is not that unusual for a parish serving academia: Halík's position within the community is perhaps to be compared to that of a university professor rather than to a parish priest. For its discursive and independent atmosphere, the parish is sometimes referred to as a "platform" by some parishioners, indicating its open mentality rather than a portfolio of its activities.[11]

Tomáš Halík, who had worked as a psychologist for 20 years and whose ordination into the priesthood in 1978 had been known only to a small group of people during communism, started working in the Academic Parish of Prague without before having experienced typical parish life. His conversion to Catholicism, as well as religious education and work, consisted of home-based training and pastoral care within the "underground church."[12] Starting at the St. Salvátor Church thus was a very open beginning, without specific instructions and as-

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9 CIC, c. 518, this single sentence in Cannon Law is actually the only juridical mention of a large area of specific pastoral care.

10 Akademická farnost Praha, "Historie farnosti", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/historie-farnosti#porevolucni [3.7.2019]. The APP abbreviation is used for official online presentations of the Academic Parish of Prague in further footnotes. Primary sources are listed in the footnotes in full, other references follow also in the bibliography.

11 Researcher, Personal archive: Memos, journals, and personal communication between 2007 and 2019.

12 More on the phenomenon of the official/unofficial/exile church in communist Czechoslovakia in S. Balík, J. Hanuš, *Katolická církev v Československu 1945-1989*, Brno, 2007, 239. Another perspective on church in totalitarian state has recently been introduced by K. Skalický, who differentiates "collaborating church" (*kolaborující církev*), church of passive resistance (*církev pasivní resistence*), church co-existing (*církev koexistující*), underground church (*církev v podzemí*), and church contesting (*církev vyjadřující ne-*

signment from the bishop and the diocese. Apart from the underground church activities, there was no example for inspiration or people to consult with. Halík and his colleagues therefore started looking for their own ways for pastoral care, often intuitively responding to needs of parish visitors, as well as the society around them.[13]

Analyzing the situation after three decades of active life, we can see these starting conditions eventually provided freedom and enabled creativity that may not have been possible in given borders of standard or well-established parish life. Tomáš Halík and his people therefore focused on a role they understood was specific for them: creating a platform, rather than a parish, where people, both believers and non-believers, could meet to receive spiritual support, support their social life, and cultivate their intellectual capacity. Similarly, the Second Vatican Council encouraged Christians in being active and creative in understanding the world around them:

> The Church can respond to the perennial questions which men ask about this present life and the life to come, and about the relationship of the one to the other. We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.[14]

The expression "respond to" seems very different from other translations using "answer to" the perennial questions, which indicate a somewhat directive approach. On this account, Paul M. Zulehner observes, for instance, that "churches often reply to questions that nobody is asking, and, on the other hand, they are silent on questions which are important for people."[15] Similarly argues Charles Taylor while observing that church leadership "pushes worked-out answers" without addressing seekers relevantly;[16] and that without meeting saints and

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spokojenost); in K. Skalický, *Církev v Evropě, Evropa v církvi: Teologický vhled do dějin Evropy prismatem svobody a revoluce*, Svitavy, 2018, 270-276.

13 T. Halík, "20 let akademické pastorace v kostele Nejsvětějšího Salvátora" [20 Years of Academic Pastoral Care at St Salvator Church], *Salvatore,* 72, 2010, 1-3.

14 GS 4.

15 P. M. Zulehner, *Ein Obdach der Seele*, Düsseldorf, 1995, 7.

16 C. Taylor cit. G. F. McLean, "Introduction: Disjunctions in the 21st Century", in C. Taylor, J. Casanova, G. F. McLean (eds.), *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, Washington, 2012, 5.

mystics, the churches with pat and ready-made answers are not likely to appear plausible to people today."[17] It has also become a theme for Pope Francis, who asserts that "instead of overwhelming young people with a body of rules that make Christianity seem reductive and moralistic, we are called to invest in their fearlessness and to train them to take up their responsibilities."[18]

This theme also seems essential for the Academic Parish. Perhaps due to Tomáš Halík's long-time experience as a psychologist, confessor and philosopher, he often appears as a convinced doubter – aptly outlining questions or ways of thought, but rarely answering them. Even when he is actually in a position to answer a question to a catechumen, for example, he is likely to open another space rather than provide concrete and restrictive answers; as if balancing on the edge of faith and non-faith was simply his pastoral style. It might be argued here that the shape of the parish was determined mainly by the distinctive, strong personality of Tomáš Halík, and it probably would not be far from the truth, as sociology and psychology assign the founders with an unmistakable influence on shaping the character of their work, be it an institution, movement or school of thought.[19] Examining the Academic Parish of Prague without reflecting Tomáš Halík and his theological and pastoral approach, therefore, would not only be impossible but even misleading.

Although my main research deals with people and their expectations of the parish, it is also necessary to see the other part – what tools does the parish use to attract and address people, whether parishioners or newcomers? It is assumed that offered forms of parish activities are based on formal and informal feedback from people, such as observation, private talks and confessions that cannot be recorded. In the following paragraphs, therefore, I will outline a description of the Academic Parish of Prague that is based on public sources: the parish's website and newsletter presentation, public media, sermon recordings accessible to the public, etc.

Today, the parish provides typical religious services, such as sacraments and Christian formation; however, it seems also to attract people with its rich cultural and academic program. Ultimately, this community has become not only

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17 C. Taylor, "The Church Speaks – to Whom?", in C. Taylor, J. Casanova, G. F. McLean (eds.), *Church and People: Disjunctions in a Secular Age*, Washington, 2012, 19.

18 Francis, *Christus vivit: Post-Synodal Exhortation to Young People and to the Entire People of God*, 2019, 233.

19 Halík, "20 let akademické pastorace".

the leading pastoral project within the local church but also a kind of societal phenomenon with its overlap in the public space and cultural sphere; and it is especially interest from outside of the church that raises many questions about the pastoral approach of the parish.

In the following text, I will therefore identify key activities that the parish has been providing and observe areas where the parish reaches society, both Christian and non-Christian. For schematizing the studied area, I propose major parish activities being structured as pastoral care or public engagement; see the diagram "Activities of the Academic Parish of Prague":

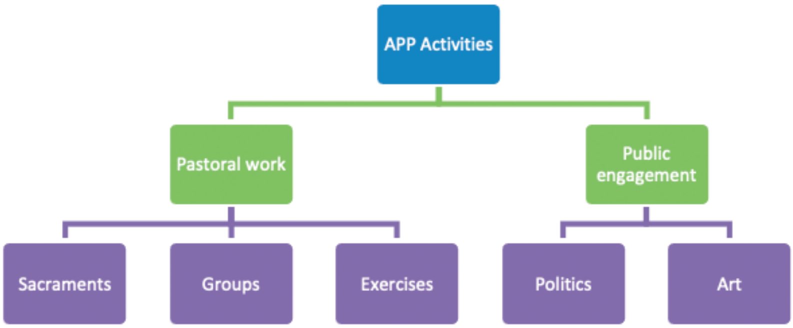

Diagram "Activities of the Academic Parish of Prague" (3.7.2019/a)

2.1.1. Pastoral work

Immediate pastoral work is exercised in three major areas in the Academic Parish of Prague: sacramental service and related accompanying activities, groups of particular interest, and spiritual exercises.

Sacramental service

Sacramental service has been provided by the parish priest, Tomáš Halík, and several chaplains. Soon after the parish was established, priests – or rather temporary chaplains – with diverse spiritual backgrounds were assigned there; namely Aleš Opatrný (Charismatic Renewal), Jan Jandourek, Milan Badal (Dominican), Ladislav Štefek and Zdeněk Králík (Schoenstatt movement), Vincente Montiel Romer (Claretian), Andrea Barbero and Stefano Pasquero (Communio et Liberazione), Pavel Petrašovský, Marek Vácha, and recently three Jesuits Petr Havlíček, Jan Regner and Petr Vacík; most stayed for a limited period of time.[20]

As of January 2017, alongside Tomáš Halík were Marek Vácha and Petr Vacík; another Jesuit, Jan Regner, was abroad on a study leave. As most priests carry out other duties elsewhere, their work for the Academic Parish is only a part-time job. Halík works also as a professor of philosophy and religion at the Faculty of Arts at Charles University in Prague; Vácha chairs the university's Department of Ethics and Humanity Studies at the Faculty of Medicine during the week while on weekends he commutes to a small parish in South Moravia; and Vacík is in charge of a retreat house in Kolín, east of Prague, where most weekend activities and programs take place. His work at the Academic Parish is therefore carried out mainly on weekdays and Sunday nights, when the "high mass" takes place at 8pm. There are two masses on Sunday, at 2pm and 8pm.[21] There is another mass during the week, on Tuesday at 6pm, just preceding the catechesis course, a main educational platform for catechumens and confirmands.[22]

Sacrament of reconciliation is offered every Tuesday and Thursday night, with several priests being available at the church usually between 8pm and 11pm. Parishioners are offered either a sacrament of reconciliation or a private spiritual talk.[23] Recently, Irena Göbelová, a Carmelite nun, joined the team to provide

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[20] APP, "U nás působící kněží", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/akademicka-farnost-praha [3.7.2019].

[21] Although there have been some attempts during the existence of the parish to transfer some services to Sunday morning, such a change was never accomplished and remained a sort of dissatisfaction for young families. Although it was discussed at various forums, such as the Parish Council, the opposing arguments remained the same: afternoon mass is accessible to people from regions, evening mass is accessible to students returning to Prague, Researcher, Personal archive.

[22] APP, "Bohoslužby a svátosti", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/bohosluzby-a-svatosti [3.7.2019].

[23] T. Halík describes the long-time experience with this service in *Noc zpovědníka* [Night of the Confessor], where he declared his delight in such accompanying people despite long lines and late night hours.

regular spiritual counseling; other "guest" priests support the team occasionally.[24] There is, of course, a possibility to request this sacrament at any time.[25]

Organization of preparations for receiving sacraments is assigned to a long-serving member of the parish team, Martin Staněk. He serves as a parish manager, organizing primarily individual preparations for the baptism of children and sacrament of marriage. He has been working for 15 years and is said to be – due to his friendly and welcoming character – a "motor" of the parish. After being baptized in the Academic Parish in 1992, he later worked as a sacristan and pastoral assistant for several years, eventually being promoted to parish referent and coordinator, a position not typical for Czech parishes, but drawing its inspiration from German-speaking countries (Pastoralreferent, Kirchenreferent).[26]

Homily is certainly the most visible pastoral tool of the parish as was also communicated in the qualitative interviews. People reported coming to the church for the sermons – for hearing the Gospel in a way that is relevant and appealing to them. Tomáš Halík is perceived as a rhetorically and intellectually strong personality who attracts both Christians and non-Christians. Irena Hamzová Pulicarová observed that Halík speaks urgently and presents original thoughts to which his audience is attracted. Moreover, he works within a larger social context and encourages his listeners to lead active and responsible lives while using rich vocabulary, biblical references, and a self-confident non-verbal style:

> Halík gives the impression of a thoughtful and original thinking scholar, open to seeing mutual inspiration between the worlds of faith and atheism. And at the same time the impression of a person who, in addition to having deep knowledge of the spiritual dimension, also lives this dimension in his life. By doing so, his homily is appealing. And there are also his links to sociology, philosophy, and psychology that he deals with as a preacher.[27]

Tomáš Halík's sermons are, however, usually perceived in extreme ways in the Czech church: many people see them very positively, but some regard them as rather negative; be it for Halík's distinctive personality, thought-provoking

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[24] *Salvatore*, 149, 2018, 2-3.

[25] APP, „Adorace s možností svátosti smíření nebo duchovního rozhovoru", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/udalost/92758/2019-05-23/adorace-s-moznosti-svatosti-smireni-nebo-duch--rozhovoru [3.7.2019].

[26] APP, "Martin Staněk", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/martin-stanek [3.7.2019].

[27] I. Hamzová Pulicarová, "Směřování k naplněnému sdělení," PhD Thesis, Praha, 2013.

message, use of language and rhetorical style or 15-minute-length. Theologically, nevertheless, the content is above the style, so we may ask how important it is for people to see the speaker as credible and authentic. Halík obviously aims at an educated and knowledgeable audience in his sermons; interestingly, he sometime uses rather general and non-religious vocabulary to approach non-Catholics in the audience; other times he perhaps employs demanding intellectual connotations that are not accessible to some Catholics. As if he preferred "reflective seekers" rather than "passive dwellers" among his listeners.[28]

The specific character of the parish, serving primarily to a community of people affiliated with institutions of higher education, emphasizes the speaker's responsibility to address this specific congregation no matter how non-appealing it might be for others.[29] Providing beneficial support through homily is also about predicting expectations of different groups and searching for a certain balance in a given liturgy service.

It was observed, for instance, that some people come to the St. Salvátor Church only for the sermon; once it has ended, they leave the church. One respondent noticed this occurs more often when the social and political situation is disturbing; her interpretation suggests that many people come for support and encouragement and not necessarily for the holy mass. Moreover, accessibility is also important; the parish has kept its sermons archived online, so most people come prepared in a way: they know the preachers and their style from the media and, eventually, can come to observe in person if they wish to.[30]

Catechesis course

The *Kurz základů víry* [Basics of Faith] course has been a flagship of pastoral activities in the parish for almost three decades; since early 1990s, it has served as a common platform for sacramental preparation of adults.[31] Today, each term

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[28] T. Halík, "Church for the Seekers", in T. Halík, P. Hošek (eds.), *A Czech Perspective on Faith in a Secular Age*, Washington, 2015, 127–133.

