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Editors' Foreword

At first glance, the present issue of *Studia Universitatis Babeş–Bolyai, Theologia Reformata Transylvanica* may appear remarkably diverse. The studies take us across different historical periods, geographical settings, and academic disciplines: from the memory of ancient Jerusalem to the history of the Korean ecumenical movement and from the historical traumas of Central Europe to the question of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda. Despite the diversity of topics, however, the contributions are connected by a common question: how do the experiences of the past continue to live on in the memory of individuals and communities, and what paths may lead towards healing or reconciliation?

The authors approach this broad field of inquiry through different methods and perspectives. Some examine the relationship between memory and identity through the interpretation of biblical texts, while others explore the possibilities of reconciliation through the analysis of historical events or ecclesiastical processes. Several studies also demonstrate that coming to terms with the wounds of the past is not merely a task for historians or social scientists but a theological challenge as well.

As a reader, I was also surprised by the many different contexts in which the question of memory emerges throughout this volume. The biblical interpretation of the trauma of the Babylonian exile, the legacy of the Beneš Decrees, the ecclesiastical experiences of the communist period, and the processes of healing within Rwandan society all remind us that the past never remains simply in the past. It continues to live on in our communities, institutions, and ways of thinking, often shaping the decisions we make in the present.

Several studies are devoted to questions of ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. These contributions do not present an idealized picture of the possibilities of Christian unity; rather, they reveal its historical difficulties, conflicts, and achievements. Examples

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of dialogue among Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, and other Christian traditions remind us that mutual understanding is rarely the result of spectacular events. It is much more often a long process requiring patience and self-criticism. Several contributions in this issue are related to questions raised during the international conference *Healing of Memories*, held at the Faculty of Reformed Teacher Education and Music of Babeș–Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca between 21 and 23 September 2025.

Alongside historical and social questions, the volume also addresses themes that are directly connected to personal human experience. The relationship between trauma and spiritual care, theological interpretations of serious illness, and psychological perspectives on intimate relationships all remind us that theology ultimately deals not with abstract concepts but with people – people who carry losses, seek answers, and strive to find hope in different situations of life.

It is a particular pleasure for us that the contributors to this volume come from several countries and represent different ecclesiastical traditions. Their work is a fine example of the openness and commitment to scholarly dialogue that our journal regards as a fundamental value.

It is the hope of the editorial board that these studies will not only enrich scholarly discussion with new insights but also invite readers into dialogue. The volume raises a number of questions that extend far beyond the narrower field of theology: how do we remember, how do we relate to the legacy of the past, and what responsibility do we bear for one another in a diverse and often divided world?

The Editorial Team

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Szerkesztői köszöntő

A *Studia Universitatis Babeş–Bolyai, Theologia Reformata Transylvanica* jelen száma első pillantásra rendkívül sokszínűnek tűnhet. A tanulmányok különböző korokba, földrajzi terekbe és tudományterületekre vezetnek el bennünket: az ókori Jeruzsálem emlékezetétől a koreai ökumenikus mozgalom történetéig, a közép-európai történelmi traumáktól a ruandai népirtás utáni megbékélés kérdéséig. A témák változatossága ellenére az írásokat mégis összeköti egy közös kérdés: miként élnek tovább a múlt tapasztalatai az egyének és közösségek emlékezetében, és milyen utak vezethetnek a gyógyulás vagy a kiengesztelődés felé.

A szerzők eltérő módszerekkel és eltérő nézőpontokból közelítenek ehhez a problémakörhöz. Van, aki bibliai szövegek értelmezésén keresztül vizsgálja az emlékezet és az identitás kapcsolatát, mások történelmi események vagy egyházi folyamatok elemzésével keresik a megbékélés lehetőségeit. Több tanulmány arra is rámutat, hogy a múlt sebeinek feldolgozása nem csupán történészi vagy társadalomtudományi feladat, hanem teológiai kihívás is.

Engem olvasóként is meglepett, hogy az emlékezet kérdése milyen sokféle összefüggésben bukkan fel a kötet tanulmányaiban. A babiloni fogság traumájának bibliai feldolgozása, a Beneš-dekrétumok utóélete, a kommunista időszak egyházi tapasztalatai vagy éppen a ruandai társadalom gyógyulási folyamatai mind arra emlékeztetnek bennünket, hogy a múlt soha nem marad pusztán múlt, hanem tovább él közösségeinkben, intézményeinkben, gondolkodásunkban, s gyakran a jelen döntéseit is alakítja.

Több tanulmány is az ökumené és a vallásközi párbeszéd kérdései köré szerveződik. Ezek az írások nem idealizált képet rajzolnak a keresztény egység lehetőségeiről, hanem bemutatják annak történelmi nehézségeit, konfliktusait és eredményeit is. Az ortodox,

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katolikus, protestáns és más keresztény hagyományok közötti párbeszéd példái arra figyelmeztetnek, hogy a kölcsönös megértés ritkán látványos események eredménye, így sokkal inkább hosszú, türelmet és önkritikát igénylő folyamat. E szám több tanulmánya a 2025. szeptember 21–23. között Kolozsváron a BBTE Református Tanárképző és Zeneművészeti Karon tartott *Healing of Memories* nemzetközi konferencia során felvetett kérdésekhez kapcsolódik.

A történelmi és társadalmi kérdések mellett a kötet olyan témákat is tárgyal, amelyek közvetlenül kapcsolódnak az ember személyes tapasztalataihoz. A trauma és a lelkigondozás összefüggései, a súlyos betegség teológiai értelmezése vagy a párkapcsolati működés pszichológiai kérdései mind arra hívják fel a figyelmet, hogy a teológia végső soron nem elvont fogalmakkal, hanem emberekkel foglalkozik. Olyan emberekkel, akik veszteségeket hordoznak, válaszokat keresnek, és reményt próbálnak találni életük különböző helyzeteiben.

Külön öröm számunkra, hogy a kötet szerzői több országból és különböző egyházi hagyományokból érkeznek. Munkáik jól példázzák azt a nyitottságot és tudományos párbeszédkészséget, amelyet folyóiratunk alapvető értéknek tekint.

Szerkesztőségünk reménye szerint e tanulmányok nemcsak új eredményekkel gazdagítják a szakmai diskurzust, hanem az olvasót is párbeszédre hívják. A kötet számos olyan kérdést vet fel, amelyek messze túlmutatnak a teológia szűkebb területén: hogyan emlékezünk, miként viszonyulunk a múlt örökségéhez, és milyen felelősséget hordozunk egymás iránt egy sokszínű és megosztott világban.

A szerkesztők

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Lilla EKMEKCIOGLU[1]:

Interpreting Disability in the Old Testament – A Hermeneutical Analysis of Inclusion and Moral Interpretation

Abstract.

This study examines the representation of disability in the Old Testament and its influence on later theological and cultural interpretations. Employing a qualitative, hermeneutical, and context-sensitive approach, it analyses narrative, legal, cultic, prophetic, and wisdom texts that refer to physical, sensory, and cognitive impairments. Particular attention is given to the literary diversity of the biblical corpus and to the ancient Near Eastern context, in which no unified concept of "disability" existed. The study systematically identifies and classifies relevant passages, highlighting the multiple layers of meaning through which bodily difference is articulated. The findings demonstrate that the Old Testament presents disability in diverse and often overlapping ways, including descriptive accounts of human vulnerability and aging, identity-forming experiences associated with divine encounter, ethical imperatives emphasizing communal responsibility, and metaphorical expressions of spiritual insensitivity or disobedience. Legal and narrative traditions frequently foreground protection, inclusion, and care, positioning persons with impairments within broader categories of social vulnerability rather than as objects of moral condemnation. At the same time, certain cultic regulations introduce restrictions

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tied to ritual roles, reflecting symbolic notions of holiness rather than comprehensive social exclusion. Although some covenantal curse texts and disciplinary narratives portray impairment as a form of divine punishment, these instances are contextually bounded and serve specific rhetorical and theological purposes. They do not constitute a consistent or dominant biblical doctrine of disability. Overall, the study argues that the moral model linking disability with sin and punishment emerges primarily from later interpretive traditions, rather than from the internal logic of the Old Testament texts themselves, which instead reflect a plurality of perspectives shaped by genre, context, and theological intent.

Keywords: disability, Bible, Old Testament, social and cultural perception, moral model

Introduction

The significance of the biblical texts extends far beyond their religious and theological functions; they have exerted a profound and lasting influence on the moral, legal, and cultural norms of Western societies. A crucial dimension of this impact concerns the development of social and cultural conceptions of persons with disabilities. Within the Old Testament, disability is presented through multiple layers of meaning: metaphorical representations of physical or spiritual deficiency coexist with narratives addressing social exclusion, communal belonging, and the ethical responsibilities of the community. The legal prescriptions, wisdom traditions, and narrative accounts embedded in these texts collectively contributed to the formation of a complex theological, moral, and social framework for interpreting bodily and cognitive impairment. Consequently, Old Testament conceptions of disability exercised a durable influence on how subsequent historical eras understood, judged, and regulated bodily difference.

Literature Review

Interpretations of Disability

Disability, as a social phenomenon, has been present in every historical period and cultural context; however, the ways in which societies defined, assessed, and responded to various impairments were shaped by the particular social and religious circumstances

of each era.[2] The lived experiences and opportunities of individuals with disabilities were determined not solely by the type or severity of their impairment but also by the environmental and social conditions afforded by their immediate surroundings.[3] These conditions included a person's capacity to fulfil a productive or socially acknowledged role, the perceived economic burden of their support, and culturally embedded – often religiously grounded – aesthetic, moral, and behavioural norms governing bodily expectations and notions of "normality".[4] Another decisive factor was the presumed trainability and treatability of persons with disabilities, which substantially influenced their perceived social value and life prospects.[5]

Collectively, these parameters shaped the interpretive and evaluative framework through which disability was classified and understood. As a result, persons with disabilities were frequently relegated to the margins of their communities, a reality that

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[2] ANDOR, Csaba (2009): *Merre tovább, melyik úton? A fogyatékosságügy a szociál- és a foglalkoztatáspolitikában.* Budapest, ELTE BGGYK. 8; JUDIK, Dorottya (2013): Siketek összeírása az 1840-es években – avagy a fogyatékosok a történelemben. In: Balogh, Zoltán – Fodor Z., Miklós (eds.): *Neograd 2013.* Salgótarján, Dornyay Béla Múzeum. 109; KÁLMÁN, Zsófia – KÖNCZEI, György (2002): *A Taigetosztól az esélyegyenlőségig.* Budapest, Osiris Kiadó. 29, 63; SZEPESSYNÉ J., Dorottya (2022): *Oktatás és társadalmi mobilitás a siketek körében a dualizmus kori Magyarországon.* Doctoral dissertation. Komárom, Selye János Egyetem. 29.; FLOGNY, Károly Lajos (2022): A fogyatékos személyek iránti attitűd Jób korában és életében, valamint manapság Magyarországon, különös tekintettel a tradicionális protestáns kisegyházakban. In: *Teológiai Fórum*. 2022/16/1. 103–135.

[3] BERZSENYI, Emese (2024): Bűnös vagy ártatlan? – Az európai középkor fogyatékosság-története. In: Juhász, Erika – Gyányi, István (eds.): *Az oktatás időszerű narratívumai: Absztraktkötet. (Hungarian Conference on Educational Research)*. Eger, Magyar Nevelés- és Oktatáskutatók Egyesülete. 99–100, 1.; FLOGNY, Károly (2021): Egy vizsgálat a magyarországi protestáns szabadegyházak körében a fogyatékkal élő emberekhez való viszonyulásról. In*: Teológiai Fórum*. 2021/15/2. 77–94.

[4] BERZSENYI, Emese (2020): Világvallások fogyatékosságképe – az ábrahámi monoteista vallások rendszere. In: Endrődy, Orsolya – Svraka, Bernadett – Lassú F., Zsuzsa (eds.): *Sokszínű pedagógia.* Budapest, ELTE Eötvös Kiadó. 300.; FLOGNY, Károly Lajos (2024) : A fogyatékkal élő ember egy posztmodern társadalomban és annak etikai vonatkozásai. In: *Teológiai Fórum*. 2024/18/2. 77–97.