[29] EG 135.

[30] Importance of online accessibility grew in recent pandemic when church attendance was not possible. Halík´s sermon-streaming, for instance, ranged between ten thousand and twenty thousand from January 2021 to August 2021, APP, https://www.youtube.com/user/salvatorskafarnost/videos [4.8.2021].

[31] M. Staněk, "Malé dějiny pražské akademické farnosti", in F. Horáček, N. Schmidt (eds.), *Salvatoria: Almanach k 60. narozeninám Tomáše Halíka*, Praha, 2008, 273–297.

is scheduled for two academic years and takes place every Tuesday evening, between 7pm and 8:30pm in the largest space available, the sacristy. The lectures are usually presented by Tomáš Halík, other parish team members or guest speakers. The thematic structure covers key topics of Christian faith (the credo) and practical Christian life (the Ten Commandments, the sacramental life, etc.); and although the target audience is comprised of candidates for baptism and confirmation, all lectures are open to the public. Usually, over 100 candidates register at the beginning of the term, about 70% of them preparing in a two-year term for baptism and confirmation ("slow confirmands" are constituted from baptized but non-practicing Christians) and about 30% are preparing in a one-year term for confirmation ("fast confirmands" are constituted from practicing Christians).[32]

In addition to these lectures, there are supporting programs on weekends; their importance has increased over the past ten years as candidates are now expected to attend about three weekends during their preparation period. These are not only to support the theological and perhaps "theoretical" nature of weekly lectures, but primarily to create an appropriate environment for the candidates to get to know each other, share their spiritual paths, learn about practical methods of spiritual and prayer life, etc. To a certain degree, it can be compared to a high school education principle of providing both lectures and seminars.

A slightly different approach to various focus groups was observed in the parish team, which may be attributed to the coordinators' different spiritual experiences. Whereas in the beginning the course was – intentionally or not – designed for "converts," i.e. people coming from outside the church, today also many young Christians apply for confirmation in the parish. From a pastoral perspective, this constitutes a challenging task: how should the program be designed to meet such a diverse audience? Is it relevant, for instance, to incorporate people without any church experience and education with those who have been practicing the Catholic faith for 20 or 30 years? It seems as a challenge for the parish team, of which some members have a convert background (Tomáš Halík, Martin Staněk, Petr Vacík, Denisa Červenková, Irena Göbelová, and recently Hana Šimková) and others a Catholic background (Jan Regner, Petr Mucha, Adéla Muchová). This disproportion was somewhat spontaneously resolved in putting emphasis on weekend programs, where people share similar experiences and ask questions

32 APP, "Kurz základů víry", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/kurz-zakladu-viry [3.7.2019].

relevant to their knowledge and spiritual background. While it possibly deserves more discussion and analysis, the topic was addressed in the parish team meetings rather indirectly so far. [33]

Martin Staněk, the parish coordinator, has been serving as the course coordinator for the past 20 years, after graduating from the course himself in 1992.[34] His responsibilities include managing weekly lectures, including arranging for speakers, and organizing the weekends. Staněk is also responsible for the group of catechumens and "slow-confirmands": the weekend meetings, the liturgical preparation, and the "Sunday school," special meetings offered during the Sunday masses just a few weeks before the baptism, which provide the candidates with still more help with their spiritual life.[35]

Groups

Like other Catholic parishes, the Academic Parish is home to various groups – they have come and gone throughout the decades – and they were mostly initiated by parishioners around a central theme or need. Prayer groups are diverse: a weekly meditation group, for instance, has been meeting for a decade under the guidance of Carmelite nuns; the *Krypta* prayer group uses a verbal form of prayer and songs from Taizé; the choral prayer group meets early in the morning to sing the Latin Laudes together.[36] Recently, a small group of Centering Prayer mediation practice has also started.[37]

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33 In informal conversations, for instance, Tomáš Halík and Martin Staněk, preferred that the Catholics by origin coordinate "fast-confirmands" group and they themselves engage with the catechumens who are closer to their own religious experience, Researcher, Personal archive.

34 P. Jirsová Fassati, M. Staněk, "Osm plus jedna otázka pro pastoračního asistenta Martina Staňka", *Salvatore,* 70, 2009.

35 Fassati, Staněk, "Osm plus jedna", APP, "Martin Staněk", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/martin-stanek [3.7.2019].

36 A special community, for instance, has developed around this group; both youth and young families spend Easter in a former monastery in Roudnice nad Labem to pray together: they wear informal liturgical gowns for the occasion and seem to enjoy this traditional prayer of the church. It is, in a way, similar to church choirs that provide their members with both deep spiritual experience and closer social ties, in Researcher, Personal archive.

37 *Salvatore*, 156, 2019, 11.

Some other groups were recently identified, such as a long-time serving parish choir, a small Bible study group, a group called *Cesta* organizing hiking trips together, and a few groups serving young families – some meet on a regular basis, others spend a summer week together. The programs for the families, however, have always been regarded as insufficient, and many parishioners who have started their own families have called for more activities. It has, however, usually depended on the families themselves whether they could start something on their own, and there has never been much initiative from the parish management.

Moreover, there are two independent organizations associated with the parish informally. *Vysokoškolské katolické hnutí Praha* [Movement of Catholic University Students in Prague] is run by their own board of students and gathers those who seek for social, cultural, and religious support. Some of their activities are performed in cooperation with the Academic Parish and regularly promoted in the parish newsletter.[38] *Karmel Edith Steinové* [Edith Stein Carmel] is a community that joined the parish through its Czech members: Denisa Červenková was baptized in the parish and today works at the Department of Fundamental Theology at the Catholic Theological Faculty at Charles University, and Irena Göbelová, also a graduate from the Academic Parish, works as a psychologist. Besides their own pastoral work at the convent, they are both available for spiritual service at the parish, the meditation groups and spiritual accompaniment.[39]

Spiritual exercises

Spiritual exercises and retreats comprise a significant portion of parish pastoral work today; they were introduced through Jesuits to the parish and now create a non-separable part of pastoral service. Most take place during weekends in Kolín, in a former Capuchin monastery that served as a Jesuit center for 20 years before being assigned to the Academic Parish of Prague. Between 2011 and 2020, this center was under the supervision of Petr Vacík, a Jesuit and a member of the Academic Parish team.[40]

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38 Vysokoškolské katolické hnutí Praha, http://vkhpraha.cz/ [3.7.2019].

39 Karmel Edith Steinové, http://www.cestanahoru.org/ [3.7.2019]. It is a member of Carmelite Sisters of St. Teresa in Florence, http://www.suorecarmelitanedifirenze.it/il-carmelo/?lang=en [6.10.2019].

40 Kolínský klášter, https://www.kolinskyklaster.org/ [3.7.2019]. Moreover, Vacík claims inspiration from Jesuit centers of spirituality worldwide, such as Haus Gries: Stille und Meditation, in Germany, J. Matějková, "Hledání srdce: Cestou kontemplace a zenu s je-

All the programs are influenced by Jesuit spirituality and range from typical Ignatius exercises (weekend-long, week-long), through meditations of various kind (Sadhana), contemplative exercises, psychology-oriented Enneagram, to thematic retreats in Advent and Lent, Carmelite spirituality retreats, exercises with film, ecumenical-oriented programs, etc. Each session is supervised by a team member (Petr Vacík, Jan Regner, Denisa Červenková, Irena Gobelová, František Hylmar) and often accompanied by a psychologist (Michal Petr, Petr Miklas) or another expert (Jan Šedivý, Elva Frouz, Miloš Hrdý, Ivana Noble, Scarlett Vasiluková Rešlová). There are about 30 exercises offered each year in Kolín, which last from three to seven days. Most are fully booked within a few weeks after the registration period is opened and, thus, keep waiting lists for applicants.[41] So, although the exercise team does not necessarily overlap with the parish team, these programs are regarded as key activities of the parish and would surely deserve closer research in a larger context of urban ministry.[42]

2.1.2. Public engagement

Active participation in public and politics has always been a delicate theme for the church and Christians in the modern era. Since the Second Vatican Council, the church has formally avoided favoring certain political parties but rather called for general ideas of human rights and social justice.[43] Priests and official church institutions tend not to take political positions; and if there is a need for debate over political issues, various lay organizations get involved. The existence and character of an academic parish, however, indicates a certain interest in politics within Christian circles, clerics not excluded.

Tomáš Halík's involvement in public life has often been criticized as inadequate and inappropriate for a religious figure.[44] For instance, the parish has long

zuitou Petrem Vacíkem" [Heart search: The way of contemplation and Zen with the Jesuit Petr Vacík], *Česká televize*, 8.10.2017, https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/1185258379-cesty-viry/217562215500007-hledani-srdce/ [6.10.2019].

41 APP, "Salvátorská duchovní cvičení v Kolíně" [Spiritual Exercises offered by St Salvátor in Kolín], *Salvatore*, 149, 2018, 11-14.

42 APP, "Duchovní cvičení", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/duchovni-cviceni [3.7.2019].

43 Gaudium et spes 76.

44 M. Kočí, "Přínos Tomáše Halíka", in T. Halík, *Žít s tajemstvím: Podněty k promýšlení víry*, Praha, 227–249.

been in contact with liberal elements of society, be they politicians, schools of thought, or civil activities; e.g., President Václav Havel, the Forum 2000 Foundation, and Christian liberal politicians such as Karel Schwarzenberg, Zuzana Roithová, Daniel Herman and Pavel Fischer. Halík, on the other hand, often took clear stands against Czech presidents Václav Klaus and Miloš Zeman and their style of politics.[45] Due to Halík's articulated position, therefore, it is probable that many parishioners share political views close to those of Christian liberal thinking.

If we examine available data, namely Halík's official speeches and articles, as well as supported activities within the parish, we observe that he regularly alludes to politics and certain politicians in his sermons and intercessions, especially when some tension in society arises, such as during election campaigns or the refugee crisis in 2015.[46] People who know Halík from his writings and media appearances seem therefore attracted to his philosophy also at the church. It is not unusual, for instance, that some people come for the liturgy of the word only, leaving the church right after the homily; many of these non-Christians attend either because of their interest in spirituality or to receive comfort in politically and socially tense times. It is not without interest, however, that it is rarely particular legislation that is criticized by the parish representatives publicly but rather ethics itself. In this sense, these activities can be understood as philosophical rather than political work.[47]

Czech society tends to be sensitive to truth, which is sometimes attributed to the beginning of Protestantism in Bohemia; the Catholic Priest Jan Hus confronted clerical corruption and put principal emphasis on this key Christian virtue. It was later adopted when the modern Czechoslovak state was constituted:

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45 T. Halík, "Výzva k neúčasti", T. Halík, "Desatero ke strachu z islámu. Rozum a věcnost místo hysterie a panikaření", *Lidové noviny Orientace*, 3.10.2015, 22.

46 J. Pehe highlights Halík´s role as a public intellectual, J. Pehe, "Občanský aktivista a veřejný intelektuál", in *Máš před sebou všechny mé cesty: Sborník k 60. narozeninám Tomáše Halíka*, Praha, 2008, 253-254.

47 It should be mentioned that T. Halík even considered running for president but later rejected the idea in order to keep his profession as priest and professor, M. Kočí, "Halíkovo napětí mezi ano a ne prezidentské výzvě" [Halík's Tension between Yes and No to a Presidential Candidacy], *Česká pozice*, 18.8.2014, http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/forum/halikovo-napeti-mezi-ano-a-ne-prezidentske-vyzve.A140813_160536_pozice-forum_lube [25.7.2019].

the banner of the President has since the 1920s included the motto *Pravda vítězí* [Truth prevails], and during the critical days of 1989, for instance, Václav Havel adapted this into a famous phrase: *Pravda a láska musí zvítězit nad lží a nenávistí* [Truth and love must prevail over lies and hatred]. What seemed as a positive and deeply Christian call in early democratic years, however, soon became a bizarre tool for various hate campaigns within society; some people claiming it was too moralistic, others accusing supporters of being naïve; yet others believing this was only a means of hidden corruption interests. Opponents started to use a derogatory term for Václav Havel and his followers – "*pravdoláskař*" [a truth-and-love type], which has survived to these days and is meant to signify their naivety. A list of alleged "*pravdoláskař*" citizens was even created and updated by Adam B. Bartoš, a nationalist who proclaims himself a believer of Protestant origin.[48] This weird phenomenon may seem a sort of harmless rhetorical game; however, for our research it is important that parish-related people were soon listed there (Tomáš Halík, Jan Jandourek, Martin C. Putna, Marek Vácha, Petr Mucha),[49] and thus, positioned within certain intellectual and political circles.[50]

It is necessary to reject the notion that opponents to "*pravdoláskař*" deny the concept of truth and love in general, or that they deliberately promote lies and hatred, as it is sometimes jokingly suggested. It makes, however, a practical instrument in examining the political-ethical emphasis of the Academic Parish that refers directly to Václav Havel's legacy:

> In the post-totalitarian system, therefore, living within the truth has more than a mere existential dimension (returning humanity to its inherent nature), or a noetic dimension (revealing reality as it is), or a moral dimension (setting an example for others). It also has an unambiguous political dimension.[51]

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48 A. B. Bartoš, "CV: Bůh, vlast, rodina, " https://abbartos.wordpress.com/curriculum-vitae/ [5.7.2019].

49 A. B. Bartoš, "Pravdoláska 5.0", https://abbartos.wordpress.com/2013/05/25/pravdolaska-5-0-aktualizovany-seznam-pravdolaskaru-200-dalsich-jmen-celkem-700-pravdolaskaru/ [7.7.2019].

50 M. Vácha recently commented this topic, J. Leschtina, M. Vácha, "Marek Orko Vácha: Miloš Zeman hází hlubinné miny do podvědomí národa", *Aktuálně.cz*, 9.7.2019, https://nazory.aktualne.cz/rozhovory/marek-orko-vacha-milos-zeman-hazi-hlubinne-miny-do-podvedomi/r~8f0c4e74a16511e9b7740cc47ab5f122/ [6.10.2019].

51 V. Havel, *The Power of the Powerless*, Praha, 1978.

Václav Havel, a philosopher himself, promoted "living in truth" as the most important responsibility for both politicians and citizens alike. So, although he did not officially position himself within an established religion, Havel became a model for many Christians in times of persecution and later democratization; the Academic Parish of Prague therefore claims him as one of its ideological inspirations, as was summarized in a requiem ceremony by Tomáš Halík in 2011:

> The Gospel says that man is asked about his faith there. Not to his religious views and beliefs, but to the faith that can be read from the deeds as written in one of the New Testament epistles. Even in the lives of many who haven't lived in church pews and don't consider themselves religious believers, faith – which God appreciates the most – is present: life in truth.[52]

The relation between the sacral (parish) and social (politics), therefore, seems inseparable in the context of the Academic Parish. And although we have just noted that it is mainly parish priest Tomáš Halík who represents the most visible political voice, it is not solely his initiative but rather a characteristic of the parish community in general.

Politics

In public discourse, the parish representatives often take a clear stand when it comes to political situations with a problematic ethical dimension, as outlined earlier. I would like to illustrate this as regards the "Brady Case" when the Dalai Lama visited the Czech Republic in October 2016 and "living in truth" became an impulse for Tomáš Halík and the parish to get involved.

Before the Tibetan spiritual leader's visit, President Miloš Zeman allegedly threatened Daniel Herman, then Minister of Culture, that his uncle Jiří Brady – a Holocaust survivor – would not be given a state award as intended if Herman met the Dalai Lama in Prague. When Herman met the Dalai Lama despite the President's disapproval, the Presidential Office denied Jiří Brady had ever been on the laureates list. This situation proved embarrassing for the Presidential team and eventually ended up in their confusing specifications and put-offs regarding logistics, protocol, etc. Moreover, a few days later, fearful of the Chinese reaction,

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[52] T. Halík, "Víra Václava Havla", APP, http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/clanek/1440/promluva-tomase-halika-pri-rekviem-za-vaclava-havla-20-12--2011#.XR9yS-gzZPY [5.7.2019].

top Czech politicians – the President, the Prime Minister, the Head of the Lower House of Parliament, and the Head of the Senate – issued a statement distancing themselves officially from this meeting:

> As the highest Constitutional representatives of the Czech Republic, we wish to emphasize that our country in meeting its long-term policy towards the People's Republic of China is based on principles of strategic partnership between the two countries and the mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of the People's Republic of China, of which Tibet is a part. (…) The personal activities of some Czech politicians do not reflect changes in official Czech politics.[53]

In response, some politicians and public representatives decided against attending the ceremony and rather raised a Tibetan flag as a symbol of their disapproval with the President and his public office associating with China. The Academic Parish also raised the Tibetan flag, and Tomáš Halík supported his friend Daniel Herman[54] and the boycott in a public statement four days later:

> One cannot ignore the fact that Miloš Zeman has been, also judicially, convicted of lies several times. It is no longer possible to keep silent about his behavior, because silence would mean complicity in the constant turning of our country's helm away from Europe and the Western world, and the distrust of our allies, complicity in the betrayal of Václav Havel's moral and political legacy, in reducing our country's seriousness in the world damaging the moral climate of Czech society. It is not possible to pretend that nothing is happening. Against cowardice and indifference to evil in public life, civil responsibility and character strength need to be demonstrated in order to clearly show who stands for what… and what for a man and citizen actually is.[55]

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53 Prezident ČR, "Společné prohlášení nejvyšších ústavních činitelů České republiky" [Joint Statement by the Czech Republic´s Supreme Constitutional Officials], official website, 18.10.2016, https://www.hrad.cz/cs/pro-media/tiskove-zpravy/aktualni-tiskove-zpravy/spolecne-prohlaseni-nejvyssich-ustavnich-cinitelu-ceske-republiky-12953 [11.7.2019].

54 Daniel Herman, a former Catholic priest, is now in public service.

55 T. Halík, "Výzva k neúčasti", 22.10.2016, APP, http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/clanek/2160/vyzva-k-neucasti-na-letosnim-udelovani-statnich-vyznamenani#.XR-96yugzZPY [5.7.2019].

Similarly, Halík recently supported political demonstrations against Prime Minister Andrej Babiš in June 2019 for alleged fraud and conflicts of interest, claiming that there are certain times in history when "civil responsibilities cease to be merely a political measure of power, but they are given a spiritual and moral dimension:"

> We are not primarily here for Mr. Babiš and Mrs. Benešová [his newly appointed Minister of Justice]. We are here for ourselves. These meetings are an expression of our human dignity and civil responsibility. We are sending a clear message that we are not deaf, blind and dull, indifferent to what is happening around us, what is happening to our state and our Czech society.[56]

These cases illustrate strong involvement of Tomáš Halík in public and political discourse, and the parish seems to support its representative mainly by adhering to his speeches and presentations on the parish website. It is noteworthy that politics has recently caused major confrontations between Halík and the Archbishop of Prague, Cardinal Dominik Duka; once close friends as anti-communist dissidents, each man acknowledges having a different political worldview today.[57]

Art

Emphasis on art is another important communication channel from the Academic Parish towards society at large; by providing space to various artistic forms, such as visual art, film, performing arts, and music, the parish seems to attract people with high-quality standards. Constituting a team of volunteering experts in the "parish exhibit council," including Norbert Schmidt, Klára Jirsová, Pavla Pečinková, Petr Tej, Petr Vacík, Petr Neubert, Hana Rysová, and Martin Staněk; moreover, it emphasizes the importance of these activities.[58]

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56 T. Halík, "Pozdrav Tomáše Halíka účastníkům manifestací za svobodu a demokracii", 10.6.2019, APP, http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/clanek/2475/pozdrav-tomase-halika-ucastnikum-manifestaci-za-svobodu-a-demokracii#.XR-CsegzZPY [5.7.2019].

57 This conflict, as of November 2019, would be an appealing subject for further research in church studies, hierarchy, clericalism, globalization, dialog and pluralism. For its complexity, however, it is not possible to examine details here. Rather, I refer to the official website of the Archbishop of Prague and private website of Tomáš Halík for more details.

58 APP, "Umělecké intervence a výstavy", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/umelecke-intervence-a-vystavy [5.7.2019].

The annual *Popelec umělců* [Ash Wednesday of Artists], referring to a French tradition during World War I, promotes dialog between the worlds of art and faith. It takes place every year on the first day of Lent and provides a space for meditation and performances by musicians, poets, visual artists, and theater groups.[59] In 2019 it marked its 24th anniversary; it has since developed into a rather popular cultural event, sometimes broadcast on Czech public television.[60]

Visual interventions, modern performances that intervene traditional religious space, and various musical performances were recently presented by Norbert Schmidt in *Přímluva za současnost: Umění v sakrálním prostoru* [A Plea for the Present: Art in Sacral Space] edition tracking the most important artistic activities between 2009 and 2016, from contemporary authors, such as Václav Cigler, Eva Brodská, Václav Sokol, Adriena Šimotová, Jindřich Zeithamml, Stanislav Kolíbal, Magdalena Bartáková, Choi Jeonghwa, and Petr Nikl.[61] Some works were, for instance, installed during the liturgical period of Lent, traditional for its minimalistic decorations. The upper gallery of St. Salvátor Church is used for exhibits featuring authors, or, alternatively for the parishioners' works produced within the projects of *Fotomaraton* [Photomarathon] or *Salvátorský salon* [Salvator Salon].[62] The parish cooperates closely with *Centrum teologie a umění* [the Centre for Theology and Arts at the Catholic Theological Faculty] of Charles University in Prague. All exhibits offer free entry to general public; moreover, elementary and high schools are invited to guided tours during school days.[63]

Since 2011, *Filmový klub: Film a spirtualita* [Film Club: Film and Spirituality] has been organized in the municipal library under the supervision of film theorists Lukáš Jirsa and Petr Vacík from the Academic Parish of Prague. The film screenings for the general public are followed by an open floor; people can

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59 APP, "Popelec umělců", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/clanek/1727/popelce-umelcu#.XVwKtugzZPY [20.8.2019]. The parish website also provides audio, visual, and textual archive material of *Popelec umělců* between 1995 and 2019.

60 J. Brichcín, "Popelec umělců 2012", *Česká televize*, 22.2.2012, https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/ivysilani/10396756282-popelec-umelcu/21256221450/ [3.10.2019].

61 N. Schmidt, *Přímluva za současnost: Umění v sakrálním prostoru*, Praha, 2016.

62 The parish website lists major events since 2003, APP, "Archiv uměleckých intervencí" [Art Interventions´ Archive], http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/clanky/archiv-umeleckych-intervenci#obsah [20.8.2019].

63 APP, "Umělecké intervence a výstavy", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/umelecke-intervence-a-vystavy [5.7.2019].

discuss with Jirsa and Vacík, or a guest from the field. While Jirsa was a member of the Ecumenical Jury of the Karlovy Vary International Film Festival and now works for the Catholic television NOE, the screenings attract a wide audience. There have been 37 films with a spiritual theme presented so far, including *The Tree of Life* by Terrence Malick, *Avatar* by James Cameron, *Of Gods and Men* by Xavier Beauvois, *A Serious Man* by Joel and Ethan Coen, *Interstellar* by Christopher Nolan, *Psi Páně* by Jonáš Vacek, *Voyage of Time: Life's Journey* by Terrence Malick, and *L'Apparation* by Xavier Giannoli.[64] The film club seems to be a popular exchange platform at the edge of church and society; the screenings and debates afterwards are attended by two hundred people on average.[65]

2.2. Qualitative interviews: Acknowledgement and choice

Through my research I have been looking for respondents' motives that attracted them to a certain religious community; more specifically, I was asking why people choose the Academic Parish of Prague as their spiritual inspiration, when there are many other faith communities available. I followed grounded theory methodology in order to carry out empirical research: after designating the main research area, research design framework and interview guidelines, I did purposive sampling of parish members and carried out interviews with a sample of 11 people. Respondents were between 19 and 61 years of age, there was a proportional number of male and female respondents, and they represented various religious backgrounds, such as believers from childhood, converts to Christianity some time ago, and new converts or seekers, as well as current and recent parish members. In my later process of analysis, I followed the structure of open, axial and selective coding in order to examine my interview data qualitatively.[66]

Upon analysis of received data and review of existing theories, I eventually came to the concluding results that people choose the Academic Parish of Prague because it addresses their social, spiritual and intellectual needs seriously and relevantly, and treats people with respect. So, although my initial research ques-

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64 APP, "Film a spiritualita", http://www.farnostsalvator.cz/clanek/1973/film-&-spiritualita#.XR-rQ-gzZPY [5.7.2019].

65 Researcher, Personal archive.

66 Charmaz, *Constructing Grounded Theory.*

tion was asking for "spiritual inspiration," my research showed that spiritual need was only one of the "inspirations," and that people receive more of a comprehensive service from the parish than initially expected. The research results are visually outlined in the diagram "Choosing the parish" below:

Diagram "Choosing the parish"
(Diagram 11.6.2019/a)

It does not obviously mean that one single parish can satisfy all their needs in respective areas; it would not be possible anyway. It does seem, however, that respondents find the parish attractive for its ability to address key areas of their lives relevantly and specifically. So, while these aspects might be addressed differently, or not addressed at all in other parishes, here people benefit especially from recognition, respect and reflection: (1) Socially, people appreciate being recognized (recognition), (2) Spiritually, people appreciate being respected (respect), (3) Intellectually, people appreciate being challenged to reflect (reflection).

These results, based on empirical qualitative research of the Academic Parish, do not claim that other faith communities in Prague cannot provide similar gratification to their members. In this context, it is necessary to understand this research as an in-depth study of a particular parish community, however specific it might be, not a comparative study of any kind. Also, it should be clear that it is not a mere institutional study; in such case, much greater attention to the organization itself – its structures, mechanisms and visions – would be needed. Its main task, to investigate the motives that are bringing people to this particular parish, was only possible through careful application of qualitative research methods, namely the interviews with current and past parish members. The data received from the interviews thus created valuable material for my further analysis.