[5] GORDOSNÉ SZABÓ, Anna (1975): *Gyógypedagógia-történet I. Egyetemes gyógypedagógiatörténet a XX. századig.* Budapest, Tankönyvkiadó. 3–25.

is also well attested in Old Testament writings.[6] Such marginalization reinforced broader mechanisms of exclusion and segregation. The social construction of disability became intimately tied to notions of "otherness", "weakness", and "difference", and in many cases functioned as an instrument for sustaining and legitimizing prevailing social hierarchies.[7]

The Moral Model in the Interpretation of Disability

One of the earliest conceptual approaches to disability is the moral–ethical model, which gained significant influence during the consolidation of Christian intellectual life in the medieval period. According to this paradigm, disability is not construed merely as a physical or biological condition but rather as the consequence of an individual's – or, in some cases, their ancestors' – moral failings or transgressions.[8] The central premise of this model holds that physical or cognitive impairments represent tangible manifestations of divine justice, such that disability is interpreted as a deserved punishment for wrongdoing.[9]

The moral model exerted considerable social impact: it contributed to the stigmatization, exclusion, and marginalization of persons with disabilities, thereby shaping long-term attitudes towards them.[10] Although Christian tradition emphasized acts of mercy and charity towards vulnerable individuals, such practices frequently reinforced

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6 BERZSENYI, Emese (2017): *A fogyatékos személyek nevelésének története interkulturális megközelítésben az ábrahámi vallások szent könyveiben.* Doctoral dissertation. Budapest, ELTE. 16.

7 BÖSL, Elsbeth (2010): Was ist Disability History? In: Bösl, Elsbeth – Klein, Anne – Waldschmidt, Anne (eds.): *Disability History: Konstruktionen von Behinderung in der Geschichte*. Bielefeld, Transcript Verlag. 29–43, 7.

8 BERZSENYI 2017, 16; KATONA, Vanda – SÁNDOR, Anikó – ANTAL, Zsuzsanna – HERNÁDI, Ilona – HOFFMAN, István – HORVÁTH, Péter – JAKAB, Nóra – KOLONICS, Krisztián – KÖNCZEI, György – KUNT, Zsuzsanna – SZŰCS, Marianna (2019): Kvalitatív kutatásunk elmélete és gyakorlata. In: Könczei, György – Hernádi, Ilona – Sándor, Anikó (eds.): *Esély? Egyenlőség? Taigetosz? Egy fogyatékosságtudományi kutatás tapasztalatai*. Budapest, ELTE Eötvös Kiadó. 26–38.

9 KATONA 2019, 54; SZÉNÁSI, Lilla (2022): Az önismeret helye a szociális gondoskodásban. In: *Teológiai Fórum*, Calvin J. Teológiai Akadémia, Komarno, 2. 106–114.

10 KAPLAN, Deborah (2000): *The Definition of Disability*. In: *Journal of Health Care Law and Policy*. 3, 2. 352–364.

pity-based hierarchical relationships rather than fostering a substantive re-evaluation of disability within the community.[11]

Szászi observes that the biblical corpus does not contain explicit statements equating disability with personal guilt.[12] Nevertheless, in numerous ancient cultures, curse formulas regularly associate sin with bodily affliction, reflecting a pervasive symbolic connection between moral transgression and physical suffering.[13]

This broader interpretive pattern is consistent with the analyses of several international scholars. Shakespeare demonstrates that the moral model was widely disseminated across Eurasian traditions, where religious systems frequently interpreted bodily difference through a logic of retributive justice.[14] Eiesland argues that Christian theology often linked moral purity with bodily integrity, positioning the impaired body within metaphors of "lack", "brokenness", or "punishment".[15] Yong contends that the moral model constitutes one of the most deeply rooted cross-cultural interpretive strategies related to disability – yet one that derives not from the biblical texts themselves but from their historical theological reception.[16] Garland-Thomson further characterizes the moral model as a foundational form of stigma construction, through which disability becomes a repository for communal fears, normative expectations, and strategies of social control.[17] Taken together, contemporary scholarship confirms that although the biblical texts do not articulate a unified moral model of disability, later

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[11] KÖNCZEI, György – HERNÁDI, Ilona (2011): A fogyatékosságtudomány főfogalma és annak változásai. Hipotetikus kísérlet rekonstrukcióra. In: Nagy, Z. Éva (ed.): *Az akadályozott és egészségkárosodott emberek élethelyzete Magyarországon: Kutatási eredmények a TÁMOP 5.4.1 projekt kutatási pillérében*. Budapest, Nemzeti Család- és Szociálpolitikai Intézet. 10–11.

[12] SZÁSZI, Andrea (2019): Bibliai szempontok a fogyatékosság értelmezéséhez. In: *Magyar Református Nevelés*. 4. 6–21.

[13] KELLENBERGER, Edgar (2011): *Der Schutz der Einfältigen. Menschen mit einer geistigen Behinderung in der Bibel und in weiteren Quellen.* Zürich, Theologischer Verlag Zürich. 456–457.

[14] SHAKESPEARE, Tom *(2006): Disability Rights and Wrongs.* London – New York, Routledge. 31–32.

[15] EIESLAND, Nancy L. (1994): *The Disabled God: Toward a Liberatory Theology of Disability.* Nashville, Abingdon Press. 71–73.

[16] YONG, Amos (2007): *Theology and Down Syndrome.* Waco, Baylor University Press. 36–38.

[17] GARLAND-THOMSON, Rosemarie (1997): *Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature.* New York, Columbia University Press. 6.

interpretive traditions frequently imposed such a framework upon them. As a result, disability came to be associated with shame, deviance, and punitive suffering, functioning as a mechanism for maintaining and reinforcing established social hierarchies.

Disability in the Bible

In the cultural contexts in which the biblical texts originated, the modern conceptual category of "disability" did not exist. Nonetheless, societal norms regarding bodily integrity and physical conformity were clearly operative, guiding perceptions of which bodily traits were deemed normal, acceptable, or conversely, deficient or improper.[18]

In the Old Testament, disability most commonly appears in the form of illness, frequently imbued with spiritual or theological significance.[19] Such representations may function as literal descriptions of impairment, yet they may also carry symbolic, metaphorical, or instructional meanings that vary according to historical and literary context. As Bengtsson argues, any interpretation of disability must be situated within its sociocultural environment; although religious texts serve as important interpretive sources, biblical conceptions of disability remain profoundly context-dependent.[20]

The biblical corpus exhibits a particular sensitivity towards three categories of socially vulnerable individuals. First, it acknowledges the plight of the socially marginalized**,** including foreigners, orphans, widows, slaves, and the poor. Second, it demonstrates concern for persons with physical impairments, such as the lame, deaf, blind, or mute, as well as for those excluded from communal life due to conditions such as leprosy. Third, individuals with intellectual disabilities or those experiencing psychological or spiritual distress also appear within the textual tradition.

Crucially, isolation was mandated primarily in cases of contagious illnesses, most notably leprosy, while other forms of disability did not necessitate social segregation.[21]

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[18] BENGTSSON, Staffan (2014): On the Borderline – Representations of Disability in the Old Testament. In: *Scandinavian Journal of Disability Research*. 16, 3. 280–292.

[19] SZÁSZI 2019, 6–20.

[20] BENGTSSON 2014, 282–283.

[21] KŐSZEGHY, Miklós – PARRAGH, Szabolcs (³2016): „…nem voltak fogyatékosok a történelemben…": A fogyatékosság jelensége a történettudományban. In: Zászkaliczky Péter – Verdes Tamás (eds.): *Tágabb értelemben vett gyógypedagógia*. Budapest, ELTE Eötvös Kiadó – ELTE Bárczi Gusztáv Gyógypedagógiai Kar. 515–536.

The biblical sources further indicate that caregiving responsibilities fell predominantly upon the family, and the texts consistently refrain from assigning personal blame to the affected individual. Moreover, several passages reflect an attitude of compassion towards parents of children with impairments, signalling a more nuanced and humane perspective on disability and its social implications.[22]

Research Questions and Objectives

One of the principal aims of this study is to review, analyse, and synthesise both Hungarian and international scholarship concerning the representation and interpretation of disability in the Bible. Additionally, the study seeks to investigate the ways in which biblical texts contributed to the development of cultural frameworks for understanding disability and shaped societal attitudes towards individuals with disabilities throughout the evolution of the Christian tradition.

Research Questions

1. How can the occurrences of disability in the Old Testament be systematically identified and classified according to their textual form and meaning?
2. How do Old Testament texts construct the social status and communal roles of persons with disabilities, particularly in relation to inclusion and exclusion?
3. To what extent do Old Testament representations of disability support or challenge the moral model that associates disability with sin and divine punishment?

Methods

This study employs a qualitative, text-based approach combining systematic textual analysis with hermeneutical interpretation. The Old Testament (NRSV-CE) serves as the primary corpus. Passages referring to bodily, sensory, and cognitive difference (both explicit and metaphorical) were identified and compiled into *Table 1*, which provides a systematic mapping of disability-related references. The material was subsequently classified

[22] KELLENBERGER 2011, 29.

according to textual function and disability type, forming the basis for analysing social implications and evaluating the moral model of disability.

Results

The interpretation of disability in the Old Testament requires sensitivity to the literary and theological diversity of the biblical canon, as well as to the cultural context of the ancient Near East, in which no modern concept of "disability" existed.[23] Within this framework, bodily difference emerges across a range of genres, including narrative, legal, prophetic, and theological texts, where it fulfils diverse and often overlapping functions.

Table 1, arranged according to the canonical order of the Old Testament books, presents selected passages in which disability or disability-related imagery occurs. In doing so, it provides a systematic mapping of these occurrences and establishes the empirical basis for addressing the first research question. Rather than offering a simple catalogue of physical or mental conditions, the table highlights the diversity of their representation across textual genres and interpretive contexts. It distinguishes between narrative, legal, ethical, metaphorical, theological, and eschatological usages, thereby underscoring that such references frequently carry symbolic, rhetorical, or theological meanings in addition to (or instead of) literal ones.

Table 1. *Types of disability-related references in Old Testament texts*

Location	Text	Type of Reference	Category	Note
Gen 19:11	And they struck with **blindness** the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they were unable to find the door.	Narrative	Visual	Temporary blindness
Gen 27:1	When Isaac was old and **his eyes were dim so that he could not see**, he called his elder son Esau and said to him, "My son"; and he answered, "Here I am."	Narrative	Visual	Age-related
Gen 32:32	Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because **he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle**.	Narrative	Mobility	Injury

[23] AVALOS, Hector (1995): *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia, and Israel.* Atlanta, Scholars Press. 27–35; SCHIPPER, Jeremy (2006): *Disability Studies and the Hebrew Bible: Figuring Mephibosheth in the David Story.* London, T&T Clark. 1–15.

Location	Text	Type of Reference	Category	Note
Gen 48:10	Now the eyes of Israel were **dim with age, and he could not see well**. So Joseph brought them near him; and he kissed them and embraced them.	Narrative	Visual	Age-related
Exod 4:10	But Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but **I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.**"	Narrative	Speech	Self-description
Exod 4:11	Then the LORD said to him, "Who gives **speech** to mortals? Who makes them **mute or deaf,** seeing **or blind**? Is it not I, the LORD?	Theological	Speech, Auditory, Visual	Divine origin
Exod 15:26	He said, "If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God, and do what is right in his sight, and give heed to his commandments and keep all his statutes, **I will not bring upon you any of the diseases** that I brought upon the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you."	Theological	Disease	Punishment
Exod 23:8	You shall take no bribe, for a bribe **blinds the officials**, and subverts the cause of those who are in the right.	Metaphorical	Visual	Figurative
Lev 13:1-3	The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: When a person has on the skin of his body a **swelling or an eruption or a spot**, and it turns into a **leprous disease on the skin of his body**, he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests. The priest shall examine the **disease on the skin of his body**, and if the hair in the diseased area has turned white and the disease appears to be deeper than the skin of his body, it is a **leprous disease**; after the priest has examined him he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean.	Legal/cultic	Disease	Ritual purity
Lev 13:45–46	The person who has **the leprous disease** shall wear torn clothes and let the hair of his head be dishevelled; and he shall cover his upper lip and cry out, "Unclean, unclean." He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean. He shall live alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.	Legal	Disease	Exclusion
Lev 19:14	You shall not revile the **deaf** or put a stumbling block before the **blind**; you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.	Ethical	Auditory, Visual	Protection
Lev 21:17–23	Speak to Aaron and say: No one of your offspring throughout their generations who has a **blemish** may approach to offer the food of his God. For no one who has a **blemish** shall draw near, one who is **blind** or **lame**, or one who has a **mutilated face** or **a limb too long**, or one who has a **broken foot** or a **broken hand**, or a **hunchback**, or a **dwarf**, or a man with a **blemish in his eyes** or an **itching disease** or **scabs** or **crushed testicles**. No descendant of Aaron the priest who has a **blemish** shall come	Cultic	Physical	Priestly exclusion