My research showed, for instance, that people do not choose a faith community only due to its objective variables (such as high quality, professionalism, fame, or accessibility) but also for its subjective variables (personal benefit, psychological and emotional satisfaction). It is therefore necessary to observe the motives and needs in a complex and complementary way. In the beginning, for example, I had to eliminate "spiritual gratification" from my question as I realized that people appreciated the comprehensive service the Academic Parish provides them on a social, spiritual and rational level. Unlike traditional images of a parish focusing primarily on people's social (community) and spiritual (belief) needs, the Academic Parish seems to address also a rational (knowledge) dimension. And although some respondents emphasized just two of aspects in various combinations (social and rational, social and spiritual, rational and spiritual), in general, receiving gratification in all three areas was crucial for choosing this parish.

I also noticed that people acknowledged being truly respected and accepted; in the parish they enjoy the atmosphere of dialog and pluralism usually described as openness, and tolerance – often relational and based on their direct experience with parish representatives and interpretation of parish activities. They reported getting very specific satisfaction in different areas.

In the social area, for instance, they enjoyed social recognition through other people: while from parish representatives they received confirmation and credit for being equal partners, from their peers they received affirmation through personal attention and generational identification. They felt recognized as worthy fellow parishioners, and as such, were able to socialize within the parish better. Here, I would also include emotional and psychological satisfaction, as people reported on the community atmosphere and acceptance they experience there.

In the spiritual area, they valued a spiritual respect that was exercised through a sensitive and non-invasion approach to their inner life. They felt trust, and respect for their spiritual experience, without any pressure to take part in visible forms of parish life, such as participation at liturgy or groups that may not suit them.

In the rational area, they appreciated the intellectual challenge and stimulation that the parish provided them. They enjoyed having intellectual freedom to question their faith, as well as the openness in communication about it; some emphasized, for instance, that logical reasoning was a new and important part of their faith refection. They felt being recognized as partners despite not always having the same knowledge and experience as others.

In this regard, there were only minor differences between believers and converts, so it did not seem appropriate to differentiate between the two groups in my research. Initially, when considering a concept of "conversion" to be a central code, I thought the topic of conversion would be elaborated more. As my research developed, I omitted “conversion” from the central focus for two reasons. First, I did not have enough evidence in my data; and second, it seemed such a large and specific theme itself that I would need to direct my further research in this direction, which I eventually did not. Rather, I stayed with a concept of choice and its motives, which seemed more universal.

In the beginning, parishioners did not necessarily look for any specific social, psychological, spiritual or intellectual affirmation – although they may later enjoy some social acceptance, spiritual approval and intellectual agreement within the parish. People rather search for a safe space where their possible questions, uncertainties and challenges are treated seriously, and thus people can eventually grow in the respective areas freely. I identified this general approach as “acknowledgement” for two different reasons. First, it includes the values of “recognition,” “respect” and “reflection” discussed above; and second, it refers to “knowledge,” a very important part of parish life. Moreover, it addresses also psychological and emotional satisfaction with the parish, which was not elaborated separately for its ambiguous character but is rather viewed as part of “social recognition” in my model. See the diagram “Acknowledgement” below:

Diagram “Acknowledgement” (12.6.2019)

To sum up, my research started with “Why-this-choice” as a key research question, and soon I identified properties of “Community-social,” “Belief-spiritual,” and “Knowledge-rational” as partial answers in my analysis. This model was later specified with “Why-this-choice” as the main research question and “Social recognition,” “Spiritual respect,” and “Rational reflection” as respective partial answers (“Choosing the parish” Diagram 11.6.2019/a). The final analysis of research results eventually remodeled the “Why-this-choice” question into an “Acknowledgment” answer (“Acknowledgement” Diagram 12.6.2019). To conclude, it can be stated that people choose the Academic Parish because it acknowledges their social, spiritual and intellectual needs seriously and relevantly and, moreover, addresses people with respect. In addition to receiving necessary social recognition and spiritual respect in the parish, people are inspired to reflect freely upon issues of faith and society there – and by doing so – grow in all three areas accordingly.

3. Theological reflection

Although the supply-demand model may seem irrelevant in religion, a debate has been running for some time, and studies show that people in urban and pluralistic societies choose their faith community regardless of their residence and place of origin.[67] A traditional model of local parishes has been challenged especially in urban areas, where people tend to choose a community according to their specific needs: they opt for family-friendly parishes, particular spirituality oriented communities, ethnic- or language-minority parishes, and various chaplaincies. This is a major pastoral concern for the church – how to communicate its offer to people, both believers and non-believers, who see religious affiliation as somewhat optional and deliberate. In highly secular countries – the Czech Republic is known for its low level of religious affiliation – this question seems especially timely.[68]

As two major forms of pastoral ministry are acknowledged in the Catholic church – parishes and chaplaincies – I have long been struggling with appropriate contextualization of the Academic Parish of Prague during my research.

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[67] R. Stark, S. Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion*, New Brunswick, 1996; R. Finke, R. Stark, "Religious Choice and Competition", American Sociologial Review, 1998, G. Davie, *Religion in Britain Since 1945: Believeing Without Belonging*, Oxford, 1994.

[68] D. Hamplová suggests that church-going may serve as a rather stabile indicator for religious practice. She operates with the International Social Survey Program conducted between 1993 and 2008, which indicates about 10% of the population attending church monthly in the Czech Republic, D. Hamplová, *Náboženství v české společnosti na prahu 3. tisíciletí*, Praha, 2013, 17-19. In 2018, the Pew Research Center indicated 11% visiting monthly, specifying that 8% of adults are "highly religious" in the country, J. Evans and C. Baronavski, "How Do European Countries Differ in Religious Commitment?" Pew Research Center, 5.12.2018, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/05/how-do-european-countries-differ-in-religious-commitment/ [4.10.2019].

Technically and literally, it is a typical parish community with a church building, fixed sacramental schedule, and appointed parish priest. People come here – to church property – deliberately; their initiative is expected within the community. Moreover, it is qualified as a “personal parish,” meaning that its services are primarily for students and staff of local universities, not for a general neighborhood public.

A chaplaincy, on the other hand, is characterized as a field ministry; chaplains come to people into their specific space, their particular life-situation, be it in on a street, in a hospital, school, prison, etc. People are offered the service directly or indirectly through respective institution or other means of communication. Participants are free to receive the offer or not, but their choice is usually limited by space, time and specific life-situation.[69] In this sense, the Academic Parish cannot be labeled as a chaplaincy per se.

Rather, its position seems somewhat in between. It takes forms of both, parish life and chaplaincy ministry, trying to identify its specifics and respond to them in an accessible manner. The German term “kategoriale Seelsorge” seems relatively apt in this context and was more or less adopted into Czech language as “kategoriální pastorace.” However, the literal English translation, “categorial pastoral ministry,” sounds rather strange, and so “chaplaincy” or “special ministry” is used instead. So, although I have decided – on the stated reasons – to position the Academic Parish within parish studies, its special role needs to be taken into consideration when discussing pastoral specifics.

3.1. Functions of the church

The general church carries out its mission through particular church communities; in dioceses, it is mostly represented by parishes and other communities.[70] In its original sense, the Latin *parochia* and Greek *paroikia* signified living alongside others; the term emphasized a community of Christians sharing the same space: *parochial* terminology has been in use since the 6th century to describe a community of Christians in a particular region.[71]

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69 M. Sellmann, C. Wolanski, *Milieusensible Pastoral: Praxiserfahrungen als kirchlichen Organisationen*, Würzburg, 2013.

70 EG 28-29.

71 W. J. Rademacher, J. S. Weber, D. McNeill, *Understanding Today´s Catholic Parish*, New London, 2007, 5. E. Górecki points out that administrative role of parishes was es-

Today, special ministry provides an apostolate in settings different from traditional local parishes. It usually has either a field form – chaplaincies in health institutions, prisons, the army; or a based form – personal parishes of language, profession, etc.[72] These parishes, although different from territorial parishes in jurisdiction, yet seem to carry a form and structure of the previous models for the lack of specific theological and practical grounding. For this very reason, I keep a theological realm of parish studies in my research of the Academic Parish of Prague; yet, being aware of certain terminological and theological disproportion and ambiguity it may create from time to time, I refer to this fact in respective parts. And despite being conditioned by some specifics, still personal parishes – in the era of virtual social media – carry the positives of traditional parishes as outlined by Karl Rahner: they "gather together in one and the same place" and "localize concretization of the general Church."[73] John Paul Vandenakker observes, for instance, that Vatican II did not discuss parish systematically or in detail:

> The word *paroecia* (parish) is found on 22 occasions, the word *parochus* (parish priest) is found on 19, and the word *paroecialis* (parochial) is found on another 10. However, there are a variety of other expressions which are also used to designate the parish. These include: local assembly of the faithful (*congregation localis fidelium*); assembly of the faithful (*congregation fidelium*); local community (*communitas localis*); cell of the diocese (*cellula diocesis*); ecclesiastical family (*familia ecclesiastica*); and so forth.[74]

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pecially developed during the Habsburg period in Central Europe, and thus, needed new impulses how to deal with modernization and urbanization of 19th century, E. Górecki, *Církev se uskutečňuje ve farnosti*, Olomouc, 1996, 15.

72 T. O. Bruce, *Parish and Place: Making Room for Diversity in the American Catholic Church*, New York, 2017.

73 K. Rahner, "Theology of the Parish", in H. Rahner (ed.), *The Parish: From Theology to Practice*, Westminster, 1958, 28-29, cit. J. P. Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities and the Parish*, Kansas City, 1994, 31.

74 Vandenakker, *Small Christian Communities*, 50. Similarly, T. van Zavrel examines that both terminology and consistency vary from text to text. In *Sacrosanctum concilium*, for instance, there is "parish," while in *Lumen gentium*, there is "community," T. van Zavrel, "Pojetí farnosti po druhém vatikánském koncilu", MA thesis, Praha, 2010, 9. E. Górecki outlines that different texts tried to formulate its characteristics and mission in their respective language. *Sacrosanctum concilium,* for instance, speaks of a group

Studying parishes today seems as a rather complex and interdisciplinary task – as the parish may represent sociological, theological and juridical phenomena. In order to examine my topic theologically – the goal of this section – I will therefore limit my research to theological understanding and challenges that parishes face today.

Since the Second Vatican Council, systematic study of church life has been developing in order to describe models, roles and functions of the church in modern society.[75] Markus Lehner emphasizes there are two basic models in understanding activities of the church and they are rather independent from each other as the first describes roles and the second practical functions of the church. The threefold office of Christ is based on the image of Jesus Christ as priest, prophet, and king; therefore, the church carries out his mission in teaching, sacral and pastoral service.[76] This model is accompanied by another approach; four basic functions of the church connect traditional church practices into a systematic and clear model: martyria (witnessing faith), liturgia (celebrating faith), diakonia (serving others), and koinonia (sharing with others).[77] This theological systematization is derived from the biblical image of Jesus Christ: Jesus proclaiming the

of believers arranged under the guidance of a shepherd, who represents the bishop (SC 42); *Christus Dominus* about the designated part of the diocese in which care of souls is entrusted to a shepherd under leadership of the bishop (CD 30); and *Apostolicam actuositatem* about the visible apostolate in society (AA 10). Moreover, the parish has a chance to become a true ecclesial community if its members feel a sense of belonging to a parish community (SC 42). Her spiritual climate is to point out that she is "the family of God´s brothers revived by the spirit of unity" (LG 28) and "a family, fraternal and hospitable home (CL 26), Górecki, *Církev se uskutečňuje ve farnosti,* 8.

75 A. Dulles, for instance, introduces church as institution, mystical communion, sacrament, herald, servant, and community of disciples in 1974; A. Dulles, *The Models of the Church*, New York, 2002.

76 *Lumen gentium* 10, 12, 36 and *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 783-786.

77 M. Lehner, "Das Bett des Prokrustes: Systematisierungsversuche in der Pastoraltheologie", Orientierung, 4, 1994, 41. Lehner claims adaptation from K. Rahner´s list of basic functions: Gospel proclamation, cult celebration, providing sacraments, juridical life of the church, Christian life in general, and charity, as first outlined in Rahner´s *Die Grundfunktionen der Kirche*. In this text I keep terminology martyria, liturgia, diakonia, and koinonia rather than their Greek origins or updated English translations; it is more applicable to pastoral context of this research.

Gospel (martyria), praying to God (liturgia), serving others (diakonia), and living in community (koinonia).

So, although theology made various attempts to phrase it differently – Paul M. Zulehner, for instance, suggested *mystika/koinonia/diakonia* trilogy[78] and Pavel Ambros elaborated *kerygma-martyria/liturgia/diakonia* trilogy[79] – a fourfold model is recognized as rather comprehensive and illustrative in church studies today.[80] To understand and define my topic as much as possible, I decided to work with the fourfold framework to capture all possible areas affected.