Location	Text	Type of Reference	Category	Note
	near to offer the Lord's offerings by fire; since he has a **blemish**, he shall not come near to offer the food of his God. He may eat the food of his God, of the most holy as well as of the holy. But he shall not come near the curtain or approach the altar, because he has a blemish, that he may not profane my sanctuaries; for I am the Lord; I sanctify them.			
Lev 26:14–16	But if you will not obey me, and do not observe all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and abhor my ordinances, so that you will not observe all my commandments, and you break my covenant, I in turn will do this to you: I will bring terror on you; consumption and **fever** that **waste the eyes and cause life to pine away**.	Theological	Disease Visual	Punishment
Num 12:9–15	And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and he departed. When the cloud went away from over the tent, Miriam had become **leprous**, as white as snow. And Aaron turned towards Miriam and saw that she was **leprous**. Then Aaron said to Moses, "Oh, my lord, do not punish us for a sin that we have so foolishly committed…"	Narrative	Disease	Punishment
Deut 16:19	You must not distort justice; you must not show partiality; and you must not accept bribes, for a bribe **blinds** the eyes of the wise and **subverts the cause** of those who are in the right.	Metaphorical	Visual	Figurative
Deut 27:18	Cursed be anyone who misleads a **blind** person on the road. All the people shall say, "Amen!"	Ethical/legal	Visual	Protection
Deut 28:21–22	The Lord will make the **pestilence** cling to you until it has consumed you off the land that you are entering to possess. The Lord will afflict you with **consumption, fever, inflammation**, with **fiery heat** and **drought**, and with blight and **mildew**; they shall pursue you until you perish.	Theological	Disease	Punishment
Deut 28:27	The Lord will afflict you with the **boils** of Egypt, with **ulcers**, **scurvy**, and **itch**, of which you **cannot be healed**.	Theological	Disease	Punishment
Deut 28:28–29	The Lord will afflict you with **madness**, **blindness**, and **confusion of mind**; you shall grope about at noon as **blind** people grope in darkness, but you shall be unable to find your way; and you shall be continually abused and robbed, without anyone to help.	Theological	Cognitive, Visual	Punishment
Deut 29:4	But to this day the Lord **has not given you a mind to understand**, or **eyes to see,** or **ears to hear**.	Theological/ Metaphorical	Cognitive, Visual, Auditory	Figurative
1Sam 3:2	At that time Eli, whose **eyesight had begun to grow dim so** that he **could not see**, was lying down in his room;	Narrative	Visual	Age-related

Location	Text	Type of Reference	Category	Note
1Sam 16:14–16	Now the **spirit** of the Lord **departed** from Saul, and an **evil spirit** from the Lord tormented him. And Saul's servants said to him, "See now, an evil spirit from God is tormenting you…"	Narrative/ theological	Cognitive	Punishment
1Sam 21:13–15	So he changed his behavior before them; he pretended to be **mad** when in their presence. He scratched marks on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle run down his beard. Achish said to his servants, "Look, you see the man is **mad**; why then have you brought him to me? Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to play the **madman** in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?"	Narrative	Cognitive	Feigned madness
2Sam 3:29	May the guilt fall on the head of Joab, and on all his father's house; and may the house of Joab never be without one who has a **discharge**, or who is **leprous**, or who holds a spindle, or who falls by the sword, or who lacks food!"	Narrative / curse formula	Disease	Punitive wish
2Sam 4:4	Saul's son Jonathan had a son who was **crippled in his feet**. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel. His nurse picked him up and fled; and, in her haste to flee, it happened that he fell and became **lame**. His name was Mephibosheth.	Narrative	Mobility	Accident
2Sam 5:8	David had said on that day, "Whoever would strike down the Jebusites, let him get up the water shaft to attack the lame and the blind, those whom David hates." Therefore it is said, "The **blind** and the **lame** shall not come into the house."	Metaphorical	Physical, Visual	Figurative
2Sam 9:3, 13	The king said, "Is there anyone remaining of the house of Saul to whom I may show the kindness of God?" Ziba said to the king, "There remains a son of Jonathan; he is **crippled in his feet**." Mephibosheth lived in Jerusalem, for he always ate at the king's table. Now he was **lame in both his feet**.	Narrative	Mobility	Inclusion and royal protection
1Kgs 1:1	King David was **old and advanced in years**; and although they covered him with clothes, **he could not get warm**.	Narrative	Disease	Age-related
1Kgs 13:4	When the king heard the words that the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, "Seize him!" But **the hand that he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself.**	Narrative	Physical	Sudden paralysis, Punishment
1Kgs 15:23	In the time of his **old age he was diseased in his feet**.	Narrative	Mobility	Age-related
1Kgs 14:4–5	Jeroboam's wife did so; she set out and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. Now Ahijah **could not see,** for his e**yes were dim because of his age.** But the Lord said to Ahijah, "The wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son; for he is sick. Thus and thus you shall say to her.	Narrative	Visual	Age-related

Location	Text	Type of Reference	Category	Note
1Kgs 18:21	Elijah then came near to all the people, and said, "How long will you go **limping** with two different opinions?"	Metaphorical	Physical	Figurative
2Kgs 5:1–2	Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favour with his master, because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from **leprosy**.	Narrative	Disease	Leprosy
2Kgs 6:18	When the Arameans came down against him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, and said, "Strike this people, please, with **blindness**." So he struck them with **blindness** as Elisha had asked.	Narrative/ theological	Visual	Temporary blindness, Punishment
2Kgs 6:20	As soon as they entered Samaria, Elisha said, "O Lord, **open the eyes of these men so that they may see**." The Lord **opened their eyes**, and they saw that they were inside Samaria.	Narrative/ theological	Visual	Restoration, Temporary blindness
2Kgs 7:3	Now there were four **leprous** men outside the city gate, who said to one another, "Why should we sit here until we die?	Narrative	Disease	Social exclusion
2Kgs 20:7	Isaiah said, "Bring a lump of figs." They brought it and applied it to the **boil**, and he recovered.	Narrative	Disease	Healing
2Chr 16:12	In the thirty-ninth year of his reign, Asa was **diseased in his feet**, and his disease became severe; yet even in his disease he did not seek the Lord, but sought help from physicians.	Narrative	Disease/ Physical	Failure to seek the Lord
2Chr 26:16–23	…Now he had a censer in his hand to make offering, and when he became angry with the priests a **leprous** disease broke out on his forehead, in the presence of the priests in the house of the Lord, by the altar of incense. When the chief priest Azariah, and all the priests, looked at him, he was **leprous** in his forehead. They hurried him out, and he himself hurried to get out, because the Lord had struck him. King Uzziah was **leprous** to the day of his death, and being **leprous** lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the Lord. His son Jotham was in charge of the palace of the king, governing the people of the land. Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz wrote. Uzziah slept with his ancestors; they buried him near his ancestors in the burial field that belonged to the kings, for they said, "He is **leprous**." His son Jotham succeeded him.	Narrative/ theological	Disease	Punishment
Job 2:7	So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and inflicted **loathsome sores** on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head.	Narrative/ theological	Disease	Testing
Job 29:15	I was eyes to the **blind**, and feet to the **lame**.	Metaphorical	Visual, Mobility	Figurative
Job 33:19–21	They are chastened also by **pain** upon their beds, and continual **strife in their bones**, so that their lives loathe bread, and their appetites the choicest food. Their **flesh is so wasted away that it cannot be seen**, and their **bones**, once invisible, now **stick out**.	Theological	Disease	Punishment

Location	Text	Type of Reference	Category	Note
Ps 38:3–8	There is **no soundness in my flesh** because of your indignation; there is **no health in my bones** because of my sin. For my iniquities have gone over my head; they weigh like a burden too heavy for me. **My wounds grow foul and fester** because of my foolishness; I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all day long I go around mourning. For **my loins are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh**.	Theological	Disease	Punishment
Ps 38:14–17	I am like the **deaf**, who **do not hear**, like the **mute**, who **cannot speak**. Truly, I am like one who **does not hear**, and in whose **mouth is no retort**. But it is for you, O LORD, that I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. For I pray, "Only do not let them rejoice over me, those who boast against me when my foot slips."	Metaphorical	Auditory, Speech	Figurative
Ps 58:5	They are like the **deaf** adder, that stops its ear.	Metaphorical	Auditory	Figurative
Ps 116:6	The LORD protects the **simple**; when I was **brought low**, he saved me.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative (moral/spiritual category)
Ps 146:8	The LORD opens the eyes of the **blind**. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous.	Theological/ Metaphorical	Visual, Physical	Restoration
Prov 10:1	A wise child makes a glad father, but a **foolish child** is a mother's grief.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative
Prov 14:15	The **simple** believe everything, but the clever consider their steps.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative
Prov 14:18	The **simple** are adorned with folly, but the clever are crowned with knowledge.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative
Prov 15:20	A wise child makes a glad father, but the **foolish** despise their mothers.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative
Prov 17:21	The one who begets a **fool** gets trouble; the parent of a fool has no joy.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative
Prov 17:25	**Foolish** children are a grief to their father, and bitterness to her who bore them.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative
Prov 22:3	The clever see danger and hide; but the **simple** go on, and suffer for it.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative
Prov 26:7	The **legs of a disabled person** hang **limp**; so does a proverb in the mouth of a **fool**.	Metaphorical	Physical	Figurative
Prov 27:12	The clever see danger and hide, but the **simple** go on, and suffer for it.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative
Prov 31:8	Speak out for those who **cannot speak**, for the rights of all the destitute	Ethical	Speech	Figurative

Location	Text	Type of Reference	Category	Note
Wis 2:21	Thus they reasoned, but they were led astray, for their wickedness **blinded** them,	Metaphorical	Visual	Figurative
Eccl 7:25	I turned my mind to know and to search out and to seek wisdom and the sum of things, and to know that **wickedness is folly** and that **foolishness is madness**.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative (moral-intellectual categories)
Eccl 12:1–7	… in the day when **the guards of the house tremble**, and the **strong men are bent**, and the women who grind cease working because they are few, and those who look through the windows **see dimly**; when the doors on the street are shut, and the sound of the grinding is low, and one **rises up at the sound of a bird**, and **all the daughters of song are brought low**; when one is afraid of heights, and terrors are in the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags itself along and desire fails; because all must go to their eternal home, and the mourners will go about the streets; before the silver cord is snapped, and the golden bowl is broken, and the pitcher is broken at the fountain, and the wheel broken at the cistern, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the breath returns to God who gave it.	Metaphorical	Visual, Auditory, Physical, Cognitive	Figurative
Sir 20:29	Favours and gifts **blind** the eyes of the wise; like a muzzle on the mouth they stop reproofs.	Metaphorical	Visual, Speech	Figurative
Sir 22:3–4	It is a disgrace for a father to have a **foolish** son, and the birth of a daughter is a loss. A sensible daughter will obtain a husband of her own, but a shameless one is a grief to her father.	Metaphorical	Cognitive	Figurative (foolishness as moral category)
Sir 38:15	Those who sin against their Maker will be **defiant toward the physician**.	Theological	Disease	Punishment
Isa 6:9–10	And he said, "Go and say to this people: 'Keep listening, but **do not comprehend;** keep looking, **but do not understand.**' Make the **mind of this people dull**, and **stop their ears**, and **shut their eyes,** so that they may not **look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed**."	Theological / Metaphorical	Visual, Auditory, Cognitive	Figurative, Judgment
Isa 29:9	Stupefy yourselves and **be stupid**; **blind yourselves** and be **blind**! You who are drunk, but not with wine, **staggering**, but not with strong drink!	Metaphorical	Visual, Physical	Figurative, Judgment
Isa 29:18	On that day the **deaf** shall hear the words of a scroll, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the **blind** shall see.	Eschatological/ Metaphorical	Auditory, Visual	Figurative
Isa 32:3	Then the **eyes of those who see will not be closed**, and the **ears** of those who **hear** will listen.	Eschatological/ Metaphorical	Auditory, Visual	Figurative
Isa 32:4	The mind of the **rash** will have good judgment, and the **tongue** of the stammerers will speak readily and distinctly.	Eschatological	Cognitive, Speech	Restoration

Location	Text	Type of Reference	Category	Note
Isa 35:5–6	Then the eyes of the **blind** shall be opened, and the ears of the **deaf** unstopped; then the **lame** shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the **speechless** sing for joy…	schatological/Metaphorical	Visual, Auditory, Physical, Speech	Restoration, figurative
Isa 42:18	Hear, you **deaf**; and look, you **blind**, so that you may see!	Metaphorical	Visual, Auditory	Figurative
Isa 59:10	We grope like the **blind** along a wall, groping like those who have **no eyes**; we stumble at noon as if it were twilight, among the vigorous we are like the dead.	Metaphorical	Visual	Figurative
Jer 5:21	Hear this, O **foolish** and **senseless** people, who have eyes, but do **not see**, who have ears, but do **not hear**.	Metaphorical	Visual, Auditory, Cognitive	Figurative
Jer 31:8	See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the **blind** and the **lame**, those with child and those in labour, together; a great company, they shall return here.	Eschatological	Physical, Visual	Inclusion
Ezek 3:26	I will make your tongue cling to the roof of your mouth, so that you shall be **speechless** and unable to reprove them; for they are a rebellious house.	Theological	Speech	Temporary Muteness
Ezek 12:2	Mortal, you live among a rebellious house; they have eyes to see, but **do not see**; they have ears to hear, but **do not hear**.	Metaphorical	Visual, Auditory	Figurative
Dan 4:30–31	While the words were still in the king's mouth, a voice came from heaven, "O King Nebuchadnezzar, to you it is declared: The kingdom has departed from you! You shall be driven away from human society, and your dwelling shall be with the wild animals. You shall **eat grass like oxen**, and seven times shall pass over you, until you have learned that the Most High has sovereignty over the kingdom of mortals and gives it to whom he will."	Narrative	Cognitive	Madness
Dan 10:8–10	So I was left alone to see this great vision. My **strength left me**, and my **complexion grew deathly pale**, and I **retained no strength**. Then I heard the sound of his words; and when I heard the sound of his words, I fell into a trance, face to the ground. But then a hand touched me and roused me to my hands and knees.	Narrative	Physical	Temporary loss of strength
Dan 10:15	While he was speaking these words to me, I turned my face toward the ground and was **speechless**.	Narrative	Speech	Temporary speechlessness
Mic 4:6–7	In that day, says the LORD, I will assemble the **lame** and gather those who have been driven away, and those whom I have afflicted; the **lame** I will make the remnant, and those who were cast off, a strong nation; and the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion now and forevermore.	Eschatological	Physical	Restoration

Location	Text	Type of Reference	Category	Note
Zeph 1:17	I will bring such distress upon people that they shall walk like the **blind**; because they have sinned against the Lord, their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung.	Metaphorical	Visual	Figurative, Punishment
Zeph 3:19	I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. And I will save the **lame** and gather the outcast, and I will change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth.	Eschatological	Physical	Restoration
Zech 11:17	Oh, my worthless shepherd, who deserts the flock! May the **sword strike his** arm and his **right eye**! Let his **arm be completely withered**, his right **eye utterly blinded**!	Prophetic	Physical, Visual	Curse formula
Zech 12:4	On that day, says the Lord, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with **madness**. But on the house of Judah I will keep a watchful eye, when I strike every horse of the peoples with **blindness**.	Theological	Cognitive, Visual	Judgment

Source: author's own compilation

Notes: Narrative = historical description, Legal/cultic = legal/cultic regulation, Ethical = moral instruction, Metaphorical = figurative/rhetorical usage, Theological = divine action or punishment, Eschatological = restoration, future promise.

Taken together, these findings indicate that disability in the Old Testament cannot be reduced to a single, unified category but operates across multiple interpretive levels shaped by genre and theological context. The mapping presented in *Table 1* demonstrates that disability appears both as a concrete physical condition and as a symbolic construct, fulfilling diverse functions across narrative, legal, and prophetic texts. This complexity necessitates a more systematic analytical framework. Accordingly, in the following section, the passages identified in *Table 1* are reclassified according to distinct disability types. This shift from descriptive inventory to interpretive analysis enables a more focused examination of how disability is represented and functions across different textual contexts.

1. Visual Impairment

Among Old Testament writings, visual impairment appears with the greatest frequency, occurring in concrete (Gen 19:11; 27:1; Exod 21:17–23; 1Kgs 14:4–5; 2Kgs 6:18), abstract and metaphorical (Gen 19:11; 2Kgs 6:20; Isa 6:9–10; 29:9; 32:3; 59:10; Zeph 1:17), moral/ethical (Exod 23:8; Lev 19:14; Deut 16:19; 27:18; Wis 2:21; Sir 20:29),

as well as redemptive and healing-oriented interpretive contexts (Isa 29:18; 33:19; 35:5–6; 42:18; Jer 31:8). In its metaphorical sense, "sight" denotes the recognition of divine truth, which enables the avoidance of sin and the mastery of passions. Within this interpretive framework, blindness is understood as a manifestation of divine punishment imposed upon the individual, from which healing becomes possible through the illumination of consciousness. Consequently, blindness is not interpreted as a final or irreversible condition. The transition out of ignorance (darkness) is contrasted with the attainment of knowledge (light).[24] Passages related to visual impairment occur on five occasions as expressions of divine admonition (Zech 11:17), in connection with the violation of the covenant (Lev 26:14–16; Deut 28:28), as punishment for sin against the Lord (Zeph 1:17), and once in response to the request of a man of God (2Kgs 6:18).[25]

2. Hearing Impairment

With regard to passages referring to hearing impairment, it can likewise be observed that multiple layers of meaning appear in Old Testament texts. Certain passages depict hearing loss as a concrete, physical condition, either as a manifestation of divine power or as part of moral legislation (Exod 4:1; Lev 19:14). Alongside this

[24] BERZSENYI 2017, 117–118.

[25] HAMILTON, Victor P. (1990): *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1–17. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; HAMILTON, Victor P. (1995): *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 37–38, 212; BODA, Mark J. (2016): *The Book of Zechariah.* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 667; CRAIGIE, Peter C. (1976): *The Book of Deuteronomy. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 247, 333, 344; OSWALT, John N. (1986): *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 188–189, 531, 624; OSWALT, John N. (1998): *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 520; WENHAM, Gordon J. (1979): *The Book of Leviticus. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 268, 330.

literal meaning, symbolic representations of spiritual or inner deafness emerge in relation to the rejection of divine revelation (Isa 6:9–10; 29:18; 32:3; 42:18). Ethically charged passages express a lack of understanding and compassion (Ps 38:14–17; 58:5), while prophetic texts referring to the healing of hearing impairment point towards God's salvific activity (Isa 35:5–6). Hearing impairment (deafness) frequently occurs in conjunction with impairment of speech (muteness).[26]

3. Speech Impairment

Among passages addressing speech impairment, references to physical speech disorders are also present (Exod 4:10), together with explicit affirmations of God's creative power in relation to speech (Exod 4:11). Ethical regulation appears as well, aimed at the protection of human dignity (Lev 19:14). In prophetic texts, symbolic meaning is employed to anticipate the removal of communicative barriers between God and humanity (Isa 32:4; 33:19), while passages describing healing (Isa 33:19; 35:5–6) project a vision of redemption. In the Psalms, muteness appears in the form of simile, emphasizing human helplessness (Ps 38:14–17). This section also reflects a call for moral sensitivity, which may point to experiences of exclusion or social withdrawal affecting persons with disabilities.[27]

4. Physical/Mobility Impairment

Physical impairment also occurs in large numbers within Old Testament texts. Concrete physical disabilities, bodily injuries, and limitations appear in narratives concerning paralysis (2Sam 4:4), bodily disfigurement (Isa 52:14–15), and lameness (Gen 32:32; 2Sam 9:13; Isa 35:5–6). Within these accounts, the practice of solidarity towards persons with disabilities is also evident (Job 29:15). Cultic regulations

[26] BERZSENYI 2017, 117–118; DECLAISSÉ-WALFORD, Nancy L. – JACOBSON, Rolf A. – TANNER, Beth LaNeel (2014): *The Book of Psalms.* The New International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 358, 495; OSWALT 1986, 188–189, 537, 580, 624; OSWALT 1998, 130; WENHAM 1979, 268.

[27] DECLAISSÉ-WALFORD – JACOBSON – TANNER 2014, 358; OSWALT 1986, 581, 588, 624; WENHAM 1979, 268.

addressing specific bodily impairments are found in priestly legislation (Lev 21:17–23), alongside punitive amputation prescribed as punishment for legal transgression (Lev 24:19–20), as well as prophetic promises and assurances of healing and restoration (Isa 35:5–6; Jer 31:8). Physical impairment also appears in figurative and symbolic form (2Sam 5:8, where lameness symbolizes the house of Saul; 1Kgs 18:21; Zech 11:17; Prov 26:7; Ps 38:14–17).[28] Paralysis appears on two occasions in the Old Testament as a consequence of resistance to God (1Kgs 13:4; Zeph 3:19; 11:17); however, the Lord delivers those who remain faithful to Him (Zeph 3:19).[29]

5. Cognitive Impairment

The Bible does not draw a sharp distinction between intellectual disability and mental illness; consequently, references to these conditions frequently overlap.[30] The texts often contain allusions to intellectual impairment, most prominently in the form of moral folly arising from a lack of wisdom, especially within wisdom literature (Prov 10:1; 14:15, 18; 15:20; 17:21, 25; 22:3; 26:7; 27:12; Sir 22:3–4). These passages emphasize that the behaviour of a foolish and irresponsible child imposes a significant emotional and psychological burden on the family, particularly affecting the inner life of the parents. Certain passages portray madness as a sign of divine intervention or punishment (Deut 28:28; 1Sam 16:14–16; Dan 4:30–31), arising as a consequence of pride, disobedience, or unbelief. In contrast, examples of divine protection and care are offered with respect to the simple-minded (Ps 116:6). In metaphorical usage (Isa 32:4), the insensitivity and incomprehension of the heart also appear with symbolic meaning (Isa 6:9–10).[31]

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[28] SCHIPPER, Jeremy (2005): Reconsidering the Imagery of Disability in 2 Samuel 5:8b. In: *Catholic Biblical Quarterly.* 67, 3. 422–434.

[29] BODA 2016, 677; DECLAISSÉ-WALFORD – JACOBSON – TANNER 2014, 358; HAMILTON 1995, 337–338; HARTLEY, John E. (1988): *The Book of Job. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 391; OSWALT 1986, 624; OSWALT 1998, 379; WENHAM 1979, 292, 312.

[30] BERZSENYI 2017, 122.

[31] CRAIGIE 1976, 344; DECLAISSÉ-WALFORD – JACOBSON – TANNER 2014, 860; OSWALT 1986, 188–189, 580; TSUMURA, David T. (2007): *The First Book of Samuel. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament.* Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 426; WALTKE, Bruce K. (2004): *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1–15. The New*

6. Diseases

This section includes illnesses that cannot be classified within the preceding categories. Although illness cannot be unequivocally identified with disability, skin diseases mentioned in Old Testament texts are included here due to their isolating and exclusionary effects on communal life. Within this category, illness most frequently appears as an expression of divine punishment or judgment. Diseases such as trembling, fever, and plague emerge as consequences of covenantal violation and sin (Lev 26:15–16; Deut 28:21–22), potentially resulting in exclusion from the community (2Chr 26:16–23) or death (Lev 26:15–16; Deut 28:21–22). Illness also appears in admonitory texts (Exod 15:26; Sir 38:15), where God declares that obedience will prevent the afflictions imposed upon Egypt. Leprosy appears both in David's curse formula (2Sam 3:29) and in factual narrative description (2Kgs 5:1–2). In the case of Job, ulcers function as signs of a divinely permitted trial (Job 2:7).

From both cultic (Lev 21:17–23) and social perspectives, Mosaic law provides detailed regulations concerning the procedure for identifying bodily impurity (Lev 13:1–3) and its relation to healing (Lev 13:45–46). On this basis, it can be concluded that the person afflicted with leprosy occupies a status of separation not only medically but also ritually and socially. In narratives of miraculous healing, divine power is manifested (2Kgs 20:7).[32]

In relation to the story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:9), Levin raises the question of whether Abel may have lived with a disability.[33] Since naming did not necessarily occur at birth, it was often connected subsequently to a person's defining characteristics or activities; the meaning of the name *Abel* – interpreted as "weak", "incapable", "disabled", or "vain" – invites further reflection. The use of the term "keeper" in the text raises the

International Commentary on the Old Testament. Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; WALTKE, Bruce K. (2005): *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15–31. The New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids (MI), William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 60, 62, 201, 351–352, 381; STRÉDL, Terézia–SZÉNÁSI, Lilla (2023): Szociális munka mentális betegekkel In: *Diakónia, szociális intézmények és szolgálatai*, Univerzita J. Selyeho, Komárno, 2023. 106–130.

[32] CRAIGIE 1976, 342; HARTLEY 1988, 82; WENHAM 1979, 197, 200, 292, 330.

[33] LEVIN, Schneir Z. (1992): The Abel Syndrome. In: *Jewish Bible Quarterly*. 20, 2. 111–114.

question of whether Abel required protection or care, and whether he may have lived with a disability.

The second research question examines how Old Testament texts construct the social status and communal roles of persons with disabilities, particularly in relation to inclusion and exclusion. The evidence indicates that these texts do not present a uniform perspective but rather reflect diverse and at times tension-filled legal, ethical, and cultic frameworks.