Vatican II outlined that local churches (parishes, communities) actually make a diocese – the basic administrative unit of the church – real and vital; in practice, these communities exercise a mission giving the church its validity: service to God (liturgia), witness (martyria), and service to others (diakonia).[81] Every structure of the church, from diocese, to parish, to religious community, is therefore invited to adopt these functions in accordance with its charisma and capacity. I would like to examine now how this call was embodied in studied example.

3.2. Parish conceptualization by Tomáš Halík

The parish priest Tomáš Halík proposed an interpretation, after 27 years of service in the parish, outlining his vision of the Academic Parish of Prague in the "Tajemství Nejsvětějšího Salvátora" [A Mystery of St. Salvátor] article in *Katolický týdeník* [Catholic Weekly] in 2017. It seems to correspond aptly with general concepts of martyria, liturgia, diakonia, and koinonia without ever mentioning the terms. While emphasizing the specific charisma of his community, Halík says that the parish needs to develop three areas of Christian existence symmetrically: religious education, spiritual life, and civil engagement. In this context, I suggest that martyria is pronounced as religious education by Halík:

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78 P. M. Zulehner, *Pastoraltheologie: Band 2 Gemeindepastoral, Orte christlicher Praxis*, Düsseldorf, 1995, 83-127. With "Rahnerian mysticism" (K. Rahner, *Praxis des Glaubens*, Benzinger, 1982), Zulehner wants to emphasize personal spiritual experience rather than formal liturgical forms.

79 P. Ambros, *Základní služby církve v české sekulární společnosti*, Olomouc, 2013.

80 Lehner, "Das Bett des Prokrustes", 41. See also K. Rahner, "Die Grundfunktionen der Kirche" in F. X. Arnold, et al. (eds.), *Handbuch der Pastoraltheologie*, Freiburg, 1964.

81 P. Neuner, P. M. Zulehner, *Přijď království tvé: Praktické učení o církvi*, Praha, 2015, 122.

> Provide a thorough religious education that enables creative dialogue with contemporary philosophy, science and culture. Through sermons, lectures and discussions it develops courage to think about one's faith.[82]

Liturgia, in its general sense of exercising faith in God, is proposed as promoting spiritual life by Halík:

> Bring young people into the depth of personal spiritual life, into the art of meditating; spiritually will accompany individuals with patience, provide space not only for the sacrament of reconciliation but also for spiritual talks and counseling.[83]

Diakonia, service to people, is portrayed as active Christian participation in the social and political life of pluralistic society:

> The third dimension is Christian civil engagement, the ability to oppose populism, arrogance and demagogy in public life. Instead of conformism and servility, we want to support courage in relating to power critically, to have a soberly critical relationship to information on social networks and to the mood of the public, not to be afraid to be a non-conformist minority, to "read signs of the times" with forethought.[84]

Koinonia, community life, is not outlined as a function or mission by Halík; rather, he proposes that an informal team – clerics and laity – constitutes a primary instrument for doing all the work:

> Salvátor is no longer a "one-man-show:" the mystery of its vitality lies in the teamwork of a number of dedicated collaborators and several special boards.[85]

Interestingly, the communitarian function of the parish seems somewhat instrumentalized in the text; the author acknowledges the importance of the group in their common work, their effort to serve others and society; however, it seems to neglect the relational dimension of the congregation and its members. I pro-

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82 T. Halík, "Tajemství Nejsvětějšího Salvátora", *Katolický týdeník*, 38, 2017, 4.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid.

pose a diagram (Diagram "Tomáš Halík´s concept of APP") combining both approaches, general functions of the church and their specific application in the Academic Parish of Prague:

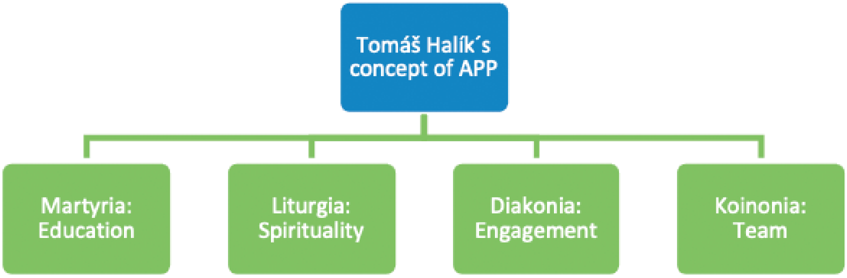

Diagram "Tomáš Halík´s concept of APP" (11.7.2019)

It seems this concept has evolved over time in the service and pastoral care of the parish. There was not a clear model to start this kind of specific pastoral work after the fall of communism, so Tomáš Halík – the first and so far the only parish priest – has naturally shaped the community according to his personal visions and emphases, regardless of how communicated they were or were not with his colleagues. If we examine the particular areas closely, therefore, we may see that some functions are stronger than others; they often take a different shape than in other parishes, and sometimes do not harmonize with other church organizations and hierarchy fully; however, we also see that the parish often demonstrates a greater understating for people and themes that are not addressed elsewhere.

It has been observed, for instance, that the parish does not aim at people from academia exclusively. Blanka, the respondent from the opening paragraph, for instance, is a forty-two-year-old woman who is neither a student, nor working at the university. The "academic" in the name of this community seems rather as a mission statement – a deliberate openness and communication with people who seek reason and reflection on their spiritual way. Most members should not be viewed as intellectuals and scholars, but rather as demanding critical thinkers in general. It has also been noticed that the congregation is attended by Christians and non-Christians alike, so perhaps a focus-group can be defined more broadly than is it usual in a parish ministry.

To conclude, the empirical research showed earlier, that people demand a holistic approach in pastoral care; they indicated satisfaction with a threefold model when their body (community), mind (knowledge) and soul (belief) were receiving certain social, intellectual and spiritual inspiration. This demand seems rather timely in a global and pluralistic society wherein the Christian community can be seen as a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. Parishes and chaplaincies are not to care for the soul only, rather they need to look after all aspects of an individual, "Sorge um den ganzen Menschen," as Rainer Bucher argues.[86] Theological reflection identified the four functions of the church as more or less working pastoral model which is, to some degree, trying to meet people's demand for spirituality and community. Still, it seems that tendencies to individualization (on the part of people) and to determination (on the part of the church) are noticeable and call for a further theological and psychological re-definition of Christian communities today.

4. Conclusion

So what is the spirit of the Academic Parish of Prague, which a parishioner holds as attractive in the opening quote? What is the specific character of this congregation that can be perceived as prosperous and attractive for people today?

It was observed that Tomáš Halík's concept of a parish community with a strong emphasis on education, spirituality, and engagement seems to correspond closely with data from qualitative interviews, when people demonstrated a need for intellectual reflection, spiritual respect and social recognition. Research data indicated a strong compatibility between the parish offer (document-based research) and expectations of people (qualitative interviews), and suggested that the Academic Parish of Prague interpreted its specific mission – addressing urban, educated and critically thinking people – relevantly and authentically (theological reflection).

Moreover, the parish was identified as a spiritual pit stop for a certain period of one's life – it has a temporary function; people come, learn, and get inspired but eventually continue on their way. It is definitely not a cradle-to-grave place where they would be destined to spend rest of their lives but quite the opposite: from the very beginning, they sense they will have to leave the community one

[86] R. Bucher, "Die pastorale Konstitution der Kirche. Was soll Kirche eigentlich?" in R. Bucher (ed.), *Die Provokation der Krise. Zwölf Fragen und Antworten zur Lage der Kirche*, Würzburg, 2004, 37.

day. Interestingly, this makes the situation more serious and significant in their eyes. This temporality – with its positives and negatives – seems somewhat common to specific pastoral practice in general: people are addressed in their milieu in a special period of their lives. Without a guarantee of any long-term affiliation, the power and influence of church communities decreases radically – a model that may appeal to people but worry religious organizations.

Yet further steps need to be taken to specify if and how a successful pastoral experience of one particular community can be shared and, possibly, passed on other congregations of a similar character. It should also be clearly identified what pastoral forms cannot be copied or relocated to other groups for their distinct character and personal charisma. The personality of parish leadership, clerical and lay, deserves a closer psychological and social examination – again with the perspective of transferability and eligibility of a particular case.

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ZUR KOLLEGIALITÄT DES BISCHOFSAMTES IM LICHTE DER COMMUNIO-EKKLESIOLOGIE DES ZWEITEN VATIKANISCHEN KONZILS

János Vik[1]

Abstract: The collegiality of the episcopate was a particular concern of the Second Vatican Council. Consequently, ordination always integrates the individual bishop into the college of bishops, so that the episcopal authority conferred on him personally can only be exercised as a member of this college. Through the exercise of the collegiality of the bishops, the synodality of the churches is also expressed. In this context, it can be stated that for centuries the universal Church understood itself as a community of the many local churches of equal theological rank, which were in communion with one another. In the first three centuries, the primacy of Rome in the communion was much more strongly connected with the entire Roman community and not with a person or an office. In the West, a new form of ecclesiastical self-understanding and self-realization established itself in the fifth century, in which the bishop of Rome with his office increasingly detached himself from his own church.

This ultimately led to the development of a centralised papal church, which was predominant in the second millennium. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Pope has once again been seen primarily as the bishop of a local church, and only from there as the bearer of primacy, and therefore he remains visibly and concretely inserted into the collegiality of the bishops in the service of the synodality of the churches.

Keywords: communion, Second Vatican Council, communio ecclesiarum, episcopate, College of Bishops, collegiality, church, papal primacy, synodality of the churches, Lumen gentium.

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1. Die Bedeutung des Bischofsamtes und seiner kollegialen Verfasstheit für die Ortskirchen als Subjekte und für die „communio ecclesiarum“

Das Ineinander von Gesamtkirche und Teilkirche (Ortskirche) bzw. das Strukturprinzip der „communio ecclesiarum“ und das Subjektsein der einzelnen Ortskirchen in ihrer Verbindung mit den anderen Kirchen[2] spiegelt sich auf der Ebene der Bischöfe wieder. Diese stehen ihrer Ortskirche vor und repräsentieren sie. Ein Bischof wird also geweiht, um seinerseits im Dienst an seiner Ortskirche zu sein, andererseits aber um Glied des Bischofskollegiums zu sein. Die Bischöfe, die einen Bischof weihen, repräsentieren die Kollegialität, die universale Gemeinschaft.[3] Der Bischof erscheint immer als „*das vermittelnde Band zwischen Kirchen als Subjekten*“.[4] Seine Aufgabe ist es, seine Kirche gegenüber allen anderen Kirchen und die Gesamtkirche in seiner eigenen zu repräsentieren; er ist das bindende Glied zu den anderen Kirchen (Kollegialität) und zu der Kirche der Apostel (Sukzession[5]). Der Bischof steht also in der Kirche, zugleich aber auch ihr gegenüber. Das Amt des Bischofs bringt zum Ausdruck, dass „keine Kirche autonom sein kann: Die einzelne Ortskirche ist wirklich Subjekt; sie verwirklicht sich in einer notwendigen Verbindung mit den anderen Ortskirchen, um so ihre eigene Identität zu finden“.[6]

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2 Vgl. dazu J. Vik, *Das Subjektsein der Kirchen im Kontext einer trinitarischen Communio-Ekklesiologie,* Studia Theologia Catholica Latina, 2020/1, 78–90, DOI: 10.24193/theol.cath.latina.2020.LXV.1.05.

3 Y. Congar, *Die Wesenseigenschaften der Kirche,* in: J. Feiner, M. Löhrer (Hrsg.) Mysterium Salutis. Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik, Bd. IV/1, Einsiedeln 1972, 357–599, hier 403.

4 H. M. Legrand, *Die Entwicklung der Kirchen als verantwortliche Subjekte: Eine Anfrage an das II. Vatikanum,* in: G. Alberigo, Y. Congar, H. J. Pottmeyer (Hrsg.), Kirche im Wandel. Eine kritische Zwischenbilanz nach dem Zweiten Vatikanum, Düsseldorf 1982, 141–174, hier 157.

5 Mit H. M. Legrand muss allerdings in diesem Zusammenhang gesagt werden, dass die apostolische Sukzession immer Sukzession in einer bestimmten Kirche ist, die den Glauben bezeugt, und nicht nur eine Sukzession von Amtsinhabern. Diese Vorstellung zeigt ihrerseits, dass sich eine bestimmte Kirche als Subjekt zeigt, wo sie den Glauben bekennt, und ihren von Gott erwählten und durch die Handauflegung der Nachbarbischöfe geweihten Bischof, als den, der an ihrer Spitze steht, aktiv annimmt. Die Ortskirche ist also Subjekt im Bereich des Glaubens, aber nur in Wechselbeziehung mit ihrem Bischof. Vgl. Legrand, *Die Entwicklung der Kirchen als verantwortliche Subjekte,* 156.

6 Legrand, *Die Entwicklung der Kirchen als verantwortliche Subjekte,* 157.

Die Bedeutung des Bischofs bzw. der Bischöfe für das katholische Ortskirchenverständnis und für eine Theologie der „communio ecclesiarum" wird von der Kirchenkonstitution „Lumen gentium" ausdrücklich festgelegt:

> „Die kollegiale Einheit tritt auch in den wechselseitigen Beziehungen der einzelnen Bischöfe zu den Teilkirchen wie zur Gesamtkirche in Erscheinung (...) Die Einzelbischöfe (...) sind sichtbares Prinzip und Fundament der Einheit in ihren Teilkirchen, die nach dem Bild der Gesamtkirche gestaltet sind. In ihnen und aus ihnen besteht die eine und einzige katholische Kirche. Daher stellen die Einzelbischöfe je ihre Kirche, alle zusammen aber in Einheit mit dem Papst die ganze Kirche im Band des Friedens, der Liebe und der Einheit dar."[7]

Im Sinn der Konzilsdokumente ist also die Kirche als „ein Netz von Ortskirchen" zu betrachten, „die untereinander eine »communio« bilden, geeint durch ein geistliches und institutionelles Band".[8]

Die kollegiale Verfasstheit des Bischofsamtes herauszustellen[9], war dabei ein besonderes Anliegen des Konzils. Das Bischofsamt ist nämlich sowohl christo-

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7 LG 23. An einer anderen Stelle von „Lumen gentium" heißt es von der Ortskirchen bzw. von der Kirche Jesu Christi noch genauer: „Diese Kirche Christi ist wahrhaft in allen rechtmäßigen Ortsgemeinschaften der Gläubigen anwesend, die in der Verbundenheit mit ihren Hirten im Neuen Testament auch selbst Kirchen heißen. Sie sind nämlich je an ihrem Ort, im Heiligen Geist und mit großer Zuversicht (vgl. 1Thess 1,5), das von Gott gerufene neue Volk. In ihnen werden durch die Verkündigung der Frohbotschaft Christi die Gläubigen versammelt, in ihnen wird das Mysterium des Herrenmahls begangen, »auf dass durch Speise und Blut des Herrn die ganze Bruderschaft verbunden werde«. In jedweder Altargemeinschaft erscheint unter dem heiligen Dienstamt des Bischofs das Symbol jener Liebe und jener »Einheit des mystischen Leibes, ohne die es kein Heil geben kann«." (LG 26).

8 H. Döring, *Die Wiederentdeckung der Ortskirche in der katholischen Ekklesiologie,* Orthodoxes Forum 2 (1988), 239–257, hier 252. Im Anschluss an H. Döring wird die vom Bischof geleitete Ortskirche auch in dieser Arbeit als Ortskirche im primären Sinn betrachtet; die Pfarrgemeinde ist Ortskirche im sekundären Sinn; alle Zusammenfassungen von Kirchen sind demgegenüber als Ortskirchen im tertiären Sinn gemeint (z. B. Bischofskonferenzen, Patriarchate, Sprachraumkirchen). Vgl. Döring, *Die Wiederentdeckung der Ortskirche,* 252f.

9 Vgl. vor allem LG 21–23. In diesem Zusammenhang sei verwiesen auf: K. Rahner, *Kommentar zu LG 18–27,* in: LThK. Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil, Bd. I, Freiburg 1966, 210–246; vor allem 217–234.

logisch als auch pneumatologisch im Pfingstereignis begründet. Das heißt, die ganze bischöfliche Vollmacht wird in Analogie zu den Aposteln unmittelbar von Jesus Christus und seiner Geistverleihung abgeleitet.[10] Wie aber Jesus die Apostel nur als „Kollegium" berufen und mit Vollmacht ausgesandt hat, so kann auch das bischöfliche Amt seiner „Natur nach nur in der hierarchischen Gemeinschaft mit Haupt und Gliedern des Kollegiums ausgeübt werden".[11] Die Weihe gliedert also den einzelnen Bischof immer schon in das Kollegium der Bischöfe ein, so dass seine ihm persönlich verliehene bischöfliche Vollmacht ihm nur als Glied dieses Kollegiums zukommt. Dementsprechend werden die persönliche Bevollmächtigung zum Bischof einer Ortskirche und die kollegiale Einbindung in das universalkirchliche Leitungsorgan gleichursprünglich in der Weihe vollzogen, so dass sie sich gegenseitig bedingen.[12] Für den ursprünglich kollegialen Charakter des Bischofsamtes wird neben der biblischen Begründung auf die altkirchliche Communio-Praxis, auf das Zusammentreten von Konzilien und auf die kollegial vollzogene Weiheliturgie verwiesen.[13] Die kollegiale Verfasstheit des Bischofsamtes hat also ihren Grund nicht nur in der Kollegialität des Apostelkreises, sondern ist der Ausdruck der „communio ecclesiarum", die „im handlungsfähigen Bischofskollegium die ihr entsprechende Wirkstruktur innerhalb der Kirchenleitung erhält".[14]

Schließlich findet durch die Ausübung der Kollegialität der Bischöfe die Synodalität der Kirchen ihren Ausdruck, die ihrerseits ebenfalls im Pfingstgeschehen begründet wird.[15] Der Pfingstgeist selbst ist nämlich „die Ursache für

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10 Vgl. LG 21. Das Konzil sieht die bischöfliche Vollmacht, die das dreifache Amt der Heiligung, der Lehre und der Leitung einschließt, in der Bischofsweihe begründet, in der die „Fülle des Weihesakramentes" (LG 21) übertragen wird. Damit wird die traditionelle Unterscheidung zwischen der in der Weihe verliehenen „potestas ordinis" und der durch den Papst verliehenen „potestas iurisdictionis" aufgehoben.

11 LG 21.

12 Rahner, *Kommentar zu LG 18–27,* 225.

13 Vgl. LG 22.

14 H. J. Pottmeyer, *Der eine Geist als Prinzip der Einheit der Kirche in Vielfalt. Auswege aus einer christomonistischen Ekklesiologie,* in: PThI 18 (1985), 253–284, hier 274.

15 Das II. Vatikanum bemühte sich zu sehr um ein ausgeglichenes Verhältnis zwischen Primat und Episkopat, verknüpfte aber weniger gut die Kollegialität der Bischöfe mit der Synodalität der Kirchen. Der Ursprung der Synoden lässt sich deshalb nur vermuten: H. M. Legrand meint, dass sie auf jeden Fall Bischofsversammlungen gewesen sind, selbst wenn

die Verschiedenartigkeit der Kirchen und ihre Berufung zur Kommunikation miteinander".[16] Das Dekret über die Missionstätigkeit der Kirche „Ad gentes" bezeichnet den Pfingsttag als den Tag, an dem „die Vereinigung der Völker in der Katholizität des Glaubens vorausbezeichnet [wurde], die sich durch die Kirche des neuen Bundes vollziehen soll, welche in allen Sprachen spricht, in der Liebe alle Sprachen versteht und umfängt und so die babylonische Zerstreuung überwindet".[17] Der Heilige Geist also, der „ohne Zweifel (...) schon in der Welt [wirkte], ehe Christus verherrlicht wurde" und der am Pfingsttag auf die Jünger herabgekommen ist, „um auf immer bei ihnen zu bleiben",[18] ist „das tiefste Einheitsprinzip"[19] der Mannigfaltigkeit der Kirchen und begründet ihre Synodalität: Er macht aus ihnen Kirchen, die Subjekte sind.

2. Der Primat der Kirche von Rom im Kontext der Beziehungen zwischen Kirchen mit Subjektcharakter

Im Zusammenhang mit dem katholischen Verständnis der Subjektwerdung der Ortskirche in ihrer Verbindung mit den anderen Kirchen und der damit in einen inneren Zusammenhang gebrachten strukturellen Form der „communio

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sie auch andere Mitglieder hatten; denn „ihre strukturelle Position in der Kirche machte aus den Bischöfen allein schon wegen ihrer Weihe bevorzugte Vertreter und Zeugen des Glaubens ihrer Kirchen". (LEGRAND, *Die Entwicklung der Kirchen als verantwortliche Subjekte,* 164). LG 22 verweist auf die überlieferte synodale und konziliare Praxis der Kirche. Nach H. J. Pottmeyer verstand sich das II. Vatikanum „wie die Konzilien der Alten Kirche als ein pfingstliches Ereignis." (POTTMEYER, *Der eine Geist,* 275).

16 POTTMEYER, *Der eine Geist,* 163.

17 AG 4.

18 AG 4.

19 CONGAR, *Die Wesenseigenschaften der Kirche,* 406. Congar führt diesen Gedanken folgendermaßen aus: „Doch das tiefste Einheitsprinzip, kraft dessen wir wirklich die Teile eines einzigen Ganzen sind, bildet nicht bloß eine spezifische Einheit, ein Prinzip der Vereinigung auf Grund der Ähnlichkeit, sondern ist ein persönliches, lebendiges Prinzip: der Heilige Geist (...) Er ist der letzte Antrieb zur Communio und Ordner der Communio; durch das jedem innewohnende Prinzip der Liebe macht er die Christen geneigt, sich nicht als Monaden zu benehmen, sondern einander nahe zu sein und einander zu dienen, wie es den Gliedern *eines* Leibes entspricht". (CONGAR, *Die Wesenseigenschaften der Kirche,* 406).

ecclesiarum“ müssen die Beziehung der Ortskirchen zum römischen Primat, sowie die Frage, inwieweit die römisch-katholische Konzeption des Primats mit einer konsequent durchgezogenen Ekklesiologie der Ortskirchen vereinbar ist, unausweichlich thematisiert werden. Zunächst ist mit Y. Congar festzustellen, dass es „eine auf der Heiligen Schrift gründende Tradition“ gibt, die „in der Petrusfunktion, deren Erbe der Sitz von Rom ist, den Hauptbestandteil einer ökumenischen Struktur der Kirche als Universalkirche erblickt“.[20] Auch das II. Vatikanum, auf dem die anderen Glaubensgemeinschaften als Kirchen bzw. kirchliche Gemeinschaften bezeichnet werden,[21] bringt zum Ausdruck, dass die Kirche, deren Leitung Christus Petrus und den anderen Aposteln übertragen hat, in der Kirche „subsistiert“ (verwirklicht ist), die vom Nachfolger des Petrus und den mit ihm in Gemeinschaft stehenden Bischöfen geleitet wird.[22]

2.1. Das II. Vatikanum und der päpstliche Primat im Kontext bischöflicher Kollegialität

Das I. Vatikanum hatte einseitig die Subjekthaftigkeit der Kirche in Gestalt der souveränen Entscheidungsvollmacht des Papstes betont. Demgegenüber bezieht das II. Vatikanum die Bischöfe, Priester und Laien in das Subjektsein der Kirche mit ein. Das bedeutet auf der strukturellen Ebene, dass der päpstliche Primat vom II. Vatikanum im Kontext der bischöflichen Kollegialität gesehen wird. Das Bischofskollegium, das sich – ebenso wie das Petrusamt – unmittelbar von Jesus Christus herleitet, ist als Nachfolger des Apostelkollegiums auch „Träger der höchsten und vollen Gewalt über die ganze Kirche“.[23] Diese höchste Vollmacht in der Kirche kommt also dem Bischofskollegium nicht vom Papst her zu, als würde das Kollegium an der höchsten Vollmacht des notwendig zu ihm gehörenden Papstes teilhaben. Vielmehr steht die höchste kollegiale Vollmacht in gleicher Unmittelbarkeit zu Jesus Christus wie die primatiale Vollmacht. „Lumen gentium“ betont diesbezüglich, dass das Kollegium seine Vollmacht nur „in Gemeinschaft mit dem Bischof von Rom, dem Nachfolger Petri, als seinem Haupt, und unbeschadet dessen primatialer Gewalt über alle Hirten

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20 Congar, *Die Wesenseigenschaften der Kirche,* 401.