On the one hand, ethical prescriptions within the Mosaic Law (Lev 19:14; Deut 27:18) establish a clear obligation to protect persons with disabilities, prohibiting their mistreatment and assigning responsibility to the community as a whole.[34] Narrative texts reinforce this inclusive dimension: Mephibosheth's incorporation into the royal household (2Sam 9:3, 13) and Job's self-description ("I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame" Job 29:15) exemplify a model in which care for vulnerable individuals becomes a marker of justice and social responsibility.[35] As noted in scholarship, such norms may have contributed to the protection and social integration of persons with disabilities.[36]

On the other hand, cultic regulations impose restrictions on participation in specific ritual roles. Leviticus 21:17–23 excludes individuals with physical impairments from priestly sacrificial functions, reflecting a symbolic association between bodily integrity and ritual holiness.[37] Scholarly interpretations diverge on this point. Some emphasize the exclusionary implications of these prescriptions and their role in

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[34] BOWA, Makomborero A. (2022): The Coronavirus Pandemic and Persons with Disabilities: Towards a Liberating Reading of the Bible for Churches in Southern Africa. In: Sibanda, Fortune – Muyambo, Tenson et al. (eds.): *Religion and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Southern Africa*. London – New York: Routledge. 186–201; WENHAM 1979, 267–269; SCHIPPER 2006, 45–50.

[35] YONG, Amos (2011): *The Bible, Disability, and the Church: A New Vision of the People of God*. Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; SCHIPPER 2006, 50–55; GARLAND-THOMSON 1997, 22–24.

[36] MELCHER, Sarah J. (2010): A Review of Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences by Saul M. Olyan. In: *Journal of Religion, Disability & Health*. 14, 1. 96–97.

[37] OLYAN, Saul M. (2008): *Disability in the Hebrew Bible: Interpreting Mental and Physical Differences.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 29–31.

reinforcing social marginalization,[38] while others argue that they are limited to specific ritual contexts and do not entail broader exclusion from religious or communal life.[39]

Temporary isolation associated with skin diseases (Lev 13:1–3; 13:45–46) and the bodily requirements for priestly service (Lev 21:17–23) belong to the symbolic order of holiness rather than to any devaluation of individual social worth.[40]

Taken together, these findings suggest that disability in the Old Testament is situated within a dynamic field of inclusion and exclusion, where ethical obligations towards protection coexist with symbolic and institutional forms of restriction.

The third research question explored the extent to which Old Testament representations of disability support the assumptions of the moral model, which interprets disability as a causal consequence of sin and divine punishment. The analysis indicates that the biblical corpus does not sustain a unified or deterministic interpretation of this kind.

Certain texts, particularly covenantal curse traditions (Deut 28:21–29; Lev 26:14–16) and specific narrative episodes (e.g. Miriam's leprosy: Num 12:9–15), do present physical or mental impairment as a form of divine punishment. However, these instances are contextually bounded and serve specific theological and rhetorical purposes, as emphasized in contemporary biblical scholarship.[41]

At the same time, numerous texts complicate or challenge this model. Wisdom literature, most notably the Book of Job, rejects a direct causal link between sin and suffering, while other passages present disability as part of human vulnerability, as a condition of testing, or as a state open to healing and restoration.[42]

Taken together, these findings suggest that while the moral model is present within certain textual traditions, it cannot be generalized as a comprehensive explanation of disability in the Old Testament. Instead, biblical representations reflect a plurality of interpretive frameworks that resist reduction to a single theological paradigm.

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38 BENGTSSON 2014, 283–286; BOWA 2022, 188.

39 SZÁSZI 2019, 15; BELSER, Julia Watts (2019): Priestly Aesthetics: Disability and Bodily Difference in Leviticus 21. In: *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology*. 73, 4. 355–366.

40 MILGROM, Jacob (1991): *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary. Anchor Bible*. Vol. 3. New York, Doubleday. 112–115.

41 AVALOS 1995, 36–50; MILGROM 1991, 191–194; YONG 2011, 342–345.

42 YONG 2018, 164–167.

Conclusions

Taken together, the findings of this study demonstrate that disability in the Old Testament cannot be understood as a single, coherent category, but it must be interpreted within a complex matrix of literary forms, social norms, and theological meanings. The systematic mapping of relevant passages shows that disability appears both as a concrete human condition and as a symbolic resource across diverse textual genres.

At the social level, biblical texts construct a dynamic tension between inclusion and exclusion: while ethical and narrative traditions emphasize protection, care, and integration, cultic regulations introduce forms of restriction grounded in symbolic notions of holiness. At the interpretive level, the analysis challenges the adequacy of the moral model as a comprehensive explanatory framework. Although certain texts associate impairment with sin and divine punishment, this perspective is neither uniform nor dominant but is counterbalanced by alternative representations that understand disability in terms of vulnerability, testing, or restoration.

These findings suggest that the moral stigmatization of disability cannot be attributed directly to the biblical texts themselves but rather to selective and decontextualized interpretations in later reception history. Accordingly, the Old Testament offers not a singular theological interpretation of disability but a plurality of perspectives that reflect the complexity of human embodiment and its relation to the divine, while also contributing to contemporary ethical and hermeneutical discussions.

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László Sándor EGERESI[1]:

Az induktív módszer a bibliai héber nyelv tanításában[2]

Abstract. The Inductive Method in the Teaching of Biblical Hebrew.
Teachers of Biblical Hebrew are following and using the standard grammar books and workbooks of their field. We use the theoretical books of Gesenius and Joüon's work (revisited by late Muraoka) and several practical books from Weingreen, Jenni, Seow, Lettinga, and Neef, to but a few. The common ground of these practical grammars are their deductive method, but we know there are some alternative ways as well. Such an alternative way is the inductive method, which is also well known from William Sanford LaSor's grammar Handbook of Biblical Hebrew – An Inductive Approach Based on the Hebrew Text of Esther (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989 – first print: 1978). The method has several advantages and disadvantages, as the author himself provided a useful overview of this issue[3].

The inductive approach in teaching classical languages is said to be innovated and first used by the American scholar W. R. Harper (1856–1906). Besides his Hebrew grammar, Harper also wrote a Greek and Latin grammars, and even the phrase "inductive method" is used in the title of these grammars. The Hebrew grammar was published in 1881 and went through six subsequent editions over a period of thirty-five years, attesting to its popularity as a workbook.

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[2] A Doktorok Kollégiuma 2025-ös ülésén elhangzott előadás szerkesztett változata.

[3] LaSor, William Sanford (1974): The Inductive Method of Teaching Hebrew – Its Advantages and Its Pitfalls, In: *Hebrew Abstracts*. 15. 108–119

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However, a hitherto unknown Hebrew grammar written by the Hungarian scholar István Tamaskó (1801–1881) had already employed this method in academic circles. The inductive grammar was written in 1841, so it predates Harper's work by several decades. The article at hand aims to explore the possible European roots of the inductive method used by a Hungarian scholar. The origins and antecedents of Tamaskó's book remain unknown and require further research.

Keywords: teaching Biblical Hebrew, methodology, inductive method, inductive approach, W. R. Harper, István Tamaskó, Hungarian Hebraists

Bevezetés

Mintegy 10 évvel ezelőtt egy budapesti konferencián a *swá* ejtési szabályainak tanításánál egy latin versikét idézett az előadó,[4] s a hallgatóságban ülő Stefan Schorch (aki kitűnően beszél magyarul) felkapta a fejét, és jegyzetelni kezdett. Valóban, leírva ezzel a versikével nem találkozunk tankönyvekben, mint ahogy egyaránt ritkán találkozunk egyéb, a bibliai héber nyelv oktatását érintő témával. Másodéves debreceni teológus voltam, amikor megfogalmazódott bennem, hogy héber nyelvet szeretnék tanítani. Ezzel egyidejűleg azt is vallottam, hogy aki nyelvtanár, annak legyen tanári végzettsége, pedagógiai szakismerete. Aki egyháztörténelmet tanít például, annak is kívánatos némi pedagógiai tudás. Diákkori rossz emlékeim közé tartozik a több évnyi egyháztörténelem tanulása, ami alatt egyetlenegyszer sem vettünk elő térképet. Történelem topográfia nélkül? Talán a szaktanári háttér ezt kiküszöbölte volna. Nyilván a gyakorlat a teológiai képzéseken ettől sokszor eltér, ami legalábbis részben igazolható. A hallgató megszerzi lelkészi oklevelét, külföldi ösztöndíjra megy, doktorál, majd bekerül az egyházi felsőoktatásba. Szakmailag, tudásban alkalmas erre a teológiai tanári szerepkörre. De alkalmas-e pedagógiai szempontból nézve is? Az érvelés mindenki számára ismeretes: a jó tanár katedrára születik, a rossz tanár pedig nem lesz jó tanár a tanári diplomájával sem. Nézzük ezt más aspektusból. A jó tanár is lehet még jobb, ha szaktanári ismeretei vannak, és a rossz tanár sokat javíthat előadásain a bölcsészeti tanulmányai alatt megszerzett ismeretekkel. Következetes ember lévén, ezért szereztem tanári diplomát később, s hálás szívvel gondolok Nagy Andor tanár úr neveléstörténeti óráira; de az oktatástechnológia is hasznos számomra mind a mai napig.

[4] *Post longum, socium, sub dages, fronte movetur*.

Továbbá említhetném az ott kapott előremutató szemléletet is: emiatt lesznek a héber nyelvtanom negyedik kiadásában QR-kódok, amik elviszik a diákot a digitális térbe, és okostelefonon gyakorolhatja majd a hallgató a héber nyelvet. A múlt században nyomtatott könyvekből tanultak nyelvet a diákok, de ma már nem így tanulnak, főleg nem nyelveket. Rá kell eszmélnie a teológiai tanároknak, hogy ma az oktatásban mekkora helyet foglal el a digitális kultúra. Ijesztő példa, hogy egy mostanában kiadott ószövetségi bevezetéstan egyetlen fotó, összehasonlító ábra, régészeti replika, internetes adatbázisra hivatkozó link vagy bármi egyéb nélkül jelenik meg, ami utalna arra, hogy az adott tankönyvnek szánt kiadvány nem a múlt században készült. (A kiadó által évtizedekig használt pár térkép még tovább rontott ezen a helyzeten…) Mind az órákat, mind a kiadott tananyagot a lehető legnagyobb mértékben kötni kell a digitális világhoz, ha nem akarunk lemaradni. Megváltozott az órák súlypontja is: ma már nem a tanításra esik a hangsúly, a tanár nem „óraadó", előadó, hanem a diákok tanulását segítő személy (*student-centred learning*). Egyre inkább előtérbe kerül a megszerzett ismeretek hasznossága (*knowledge versus skills*), és akkor a differenciált oktatásról még nem is beszéltünk.[5] Ilyen szempontból is érdemes lenne újragondolni a teológiai oktatást.[6]

Egy sokak számára talán nehezen hihető példával folytatnám: tavaly végeztem el a hegesztő szakiskolát, ahol kivétel nélkül minden tananyagot digitálisan kaptunk kézhez. Ma már olyan szimulációs gépek vannak, amin a hegesztési varratokat is digitálisan lehet gyakorolni. Tudom, ez kevés ahhoz, hogy valaki jó hegesztő legyen, és lehet vitatkozni napjaink digitális oktatási módszereinek előnyeiről és hátrányairól, de ettől a világ még ebbe az irányba halad. Aki múlt századi könyvből oktat, az a múlt századhoz tartozik. A jelen naptári év 2026.

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[5] Hajlamosak vagyunk mindenkiben a „szupertanulót" látni, noha a diákok többsége átlagos vagy átlagon aluli képességű. A tehetséges diák szinte biztosan megtanulja a tananyagot, a többieknek, a többségnek lenne szüksége differenciált oktatásra, aminek azonban hírből sincs nyoma a teológiai oktatásban. Korunk tanulóinak mentális állapotát nézve és számolva egy bizonyos létszámot elérő évfolyammal elkerülhetetlennek tartom, hogy a teológiai oktatásban is megjelenjenek az SNI-s, ADHD-s stb. hallgatók. A teológiai oktatók többsége ezekre nincs felkészülve.

[6] Lásd David J. A. Clines kijózanító sorait: CLINES, David J. A. (2010): Teaching The Biblical Languages: Time for a Rethink?, In: Ames, Frank Ritchel – Miller, Charles William (szerk.): *Foster Biblical Scholarship: Essays in Honor of Kent Harold Richards* (SBL Biblical Scholarship in North America 24). Atlanta (GA), SBL. 161–168.

S itt jutunk el a héber nyelv oktatásának módszertanához. Ahhoz, hogy következetesen taníthassunk, érdemes a nyelvoktatás alapjainak ismerete mellett az alkalmazott módszereket is megismerni. Előbbihez annyit tennék hozzá, hogy a beszélt nyelveknél öt területet fejlesztünk és mérünk, míg egy holt nyelvnél mindössze kettőt; utóbbihoz pedig annyit, hogy a nyelv tanítását végezhetjük induktív és deduktív módszerrel egyaránt. A deduktív megközelítés mindenki számára ismert: megtanuljuk az alefbétet, az olvasási szabályokat, a prepozíciók ragozását, a főnevek ragozását, igeragozást és így tovább. E tanulmány alapjául szolgáló előadás résztvevői valószínűleg mind így tanulták és így tanítják a héber nyelvet, mert ez a standard a héber nyelvoktatásban. Létezik azonban egy másik megközelítés is, az induktív módszer.

William Sanford LaSor (1911–1991)

Amerikai tudós, a Fuller Theological Seminary (Pasadena, CA) emeritus professzora. Felszentelt presbiteriánus lelkész, szolgált is több helyen (pl. New Jersey), ill. a világháború alatt tábori lelkészként is tevékenykedett. Szerény, egyszerű ember, aki előadásait rövid imádsággal kezdte és zárta; ugyanakkor nagy műveltségű személyiség volt: hat diplomával rendelkezett, többek között az irodalom és a kémia területén. A Fuller Szemináriumra 1949-ben került, ahol nyugdíjba vonulásáig (1980) tanított. Könyvtárát az Oral Roberts University-re hagyta, ahol az jelenleg is a könyvtár elkülönített egységét képezi.

Tizenhét könyv szerzője, ill. szerkesztője, melyek közül a leghíresebb talán ószövetségi bevezetéstana,[7] ami több kiadást is megért. Sokáig népszerű volt régiségtani könyvecskéje is: *Daily Life in Bible Times* (Standard Publishing, 1966).[8] Emellett laikusok is szívesen forgatták *Great Personalities of the New Testament* (Fleming Rewell, 1961) c. könyvét, aminek megírta később az ószövetségi párját is.[9]

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[7] LASOR, William Sanford – HUBBARD, David Allan – BUSH, Frederic William ([2]2006 [1996]). *Old Testament Survey. The Message, Form, and Background of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids (Mich.), Eerdmans.

[8] Ennek „utódja" Oded Borowski könyvecskéje: *Daily Life in Biblical Times* (SBL, 2003). Mindkét könyv rövid és hasznos olvasmány ma is.

[9] LASOR, William Sanford (1977): *Great Personalities of the Bible*. Hendrickson.

Minket most itt mégis a héber nyelvtan érdekel: *Handbook of Biblical Hebrew – An Inductive Approach Based on the Hebrew Text of Esther* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989 – első kiadás: 1978).[10] A nyelvtan eredetileg három kötetben jelent meg. Az 1. kötet tartalmazta az első részt, ezek voltak a tulajdonképpeni leckék, a 2. kötet a második és harmadik részt (nyelvtan, táblázatok) és a negyedik részt (szószedet), a 3. kötet pedig Eszter könyvének a szövegét tartalmazta. A későbbiekben a praktikusság okán és a gazdaságosság jegyében egyetlen kötetben jelent meg a teljes nyelvtan. Erre a kiadványra egyébként több mint három évtizeddel ezelőtt Marjovszki Tibor hívta fel a figyelmemet, amikor még debreceni diákként egyik barátommal látogattuk meg otthonában.[11] Az induktív nyelvtan használója a szerző ígérete szerint nemcsak a nyelvtan egyes részeit sajátítja el, hanem elsajátítja a megfigyelést és a megfigyelésen keresztüli tanulást is. A módszer nagyobbrészt induktív, vagyis a szövegből indul ki, de erős a módszertani kötődés a nyelvtanban a Kautzsch–Cowley-féle Gesenius-nyelvtanhoz is. A szerző *expressis verbis* kijelenti, hogy William Rainey Harper módszerét alkalmazza. Az 500 oldalnál jóval terjedelmesebb tankönyv elemzésére szükségtelen itt kitérnünk, ugyanis azt többen is megtették már. Abban a szerencsés helyzetben vagyunk, hogy az induktív rendszer kiértékelése is már korábban megtörtént, melynek előnyeit és hátrányait éppen LaSor fejtette ki.[12] Itt csak két pontot szeretnék szubjektív módon kiemelni, amit érdemes átgondolni napjaink generációinak tanulási szokásait ismerve: az induktív módszer mindvégig a bibliai szöveggel dolgozik, ezért folyamatosan megmarad a diák érdeklődése az első perctől az utolsóig. A másik a hasznosság (*utilitas*) tagadhatatlan ténye. Nincs „feleslegesen" megtanult ragozott igealakok, kivételek, szabályok és főnevek hosszú sora, amivel alig vagy egyáltalán nem fog találkozni az eredeti szöveget olvasó személy a későbbiekben. Az induktív nyelvtan,

[10] LaSor többek között görög nyelvtant is írt induktív módszerrel. Továbbá említésre méltó, hogy A. Vanlier Hunter is írt egy induktív nyelvtant, ami azonban feledésbe merült: HUNTER, A. Vanlier (1988): *Biblical Hebrew Workbook: An Inductive Study for Beginners*. Lanham – New York – London, University Press of America. A könyvről S. Segert írt recenziót (*CBQ*. 52(1990). 320–321). Segert inkább nyelvészeti megjegyzéseket tesz; terjedelmi okokra hivatkozva csupán megemlíti, hogy jó lett volna összehasonlítani Hunter könyvét Lambdin és Seow nyelvtanaival. A módszer didaktikai hasznosságát ő is méltatja.

[11] A látogatásra Görgey Géza barátom vett rá, akinek utólag is köszönettel tartozom folyamatos mentori szerepvállalásáért. Ekkor kaptam Marjovszi Tibortól egy Rúth-kommentárt és egy Gesenius-szótárt – *habent sua fata libelli*…

[12] LASOR (1974), 108–119.

így Eszter késői héberséget hordozó könyve is, zömével gyakran előforduló főneveket és igéket tartalmaz (bár a könyv kutatója nyilván tudna kivételeket is felsorolni). Összességében a tanulás folyamán a diák végig motivált marad, és alkalmazható tudást szerez. Mindezt egy deduktív nyelvtani megközelítésről nem lehet elmondani. A deduktív nyelvtanok az alefbét könnyedségével indulnak, de az igeragozás labirintusába viszik a diákot, és olyan ismereteket követelnek meg, aminek egy jelentős részét soha nem fogja használni. Hadd tegyünk egy megjegyzést LaSor nyelvtana kapcsán: LaSor pályafutása során több mint 2000 diákot tanított módszerével, nyelvtanát más kollégái is használták, és több kiadást is megért. Feltételezhetően valamilyen digitalizált formában újra felfedezik majd az előnyei miatt. Magam is kacérkodom egyébként más szemléletű és terjedelmű nyelvtan megírásával; az elmúlt szemeszterben is voltak közös pedagógiai kísérleteim a diákjaimmal.

William Rainey Harper (1856–1906)

Kiemelkedő amerikai tudós, sémi nyelvész, baptista lelkész. Hihetetlen munkabírásával segített megalapítani a chicagói egyetemet (University of Chicago), aminek 35 évesen első elnöke lesz, majd megalapítja az ország első egyiptológia és szociológia tanszékét, és megszervezi az egyetem ma is működő kiadóját (University of Chicago Press). 1896-ban segített Lydia Moss Bradleynek egy újabb intézet megalapításában, ennek is az első elnöke lett. Ma ezt Bradley Egyetemként (Bradley University) ismerjük. Csodagyereknek titulálták, aki 14 évesen diplomázott, 16 évesen iratkozott be a Yale-re, ahol 19 évesen szerezte meg doktori fokozatát, majd 30 évesen fogadta el ugyanott a sémi nyelvek professzori állására szóló felkérést. Számos tankönyvet írt, valamint nevéhez fűződik az induktív módszer alkalmazása is. 49 évesen rákos megbetegedésben hunyt el. Harper elkötelezett híve volt az induktív módszer alkalmazásának: nemcsak héber nyelvtant írt induktív megközelítéssel,[13] hanem görög[14] és latin nyelvtant[15] is. Az induktív héber nyelvtan igazi sikertörténet lett: az 1881-es első kiadást 35 év alatt hat kiadás követte, majd még revízióra is sor került

[13] HARPER, W. R. (1881): *Introductory Hebrew Method and Manual*. Chicago.

[14] HARPER, W. R. – WATERS, W. E. (1888): *An Inductive Greek Method*. New York; HARPERM, W. R. – CASTLE, C. F. (1893): *An Inductive Greek Primer*. New York, American Book Company.

[15] HARPER, W. R. – BURGESS, I. B. (1888): *An Inductive Latin Method*. New York: American Book Company.

később.[16] Teoretikus értelemben azonban nem tartom igazi induktív módszernek Harper megközelítését: lényegében nagyon hasonló egy deduktív tankönyvhöz, viszont itt nem az elmélet után következnek a gyakorló feladatok, hanem a gyakorló szövegek vannak tanulószövegként felcímkézve, melyet a nyelvtani rész követ. Az igazi induktív módszer az lett volna, ha valóban héber szövegekből, azok elemzéséből tanítja hallgatóit az első laptól fogva. Meglátásom szerint ettől Harper távol áll, s ha helyes a következtetés a hatodik kiadás előszava alapján, még ez a megközelítés is úgymond „enyhült" és eltolódott a klasszikus deduktív nyelvtanok felé.

A héber nyelvtanokat és a héber nyelv oktatásával kapcsolatos anyagokat évek óta gyűjtöm. A legújabb, még kiadatlan didaktikával foglalkozó kézirat 2023-ban született Katie M. Ericksontól, melyben összegzi eddigi ismereteinket.[17] Árulkodó, hogy az egyébként alapos kéziratnak mindössze négyoldalnyi bibliográfia található a végén, s ebben már a héber nyelvtanok, módszertani írások, sőt más sémi, ill. görög tanítással kapcsolatos írások is benne vannak. A szakirodalom tehát nem terjedelmes, viszont várhatóan megugrik majd a jövőben a fokozódó érdeklődés nyomán. Erickson tanulmánya 28. oldalán hét sorban beszél az induktív módszerről:[18]

> „Noonan szerint az induktív módszert William Harper vezette be az 1881-ben megjelent *Introductory Hebrew Method and Manual* című művében. Ebben a módszerben a diák úgy sajátítja el a nyelv alapvető elemeit, mint az alefbét, szókincs, mondattan és nyelvtan, hogy azokkal a szövegben találkozik. A nyelvtant alkalmasint kifejtik világosan, de a tanulás elsődlegesen a célnyelv számos szövegének elolvasásával történik, és inkább magával a nyelvvel szembesítik a diákot, nem pedig a nyelvtani szabályokkal. A hangsúly az induktív módszerben az olvasásra esik, valamint a célnyelvről a diák anyanyelvére történő fordításra."[19]

[16] HARPER, W. R. (1921): *Elements of Hebrew by an Inductive Method*. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons.

[17] ERICKSON, Katie M. (é. n.): *Biblical Hebrew Teaching Methods: What Helps Learners Retain the Language? A Project Report Submitted to the Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Ministry*. A Winebrenner Theological Seminary (USA, OH). Doktori programjának keretében készült projektjelentés.

[18] I. m. 28.

[19] A tanulmány szerzőjének saját fordítása.

Erickson itt egy másik kutatónőre, Jennifer Noonan-re hivatkozik, akinek pár éve jelent meg egy cikke a Stephen A. Kaufman tiszteletére kiadott köszöntőkötetben a héber nyelv tanítási módszereiről.[20] Jelen pillanatban tehát a kutatástörténet az induktív módszert William Rainey Harper nevéhez köti.

Ezek alapján igazat adhatunk annak, aki úgy gondolja, hogy a fentebb elhangzottak az induktív módszer kutatástörténeti bemutatását fejtegették. Ám előadásom mégsem ez okból született meg, ugyanis arra a nóvumra szeretném irányítani a tudományos közönség figyelmét, hogy az induktív módszer máshol és máskor keletkezett, s ennek az új felfedezésnek magyar vonatkozása van.

Előadásom gondolatmenete ezen a ponton ér össze egy korábbi kutatásommal. Nemrég ismertettem a Karasszon István születésnapjára összeállított kötetben Somosi János héber–magyar szótárának fragmentumát.[21] Somosi nemcsak az Ószövetség és a rendszeres teológia professzora volt tanszékén, hanem a sárospataki könyvtár igazgatója is.[22] Ilyen minőségében könyveket is katalogizált és adományozott a könyvtárnak. Így került kezembe mint általa adományozott könyv egy számomra addig ismeretlen szerző ismeretlen héber nyelvtana,[23] amit Somosi a saját kezű beírása szerint 1842. május 24-én

[20] NOONAN, J. E. (2017): Teaching Methods for Biblical Hebrew, In: Dallaire, H. M. – Noonan, B. J. – Noonan, J. E.: *"Where Shall Wisdom Be Found?" A Grammatical Tribute to Professor Stephen A. Kaufman*. Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns. 317–336.

[21] EGERESI L. S. (2025): Egy elfelejtett szótár – adalékok a bibliai héber lexikográfia magyar fejezetéhez, In: Egeresi, L. S. – Kovács, E. H. (szerk.): *Asré háís – Tanulmányok a 70 éves Karasszon István tiszteletére*. Budapest, KRE-HTK. 121–140.