21 Vgl. LG 15; UR 19; GS 40; AG 15.

22 Vgl. LG 8.

23 LG 22.

und Gläubigen“[24] ausüben kann. Innerhalb der Vielfalt und Universalität des Gottesvolkes, die vom Kollegium der Bischöfe dargestellt wird,[25] ist der Bischof von Rom das „sichtbare Prinzip und Fundament für die Einheit der Vielheit der Bischöfe und Gläubigen“.[26]

Aufgrund dieser Aussagen des Konzils kann man allerdings den Eindruck gewinnen, als gäbe es zwei Subjekte der höchsten Gewalt in der Kirche: Das Bischofskollegium mit dem Papst auf der einen Seite und den Papst ohne Bischofskollegium auf der anderen Seite. Der eigentlichen Aussageabsicht von „Lumen gentium“ scheint aber die These von K. Rahner näherzuliegen. Nach seiner Auffassung gibt es „nur *ein* Subjekt der höchsten Kirchengewalt: das unter dem Papst als seinem primatialen Haupt verfasste Kollegium“.[27] Das bedeutet nicht, dass der Papst für sich allein diese Leitungsvollmacht in der Kirche nicht ausüben kann. Wen er aber „für sich (...) allein“[28] handelt bzw. entscheidet, kann er das nicht sozusagen als Privatperson, losgelöst von der Kirche und dem Bischofskollegium tun. Vielmehr soll damit ausgedrückt werden, dass der Papst als Haupt des Bischofskollegiums von der obersten Vollmacht in der Kirche auch in einem persönlich-individuellen Akt Gebrauch machen kann. „Das streng *eine* kollegiale Subjekt der höchsten Gewalt in der Kirche also – entsprechend seiner inneren Struktur – zwei Handlungsweisen: durch den Papst »allein« als sein primatiales Haupt und durch einen eigentlichen actus stricte collegialis.“[29]

Insofern macht M. Kehl mit Recht die aufschlussreiche Feststellung, dass „*jeder* wirklich primatiale Akt des Papstes (ob ausdrücklich kollegial oder persönlich »für sich« gesetzt) mit innerer, theologischer Notwendigkeit (...) in die Communio der Kirche und in das Kollegium der Bischöfe“ integriert ist.[30] „Lumen gentium“ hebt in den Kapiteln 21–23 also nicht auf eine äußere Opposition zwischen Bischofskollegium und Papst ab, auch nicht auf eine rechtliche Unabhängigkeit des Kollegiums vom Papst, sondern auf „die innere theologische Zu-

24 LG 22.
25 Vgl. LG 22.
26 LG 23.
27 Rahner, *Kommentar zu LG 18–27,* 228.
28 Nota explicativa praevia 3.
29 Rahner, *Kommentar zu LG 18–27,* 229.
30 M. Kehl, *Die Kirche: eine katholische Ekklesiologie,* Würzburg 1992, 375.

ordnung (eben die »Communio«) von beiden Formen der obersten Vollmacht".[31] In Verbindung mit der höchsten Gewalt und ihrer Ausübung in der Kirche muss zusammenfassend und folgerichtig noch einmal nachdrücklich geltend gemacht werden:

> „Es gibt (...) in der Kirche gleichursprünglich die kollegiale wie die primatiale Form der höchsten Vollmacht; sie können beide nur miteinander ausgeübt werden (...) Will man (...) die Primatsaussagen des I. Vatikanums und die Kollegialitätsaussagen des 2. Vatikanums nicht ohne jede innere theologische Verbindung einfach aneinander-reihen, kommt man gar nicht umhin, die Gleichursprünglichkeit und damit die wechselseitige Verwiesenheit beider Weisen der höchsten Vollmacht zu betonen."[32]

2.2. Der Primat des Bischofs von Rom in seiner Zuordnung zum Primat der römischen Kirche

Fragt man angesichts einer Communio-Ekklesiologie und der konziliaren „Wiederentdeckung" der Kirche, die ihrem Wesen nach eine Communio von Teil-/Ortskirchen, eine „communio ecclesiarum" ist, konkret nach der Stellung bzw. nach der Rolle und nach der Bedeutung des Bischofs von Rom innerhalb des communialen Beziehungsgefüges dieser nun wieder in ihrer Subjekthaftigkeit betrachteten Kirchen, so muss man wohl die Communio-Praxis der ersten christlichen Jahrhunderte, die „communio ecclesiarum" der Patristik, zu Rate ziehen.[33]

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31 M. Kehl, *Die Kirche,* 375, Anm. 78. Im Zusammenhang mit der „Nota explicativa praevia" (der Erläuterung zum Kapitel 3 von „Lumen gentium"), die möglichen Missverständnisse bezüglich der höchsten Leitungsvollmacht in der Kirche vorbeugen will, kommentiert M. Kehl: „Dass in der Erläuterung fast nur die unaufhebbare Bindung des Bischofskollegiums an den Papst und nicht umgekehrt die unaufhebbare Bindung des Papstes an das Bischofskollegium genauso stark hervorgehoben wird, ist eine bedauerliche Einseitigkeit, die der Gesamtaussage des 3. Kapitels von LG so nicht gerecht wird." (M. Kehl, *Die Kirche,* 375, Anm. 78).

32 M. Kehl, *Die Kirche,* 374.

33 Eine ausführliche Untersuchung der ursprünglichen Stellung der römischen Ortskirche und ihres Bischofs innerhalb der „communio ecclesiarum", wie des altkirchlichen Petrusamtes bzw. seiner Entwicklung im Wandel der Geschichte würde über den Rahmen

In diesem Zusammenhang kann festgehalten werden, dass die universale Kirche sich über Jahrhunderte hindurch als Gemeinschaft der vielen, theologisch gleichrangigen Ortskirchen verstand, die miteinander in Kommuniongemeinschaft standen. Bestimmte Ortskirchen nahmen bei der Bewahrung der Tradition und bei der Stiftung des Friedens und der Einheit in der Communio eine bestimmte Funktion wahr. Der Vollzug der kirchlichen Communio hatte also in der frühkirchlichen Zeit seinen „Einheits-, Angel- und Orientierungspunkt in einer regionalen Hauptkirche mit ihrem Primas“.[34] Die Herausbildung dieser Hauptkirchen führte dann zu einem sogenannten „Patriarchatssystem“[35], wobei einige regionale Hauptkirchen zu Patriarchatssitzen wurden. Indem man in Communio mit einer Hauptkirche stand, vergewisserte man sich des rechten Glaubens und der Gemeinschaft mit der ganzen Kirche. Die regionalen Hauptkirchen waren mit ihrem synodal regierenden Primas die „Kristallisationspunkte kirchlicher Communio“.[36] Die „communio ecclesiarum“ vollzog sich also ursprünglich als Communio von „Schwesterkirchen“,[37] wobei mit „Schwesterkirchen“ Gemeinschaften von Ortskirchen gemeint sind, die als „regionale Kircheneinheiten“[38] miteinander in Communio treten.

Neben regionalen Hauptkirchen, wie Alexandrien, Antiochien und später Konstantinopel und Jerusalem spielte die Kirche von Rom für die Verwirklichung der Communio schon früh eine spezifische Rolle. Der Grund dafür war zunächst ihr einzigartiger apostolischer Ursprung: Man war davon überzeugt,

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dieses Aufsatzes hinausgehen. Dazu sei hier lediglich auf die Literaturliste bei M. Kehl, *Die Kirche,* 324, Anm. 13 verwiesen.

34 G. Greshake, *Zentralismus oder Communio der Kirchen?,* in: J. Weismayer, U. Struppe (Hrsg.), Öffnung zum Heute: Die Kirche nach dem Konzil, Innsbruck 1991, 31–53, hier 42. Bei der Herausbildung solcher regionalen Hauptkirchen und ihres Vorrangs spielte die apostolische Herkunft bestimmter Kirchen eine große Rolle, außerdem aber auch die politische Bedeutung einer Stadt, ihre zentrale geographische Lage sowie die Tatsache, dass eine Kirche das Zentrum der Missionstätigkeit für ein bestimmtes Gebiet war und so zur Mutterkirche einer ganzen Region wurde. Hinzu kamen die persönliche Autorität großer Bischofsgestalten, die Zahl der Gläubigen, aber auch die theologische Kompetenz bestimmter Kirchen. (Vgl. Greshake, *Zentralismus oder Communio der Kirchen?,* 42).

35 Döring, *Die Wiederentdeckung der Ortskirche,* 254.

36 Greshake, *Zentralismus oder Communio der Kirchen?,* 43.

37 UR 14.

38 Greshake, *Zentralismus oder Communio der Kirchen?,* 44.

dass „das mit dem Leben besiegelte Glaubenszeugnis der Apostel [Petrus und Paulus] gleichsam unzerstörbar im Glauben der römischen Gemeinde gegenwärtig bleibt".[39] Die Vorrangstellung Roms in der Communio war allerdings in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten viel stärker mit der gesamten römischen Gemeinde und nicht mit einer Person bzw. einem Amt verbunden. Mit der konstantinischen Wende und infolge innerkirchlicher theologischer Auseinandersetzungen wuchs später aber die Einsicht, dass „im Bischof von Rom der besondere Einheitsdienst des Petrus weitergeht".[40] Rom wurde auf diese Weise allmählich zum Zentrum der universalen Communio, das in Notsituationen, die man regional nicht lösen konnte, Hilfe zur Einheit leistete. Dabei erwartete man noch keineswegs eine rechtlich verbindliche Entscheidung von Rom, sondern vielmehr „eine geistlich-moralische Unterstützung".[41] Auf alle Fälle war die Communio mit Rom ein wichtiges und entscheidendes Kriterium der rechtmäßigen Gemeinschaft der Kirchen (der „communio ecclesiarum"), die sich aber primär „sowohl innerhalb der mehr oder minder autonomen regionalhauptkirchlichen Verbände (Patriarchate usw.), als auch zwischen mehr oder minder autonomen regionalen Hauptkirchen mit ihrem jeweiligen Primas" verwirklichte.[42]

Im Westen etablierte sich im fünften Jahrhundert eine neue Form kirchlichen Selbstverständnisses und Selbstvollzugs, in der sich der Bischof von Rom, „seine potestas immer mehr von der Petrusnachfolge ableitend [verstanden als Leitungsvollmacht über die ganze Kirche], mit seinem Amt zunehmend von seiner eigenen Kirche löste".[43] Diese führte letzten Endes zur Herausbildung einer zentralistischen Papstkirche, die im 2. Jahrtausend vorherrschend war. Gewiss ist diese Entwicklung von vielen Faktoren beeinflusst worden.[44] Ihr Hauptgrund bestand aber darin – so G. Greshake –, dass „die Hauptkirche Rom nicht mehr zu unterscheiden wusste zwischen ihrer universalkirchlichen Aufgabe, letztes

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39 M. Kehl, *Die Kirche,* 328.

40 Greshake, *Zentralismus oder Communio der Kirchen?,* 44.

41 M. Kehl, *Die Kirche,* 330.

42 Greshake, *Zentralismus oder Communio der Kirchen?,* 45. Vgl. auch M. Kehl, *Die Kirche,* 328f.

43 Döring, *Die Wiederentdeckung der Ortskirche,* 254.

44 Vgl. dazu M. Kehl, *Die Kirche,* 331f.

Fundament und Herz der *Communio* zu sein, und ihrer nur für den Westen geltenden patriarchalen, also regionalkirchlichen Funktion".[45]

Dass durch das II. Vatikanum das Bild einer rein juridisch-zentralistischen Kirche, in der der Papst als das einzige Subjekt der Kirche galt, aufgebrochen wurde, und dass das Konzil an die communiale Kirchenstruktur, die „communio ecclesiarum" der Patristik anknüpfte, in der jede rechtmäßige Ortskirche ihr Subjektsein in der Communio wahrnahm, dürfte heute von niemandem in Frage gestellt werden: Die eine katholische Kirche ist nicht einfach ein uniformistisches Gebilde, eine in sich geschlossene Pyramide, an deren Spitze der Papst steht. Vielmehr ist die katholische Kirche eine Gemeinschaft der vielen Ortskirchen. So heißt es in „Lumen gentium":

> „Darum gibt es auch in der kirchlichen Gemeinschaft zu Recht Teilkirchen, die sich eigener Überlieferungen erfreuen, unbeschadet des Primats des Stuhles Petri, welcher der gesamten Liebesgemeinschaft vorsteht, die rechtmäßigen Verschiedenheiten schützt und zugleich darüber wacht, dass die Besonderheiten der Einheit nicht nur nicht schaden, sondern ihr vielmehr dienen. Daher bestehen schließlich zwischen den verschiedenen Teilen der Kirche die Bande einer innigen Gemeinschaft der geistigen Güter, der apostolischen Arbeiter und der zeitlichen Hilfsmittel."[46]

Wenn man also den Papst in erster Linie als Bischof einer Ortskirche sieht, die Subjekt ist, und nur von daher als Träger des Primats, dann bleibt er sichtbar und konkret eingefügt in die Kollegialität der Bischöfe im Dienst der Synodalität der Kirchen. Wenn ferner der Bischof nach der Konzeption des II. Vatikanums Zeichen und Werkzeug der Einheit seiner Kirche ist und zugleich – als Mitglied des Bischofskollegiums – Zeichen und Werkzeug der Communio zwischen den Kirchen, dann ist der Bischof von Rom, der Nachfolger Petri, als Haupt des Kollegiums der Bischöfe „Zeichen und Instrument der Einheit des Bischofskollegiums und damit der Einheit der Gesamtkirche".[47] So lassen sich auch von hier aus eine wechselseitige Verwiesenheit und ein Aufeinander-Hingeordnetsein zwischen

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45 Greshake, *Zentralismus oder Communio der Kirchen?,* 45. Diese Entwicklung erreichte ihren Höhepunkt darin, dass der Papst die Weltkirche als eine einzige Diözese ansah, deren Bischof er war; die Ortsbischöfe hatten dabei nur als Kapläne dieser Diözese zu gelten.