[22] Somosi gazdag életművét látva e sorok írója újabb problémával szembesült: miért nem szerepel doktori programjainkban egy-egy régebben élt magyar ószövetségi kutató életpályájának a feldolgozása meghirdetett témaként? Somosi János, aki 200 évvel ezelőtt volt az első ószövetségkutató professzor Sárospatakon, nemcsak Gesenius nyelvtanát ültette át magyarra, hanem több héber nyelvtana van, exegetikai munkái, bevezetéstana, judaisztikai és magyar nyelvtörténeti vonatkozású írásai is. A ránk maradt töredékes szótárát korábban már bemutattam, viszont meggyőződésem, hogy ha a külföldi kutatókat számon tartjuk, ismerjük, saját elődeink is megérdemelnék ugyanezt. Talán doktori programunk témaköreit érdemes lenne bővíteni ilyen irányban is.

[23] A Magyarországon kiadott, magyar szerzők által írt vagy magyar nyelvű héber nyelvtanok bibliográfiáját (1635–1995) Strbik Andrea állította össze; ld. STRBIK Andrea (1999): *Héber nyelvtanok Magyarországon* (Hungaria Judaica 10). Budapest, Osiris Kiadó – MTA Judaisztikai Kutatócsoport. Jelenleg ezt a gyűjteményt tekintjük a legteljesebb bibliográfiai adatbázisnak a témakörben. Tamasko/Tamaskó István nincs a szerzők között.

vásárolt. A nyelvtan[24] címlapján ez áll: „*Gyakorlati kézikönyv a héber nyelv 'könnyebb megtanulására a' magyar nyelvet illető nehány összehasonlításokkal, kezdő tanulók számára*. Írta Tamasko István, a' Pozsonyi A.H. Ev. Lyceumnak Subrectora" (ld. *1. függelék*).

Tamaskó István (1801–1881)

Pozsonyban az evangélikus líceumban tanított, „ismert filológus, műfordító",[25] valamint személyében tisztelhetjük az egyik első magyar szanszkritológust is. Pozsonyban végezte a teológiát, de aztán 1822-ben az akkor induló bécsi teológiára ment át, ahol másfél évig tartózkodott. Pár év után, 1828-ban zsinati ösztöndíjjal újra külföldre ment, Göttingenbe (itt kezdte meg szanszkrit tanulmányait Ewaldnál), és több nagyvárost is meglátogatott. Utolsó munkája a *Szózat* latinra fordítása volt 80 évesen, amit egyik barátjának ajánlott.[26] Vagyis: Tamaskó végzett teológiai tanulmányokat, de héber nyelvtanáról mindeddig nem volt tudomásunk.

Tamaskó nyelvtanának (a továbbiakban: gyakorlókönyv) az előszavát szeretném az alábbiakban ismertetni, majd az utasításait – ui. rövid használati útmutatót is ad az olvasónak –, majd pedig megnézzük az első leckét a gyakorlókönyvből.

A gyakorlókönyv előszava (ld. *2–3. függelék*):

„Előbeszéd.

Ezen könyvecske a hebra nyelv' megtanulásának könnyebítésére céloz: mert vélekedésem szerint ezen magában könnyü nyelv csak azon körülmény által kapott olly hírre, mint ha megtanulása óriási munkába kerülne, hogy a tanulónak számos szabályokkal kellett gyötrődni elébb, míg azokat gyakorlatilag használhatná: holott, ha természeti úton járdalván, először a nyelv anyagával csak némileg is megismerkedett, mint szabályait könnyebben értheti, mint tettleges előmeneteleket tevén, tanulás kedvéje is fog nevekedni.

[24] A kézirat terjedelme 126 oldal, mérete: 270 x 180 mm, kézirattári jelzete: Kt. 3527, a katalógus bejegyzése szerint „egykorú másolat".

[25] *Pallas Nagy Lexikona*. XV. 910.

[26] THEWREWK Árpád (1881): Tamasko István, In: *Philologiai Közlöny*. V, 4. 275–293.

> Ez fő czélom vala ezen munkának szerkesztetésében: de a mellett még mást is vettem szemügyre. Dicső honi nyelvünk tökéletesítésének tudniillik minden bizonnyal csak nyereséges volna azon nyelvek' vele való összehasonlítása, mellyek a'hoz szemlátomást közelgenek s ha honunk azon tudósai nem csatlakoznak, kik hazai nyelvünkben hebraizáló nyomokat kerestek, ama nyelvek' egyike a héber is. Mi honi nyelvünket napkeletinek mondjuk: hogy tehát művelődésében el ne törpüljön, örizzük meg eredeti napkeleti jellemét.
>
> Talán már elmúlt azon idő, a mikor a héber nyelv mint zsidó, mint valamely szörnyeteg semmi figyelemre méltó, csak nem egyedül hittudósok sajátja vala: nem csak a hittudós, hanem a költő, a nyelvbúvár is tudományt meríthet annak kincseiből. A magyar nyelvnek nincs is oka, miért pirulnia a hebrán, mindenik alkotmánya egyszerü ugyan, de elmés is, a héber nyelvnek szerencsésebb huga pedig az arab, az Atlasztól a' holdbérczekig, és a' Szerecsenhonon túl az Indus partjaiig uralkodik. Általjában a legujabb történetek napkeletre vonják tekintetünket s a' mi honunk is napkeleti országokhoz szorosabb kapcsolatba jönni látszik.
>
> Ezen szempontból vévén fel a' dolgot, talán nem épen haszontalan munkát vállaltam magamra ezen könyv készítésével, mellyet ezennel a' tudós közönség' birálatának átadok: remélhető szerencsés foganatja tervét fogja igazolni, mellyet kidolgozásában követtem 's melly szerint dologhoz értő az egyes leczkék' végén feljegyzett hasonszavakról is fog ítélni. talán ezek a' magyar és héber nyelv' méllyebb összehasonlítására vezetendenek.
>
> Poson, tavaszelő, 1841.
> a' szerző"

Összefoglalva mai nyelven: 1. Tamaskó szerint az induktív megközelítés (ő még nyilván nem így nevezi) rácáfol arra a tévhitre, hogy a héber nyelv megtanulása nehéz; 2. a héber és magyar nyelv összehasonlítása pozitív a magyarra nézve; 3. elmúlt a héber nyelv antiszemita megítélése; 4. felfedezhetjük végre a héber nyelv kincseit; 5. bízik a könyv jó fogadtatásában a tudományos körökben.

Az *Útasítás*ban röviden instruálja Tamaskó a diákjait a gyakorlókönyv használatát illetően:

„Útasítás
ezen gyakorlati könyv használatára.

A' kezdő megtanulván a betűket, olvassa el a' nyelvtanítmánynak első osztályát: ezután kezdje elölről a' leczkék' olvasását úgy, hogy a'mellett a második osztályt is czikkszámra figyelmessen átolvassa. A hasábok alatt való jegyzéseket /:mellyekben a czikkjelek §. §. visszamutatnak a' nyelvtudományra:/ épen nem szükséges szorosabban vizsgálni addig, míg az egész nyelvtanítmány példányokkal /:paradigmata:/ együtt el nincs olvasva. Nem lesz fölösleges azt is javasolni, hogy a' tanuló minden leczkét magyarból visszafordítani el ne múlasson és más leczkét se kezdjen el addig, míg az előbbit akadozás nélkül - a hebra sorokat kézzel vagy papirossal befödvén - fordítani nem tudja. A magyar fordítás különösen ezen gyakorlatra van alkalmaztatva."

Megkerülhetetlen az első lépés tehát, a betűk megtanulása, utána azonban lényegében autodidakta módon használható a gyakorlókönyv.

Ezek után vessünk egy pillantást az első leckére (*4. függelék*). A héber szöveg láthatóan a bibliai héber szöveget követi, de nem szó szerint. Itt mindig dilemma az oktatónak, nyelvtanírónak, hogy milyen szöveget használjon: szó szerinti idézet legyen az eredetiből (vö. jelen sorok szerzőjének nyelvtana), kitalált szöveg legyen (vö. Varga Zsigmond görög nyelvtana), vagy egy köztes szöveg, mint jelen esetben. Ennél a gyakorlókönyvnél szerencsésnek érzem a hibrid szöveget, ami erősen támaszkodik az eredetire, annak könnyített, de felismerhető verziója. A jegyzetek lényegre törőek, pontosak, didaktikailag jól felépített a tartalom, és megfelelő a terjedelem is. A lecke végén (*5. függelék*) láthatjuk azt is, hogyan próbálja magyar szavakhoz kötni a héber szavak tanulását a szerző. A hangzásbeli hasonlóság alapján összekötni két nyelv szavait hasznos megoldás lehet, amíg nem túlzottan erőltetett. Példák saját nyelvtanomból: erős igék qal inf.: *kátób-kötób* = „lábról öngól", ill. part.: *kótéb-kátúb* = gólért játszunk. Egy egész nyelvtant végigvinni ezzel a koncepcióval viszont egészen újszerűnek hat. A könyv második felében a 61. oldaltól a nyelvtan kapott helyet, a „nyelvtanítmány" végén pedig táblázatok, paradigmák találhatók, ill. a gyakorlókönyv zárásaként tartalomjegyzék áll.

Átgondolt koncepció, világos utasítás és gyakorlati kivitelezés – egy igazi induktív tankönyv, egy gyöngyszem van előttünk.

Kérdés, hogy miért nem adatta ki nyelvtanát Tamaskó, ill. miért nem terjedt el a pozsonyi iskolában? Negyven évesen írta meg (1841), utána pedig még negyven évig élt. Az biztos, hogy a pozsonyi líceumban – vagy, ahogy akkoriban hívták, a Pozsonyi Ágostai Hitvallású Evangelika Főiskolában –, az iskola 1854-ben kiadott értesítője szerint[27] ekkor még mindig Zsigmondy Sámuel latin nyelvű héber tankönyvét (1828) használták az iskolában. Ne felejtsük, ekkor már rég megjelent a Somosi János-féle Gesenius-nyelvtan (1832), és a magyar a hivatalos nyelv az országban (1844). Továbbá azt is említsük meg, hogy Markusovszky Sámuel nem a héber nyelv tanítójaként emlékezik meg Tamaskóról a pozsonyi líceum történetét bemutató könyvében.[28] A fentiek tükrében csak akkor tudunk válaszolni a fenti kérdésre, ha újabb adatokra bukkanunk.

Kérdés az is, hogy Tamaskó kreativitása szülte-e az első „igazi" induktív nyelvtant, vagy külföldi minta volt előtte? Bécsi tanárától nem találtam ilyen kiadványt.[29] Ewald *Kritische Garmmatik*-ját ismerjük:[30] klasszikus deduktív megközelítés, németes rendszerességgel paragrafusokba szedve minden – ő nem lehet a forrás. Volt-e Tamaskó kezében latin vagy német nyelven írt induktív módszert használó héber tankönyv? Biztosat nem mondhatunk, de a kor magyar tudósai büszkén és őszintén felvállalták, ha külföldi mesterüktől tanultak valamit. Márpedig Tamaskó nyelvtanában ennek nincs nyoma; beszélne róla, ha lett volna ilyen mestere. Sőt, mint az előszóban megfogalmazza, ez az ő saját nyelvtana, amit határozott céllal írt.

Ennek tudatában a kutatás jelen állása szerint kijelenthetjük, hogy az induktív módszer alkalmazása a héber nyelv oktatásában nem William R. Harper nevéhez kötődik a 19. sz. végétől, hanem évtizedekkel régebbre datálódik, és egy magyar tudóshoz, Tamaskó Istvánhoz kell kapcsolnunk.

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[27] TUDÓSÍTVÁNY A POZSONYI ÁGOSTAI HITVALLÁSU EVANGELIKA FŐISKOLÁRÓL 1853/4 TANÉVBEN. Kiadta: Michnay Endre igazgató, Pozsony, 1854.

[28] MARKUSOVSZKY Sámuel (1896): *A pozsonyi ág. hitv. evang. lyceum története*. Pozsony. 450. Eszerint Tamaskó *subrector*ként az alsóbb osztályokban működött – ott nem volt héber nyelv.

[29] Tamaskó életrajzaiban nem találtam nyomát annak, hogy ki volt Bécsben a tanára; a legvalószínűbb e sorok írója szerint Johann Georg Wenrich (1787–1847).

[30] EWALD, G. H. A. (1827): *Kritische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache*. Lipcse.

Post scriptum

Előadásomhoz szeretnék néhány további megjegyzést fűzni.