46 LG 13.

47 Greshake, *Zentralismus oder Communio der Kirchen?,* 38.

dem bischöflichen und dem päpstlichen Amt erkennen: „Der Episkopat bedarf des Dienstes des Einheit des Hauptes, damit der einzelne Bischof und dessen Kirche nicht in Glaube, Gottesdienst und Diakonie isoliert und aus dem Katholischen herausfällt. Aber das Papstamt bedarf des Episkopats, um selbst in das Kommunikationsnetz der Kirche eingebunden zu sein und nicht die Fülle des Katholischen zugunsten einer uniformen Gleichtönigkeit und zentralistischen Verarmung zu verlieren."[48]

Das I. Vatikanum räumt dem Papst das Recht ein, immer dann allein zu handeln, wenn er glaubt, es kraft seines Amtes tun zu müssen.[49] Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil betätigt zwar die Lehre der Jurisdiktionsprimat, rückt sie aber durch das Wiederaufgreifen der altkirchlichen Lehre von der Kirche als „communio ecclesiarum", d. h. von der Kollegialität des Bischofsamtes, wieder ins Gleichgewicht. Das bedeutet, dass das Konzil die Notwendigkeit eines „einsamen" päpstlichen Handelns nicht absolut ausschließt. Und wenn man mit H. Döring bedenkt, dass der Auftrag des Papstes im Sinne der Communio der Kirchen und des Aufeinanderbezogenseins zwischen Primat und Episkopat eigentlich in „Verständigung, Ausgleich von Spannungen, Mehrung der christlichen Freude, Bauen von Brücken usw." bestünde, dann ist leicht zu verstehen, dass für diesen Dienst auch eine entsprechende Ausübungsweise der Autorität notwendig ist, „müsste der Primatsträger doch als der erste Zeuge der Wahrheit mit repräsentativen Charakter den Glauben auch mit Verbindlichkeit aussagen dürfen, müsste er im Verein mit den Ortskirchen für die gesamte kirchliche Gemeinschaft in schwieriger Lage auch eine verbindliche Sprachregelung treffen können."[50]

Damit aber dieser notwendige Dienst des Bischofs von Rom am Miteinander der vielen Ortskirchen, an der Einheit der „communio ecclesiarum", von allen Kirchen erkannt und anerkannt wird, bedarf es einer größeren „Autonomie der Kirchen im Rahmen eines legitimen Pluralismus".[51] Das II. Vatikanum hat in dieser Richtung die entscheidenden, auch für das ökumenische Gespräch notwendigen Weichen gestellt, indem es im Blick auf die ostkirchlichen Patriarchate formuliert:

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48 Greshake, *Zentralismus oder Communio der Kirchen?,* 39.

49 Zur Frage des Jurisdiktionsprimats des Papstes und der Unfehlbarkeit des päpstlichen Lehramtes auf dem I. Vatikanum vgl. DS 3059–3064 und DS 3065–3075.

50 Döring, *Die Wiederentdeckung der Ortskirche,* 255.

51 Döring, *Die Wiederentdeckung der Ortskirche,* 256.

> „Dank der göttlichen Vorsehung aber sind die verschiedenen Kirchen, die an verschiedenen Orten von den Aposteln und ihren Nachfolgern eingerichtet worden sind, im Lauf der Zeit zu einer Anzahl von organisch verbundenen Gemeinschaften zusammengewachsen. Sie erfreuen sich unbeschadet der Einheit des Glaubens und der einen göttlichen Verfassung der Gesamtkirche ihrer eigenen Disziplin, eines eigenen liturgischen Brauches und eines theologischen und geistlichen Erbes. Darunter haben vorzüglich gewisse alte Patriarchatskirchen wie Stammmütter des Glaubens andere Kirchen sozusagen als Töchter geboren, mit denen sie durch ein engeres Liebesband im sakramentalen Leben und in der gegenseitigen Achtung von Rechten und Pflichten bis auf unsere Zeiten verbunden sind. Diese einträchtige Vielfalt der Ortskirchen zeigt in besonders hellem Licht die Katholizität der ungeteilten Kirchen."[52]

In diesem Zusammenhang muss allerdings mit O. Saier im Anschluss an K. Mörsdorf angemerkt werden, dass die Verwirklichung der kirchlichen Communio durch relativ autonome Regionalkirchen nicht nur für die ostkirchlichen Patriarchate gilt. Vielmehr ist sie „gleichwohl für die ganze Kirche verbindlich und stellt eine Norm mit verfassungsrechtlichem Rang für die Kirche zu jeder Zeit dar".[53]

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52 LG 23.

53 O. Saier, *„Communio" in der Lehre des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils,* München 1973, 174.

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BUCHREZENSION: WILHELM DANCĂ, ȘI *CRED, ȘI GÂNDESC. VIITORUL UNUI DIALOG CONTROVERSAT. PREFAȚĂ DE VITTORIO POSSENTI. EDIȚIA A DOUA, REVIZUITĂ ȘI ADĂUGITĂ* [UND ICH GLAUBE, UND ICH DENKE. DIE ZUKUNFT EINES KONTROVERSEN DIALOGS. VORWORT VON VITTORIO POSSENTI. ZWEITE, ÜBERARBEITETE UND ERGÄNZTE AUFLAGE], EDITURA SPANDUGINO, BUCUREȘTI 2021, ISBN 978-606-8944-59-3

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Es ist eine große Seltenheit, dass auf dem Gebiet der rumänisch-sprachigen theologischen Fachliteratur eine Publikation erscheint, die ganz bewusst das Verhältnis zwischen Glauben und Vernunft behandelt. Der römisch-katholische Theologe und Philosoph, Wilhelm Dancă, gehört mit seiner Monografie gewiss zu dieser seltenen Erscheinung in Rumänien. Der Wert dieses Werkes zeigt sich zunächst einmal schon darin, dass es nach 2014, nun im Jahre 2021 die zweite, überarbeitete und ergänzte Auflage erlebt. Der Verfasser – Jahrgang 1959 –, der sowohl in Philosophie als auch in Theologie habilitiert ist, wirkt als Professor für systematische Theologie und für Philosophie an der Universität von Bukarest. Darüber hinaus ist er als katholischer Priester auch in der Seelsorge tätig.

Die Tatsache, dass Wilhelm Dancă sich nicht nur in der akademischen Welt der Lehre und Forschung kompetent bewegt, sondern auch die Freuden und Nöten der Christinnen und Christen konkreter Pfarrgemeinden kennt, erklärt glaubhaft seine Intention, sein Werk einem breiten Publikum zugänglich machen zu wollen. In diesem Sinne behält er seinen präzisen, aber zugleich persönlichen und zur Interaktivität einladenden Schreibstil konsequent bis zum Schluss bei. Dancă sammelt und strukturiert in diesem Buch Aufsätze und Vorträge, die er zwischen 2008–2012 im Ausland, oder in Rumänien gehalten hat, und hält beim Schreiben vor allem jene Leserinnen und Leser vor Augen, die „den Mut gehabt

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haben, eine religiöse Wahl in ihrem Leben zu treffen, und dadurch einer modischen Lebenskonzeption, oder einem solchen Lebensstil getrotzt haben." (S. 11).

In einigen der Kapitel legt der Verfasser das Verhältnis zwischen Glauben und Vernunft im Kontext epistemologischer und historischer Grundsätze dar, in anderen Kapiteln nimmt er gleichwohl konkrete Beispiele dieses Verhältnisses in den Blick, und appelliert dabei an das Leben und Werk von bekannten Persönlichkeiten aus der Welt der Philosophie, Theologie und Kirche: Mircea Eliade, Thomas von Aquin, Vladimir Ghika, Antonio Rosmini, Battista Mondin, Anton Durcovici, Tomáš Špidlík. Dabei gliedert der Verfasser sein Werk in drei Teilen, die dem Grundduktus der Darlegung des komplexen Verhältnisses zwischen Glauben und Vernunft klar folgen, können jedoch auch unabhängig voneinander gelesen werden: I. Glaube und Religion, II. Glaube und Vernunft, III. Glaube und Bildung.

Wie es schon im Untertitel des Buches – „Die Zukunft eines kontroversen Dialogs" – angedeutet wird, plädiert Wilhelm Dancă für den bleibend nötigen Dialog zwischen Glauben und Vernunft, der sich nicht nur auf der persönlichen Ebene des gedachten und gelebten Glaubens, sondern gleichwohl auch auf der Ebene des Dialogs zwischen der Theologie als Glaubenswissenschaft und der Natur-, Human- und Sozialwissenschaften konkretisiert. Der Verfasser erteilt dadurch der weiterhin gängigen Auffassung eine Absage, der Glaube und die Vernunft, bzw. die Theologie und die anderen Wissenschaften stünden entweder miteinander im Konflikt, oder seien voneinander gänzlich unabhängig. In diesem Zusammenhang zeigt sich auch die hohe Aktualität dieses Werkes. Denn gerade in Rumänien, wo die stark traditionalistisch ausgeprägte christliche Religiosität der Mehrheitsbevölkerung sogar die politischen Alltagsentscheidungen beeinflussen kann, haben 2021 die bizarrsten Verschwörungstheorien im Kontext der Corona-Pandemie einen starken Einfluss auf die Meinungsbildung der Menschen.

Für Wilhelm Dancă, den Verfasser dieses Werkes, der seine Ausführungen voll und ganz in den Kontext der Enzyklika *Fides et ratio* von Papst Johannes Paul II. stellt, steht es jedoch außer Frage, dass „der Mensch auf seinem Weg zu Gott, sowohl den Glauben als auch die Vernunft braucht. Durch den Dialog mit dem Glauben weitet sich die menschliche Vernunft, ja, sie wird dadurch bereichert. (...) Durch den Dialog mit der Vernunft reinigt sich der Glaube des Menschen von einer aggressiven Irrationalität, von dem krankhaften Mythologischen, vom Fundamentalismus; dadurch wird der Mensch authentischer, klarer und karitativer". (S. 12). Dancă verfolgt in diesem Sinne die einschlägige Absicht, die Rationalität des Glaubens, oder präziser formuliert, die Rationalität des glaubenden Menschen mit Argumenten zu untermauern. Deshalb kann diese Arbeit dem Fachbereich der Fundamentaltheologie zugeordnet werden. Denn gerade in der Fundamentaltheologie geht man einerseits vom Verständnis der Offenbarung als frei geschenkte Selbstmitteilung Gottes aus, und andererseits von der Annahme des Glaubens als freie Antwort des Menschen auf Gottes Selbstmitteilung. (S. 40–41).

Im Kontext der Frage „Glaube und Vernunft in den drei monotheistischen Religionen" nimmt der Verfasser das ganzheitliche Wohl der menschlichen Person als jenes Kriterium in den Blick, aufgrund dessen der Unterschied zwischen einem authentischen und einem unauthentischen bzw. inszenierten Glauben herausgestellt werden kann. (S. 46). Am Akt des authentischen Glaubens nimmt also der ganze Mensch in seiner Ganzheitlichkeit teil, denn er ist Intelligenz, Wille und Gefühl zugleich. In dieser Hinsicht sind die zwei Seiten des authentischen Glaubens miteinander untrennbar verbunden: Bei der subjektiven Seite geht es um den Glauben als einen Akt des Vertrauens *(fides qua creditur)*; bei der objektiven Seite tritt hingegen der begrifflich zum Ausdruck gebrachten Inhalt des Glaubens in den Vordergrund *(fides quae creditur).* (S. 45–46).

Wilhelm Dancă ruft schon im Vorwort seines Werkes in Erinnerung, dass er stets die geistige und spirituelle Bildung seiner Leserschaft und Hörerschaft vor Augen gehalten hat. In dieser Hinsicht ist es nur verständlich, dass er den dritten Teil dieser seiner Schrift gänzlich unter bildungsrationale Gesichtspunkte stellt. Demzufolge analysiert er hier überaus aktuelle gesellschaftsrelevante Themen an der Schnittstelle zwischen Theologie, Politik- und Wirtschaftswissenschaft, wie folgt: „Vernunft, Glaube und Bildung auf der Suche nach dem Gemeinwohl" (S. 311–352); „Die Beziehungen zwischen Kirche und Staat" (S. 353–382); „Kirche und Politik. Über das Engagement von Laienchristen in der Politik" (S. 383–397); „Der Mensch und die Wirtschaft. Personalistische Korrektur der Marktwirtschaft" (S. 398–419).

Das letzte Kapitel und den Epilog widmet der Verfasser den Themen „Vernunft und Gebet" (S. 420–445) und „Das Gebet zerstört Ideologien. Über die Kraft des Betens" (S. 449–476). Sein Ziel besteht in diesem Zusammenhang einerseits darin, die Rationalität des betenden Menschen herauszustellen, andererseits bietet er im Epilog selbst „eine spirituelle Lektüre der Geschehnisse vom Dezember 1989". Denn der Fall der kommunistischen Diktatur in Rumänien hat etwas auch mit der Kraft und der inneren Freiheit der betenden Menschen zu tun gehabt – so die Überzeugung nicht nur des Verfassers, sondern auch der Überlebenden der kommunistischen Gefängnisse. Der Schlusssatz bringt all das prägnant auf den Punkt: „*Invictus homo orans!* Unbesiegt bleibt der betende Mensch!“

Wer der rumänischen Sprache mächtig ist und dem christlichen Glauben in der eigenen Lebensführung einen wichtigen Platz einräumt, wird beim Lesen dieses Buches – das lässt sich wohl begründet zum Schluss feststellen – viel Freude erfahren. Schon rein optisch ist das Buch – dank der qualitätsvollen Arbeit des Verlags „Editura Spandugino“ – eine überaus angenehme Erscheinung. Inhaltlich gelingt es dem Verfasser, die Leserinnen und Leser einerseits auf dem Weg des denkenden bzw. vernünftigen Glaubens ein Stück weit überaus kompetent und persönlich engagiert zu begleiten. Andererseits haben die Leserinnen und Leser auch die Chance, zur Erfahrung dessen hingeführt zu werden, dass der tiefste Sinn des Nachdenkens über den Glauben darin besteht, die Kraft des vertrauenden Glaubens (neu) zu entdecken.