1) A fentiek tükrében át kellett gondolnom a levéltári kutatás fontosságát. Régi protestáns könyvtáraink aranybányái kiaknázatlanok. Mérhetetlen örömömet leltem abban, hogy egy igazi levéltári kutatásban vehettem részt, amikor rábukkantam és feldolgoztam Somosi János héber–magyar szótárát Sárospatakon: leletmentés, feltárás, publikálás. Amikor a sárospataki Nagykönyvtár kézirattárának munkatársaival beszélgettem, akkor döbbentem erre rá igazán. Egy elképesztő példát említek itt szemléltetés gyanánt. A 20. századi magyar református rendszeres teológia szerintem legnagyobb, zseniális alakja Nagy Barna professzor volt. Nagy Barnának a kézirattárban az ott dolgozók becslése szerint 1,5 köbméter (!) feldolgozatlan anyaga van. Hány doktori disszertáció, értékes cikk, monográfia hever itt a fiókokban a kutatókra várva…
2) Ez felvet számomra egy újabb problémát is: szerepel-e doktori programjainkban egy-egy régebben élt magyar ószövetségkutató életpályájának feldolgozása meghirdetett témaként? Ebben a kontextusban érdemes lehet megemlíteni a már korábban példaként felhozott Somosi Jánost.
3) Látható, hogy mennyire elhanyagolt téma az ószövetségkutatásban és a teológiai oktatásban a héber nyelv oktatásának kérdésköre. Talán érdemes lenne létrehozni egy olyan digitális felületet, ami a módszertani áttekinthetőség javítását szolgálja; ahova fel lehetne tölteni feladatokat, akár régebbi kéziratokat, akár újabbakat, cikkek, könyvek recenzióit, megvitatni módszertani kérdéseket stb. Ez létrejöhetne akár több egyetem együttműködésének eredményeként is, melynek révén a projekt alkalmasabbá válik pályázati benyújtásra – mindezt ráadásul angol nyelven is lehetne működtetni. Az ivrit szakirodalom áttekintésére a jelen pillanatig nem vállalkozott e tanulmány írója, azonban az angol és német nyelv területén nem talált írásokat a bibliai héber nyelv tanításának módszertanára, ami így továbbra is *desideratum* marad, melynek megalkotása a jövő feladata.

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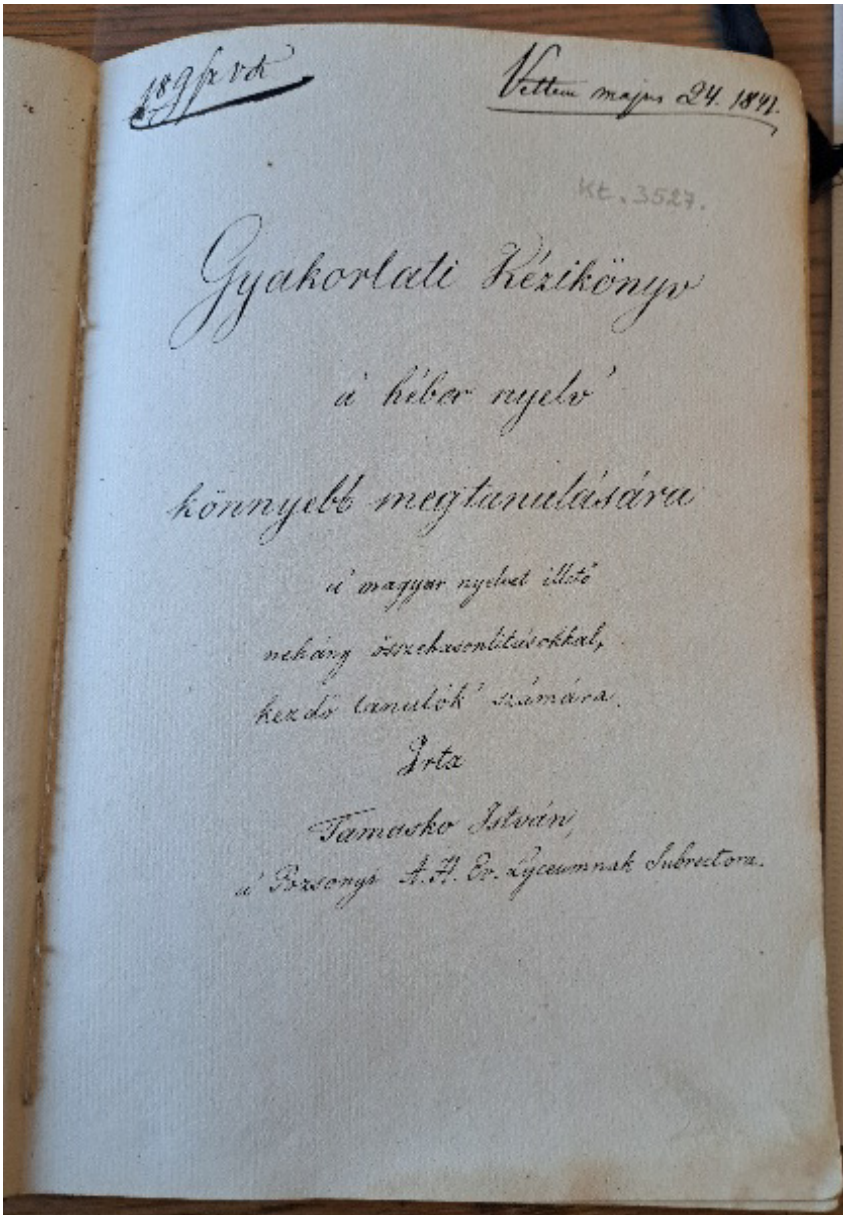
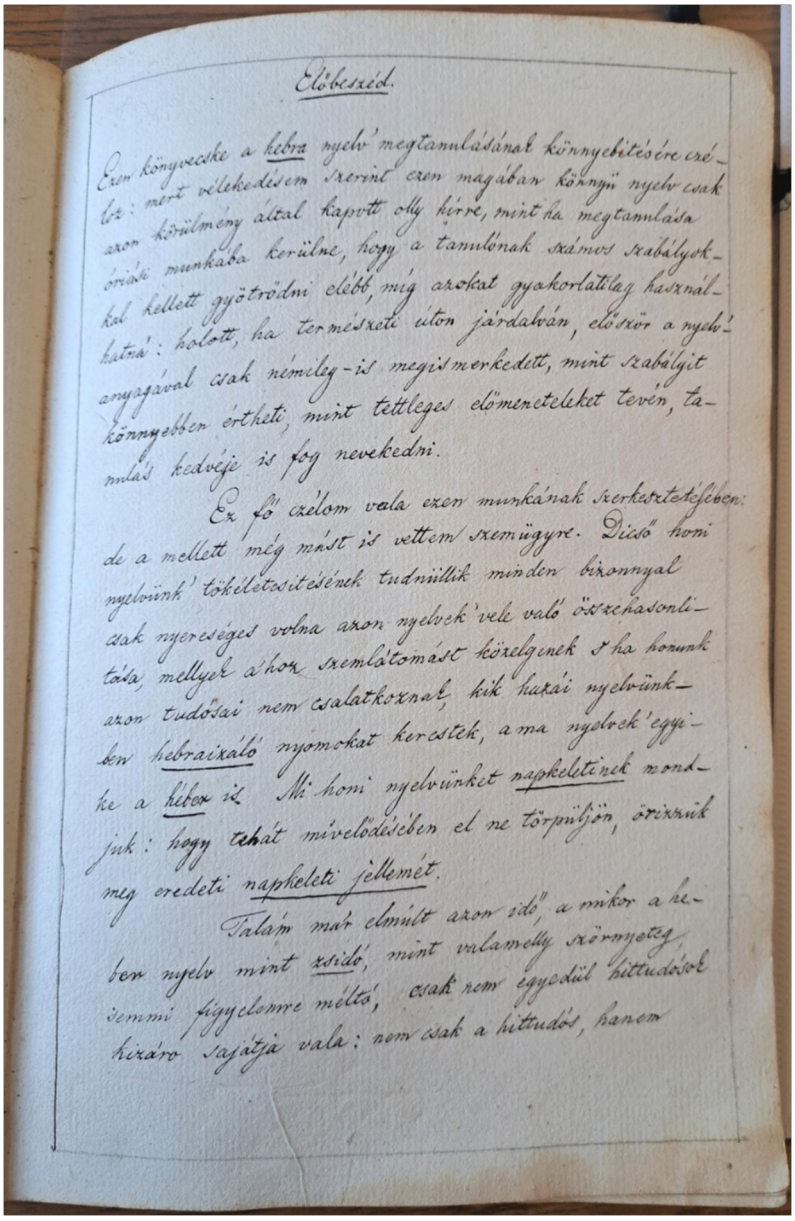


1. függelék: *Címlap*



Előbeszéd.

Ezen könyvecske a hebra nyelv' megtanulásának könnyebbítésére czéloz: mert véleködésem szerint ezen magában könnyü nyelv csak azon körülmény által kapott oly hírre, mint ha megtanulása óriási munkába kerülne, hogy a tanulónak számos szabályokkal kellett gyötrödni előbb, még azokat gyakorlatilag használhatná: holott, ha természeti úton járdalván, először a nyelv' anyagával csak némileg-is megismerkedett, mint szabályit könnyebben értheti, mint tettleges előmeneteleket tevén, tanulás kedvéje is fog nevekedni.

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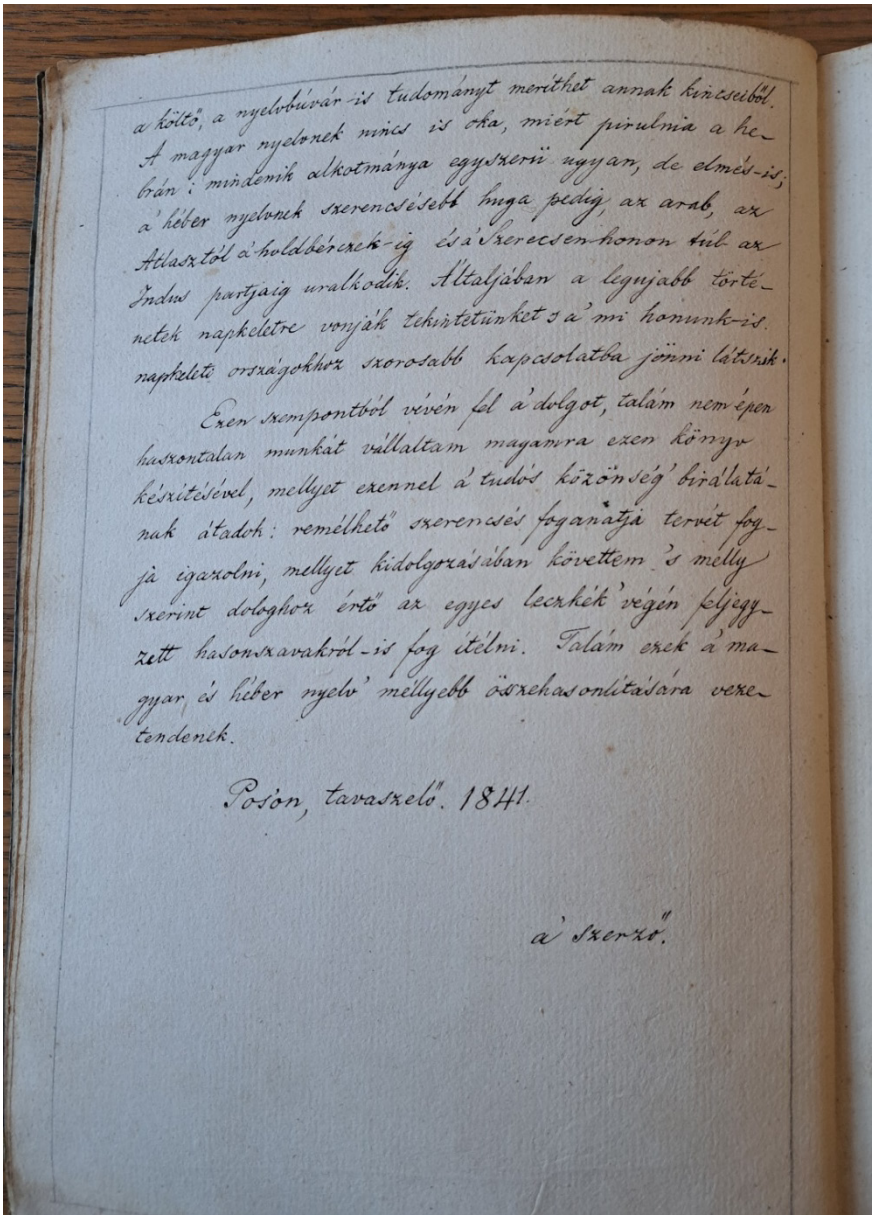
Talám már elmult azon idö, a mikor a hebren nyelv mint zsidó, mint valamelly szörnyeteg semmi figyelemre méltó, csak nem eggyedül hittudósok kizáro sajátja vala: nem csak a hittudós, hanem

2. függelék: Előbeszéd *(első oldal)*



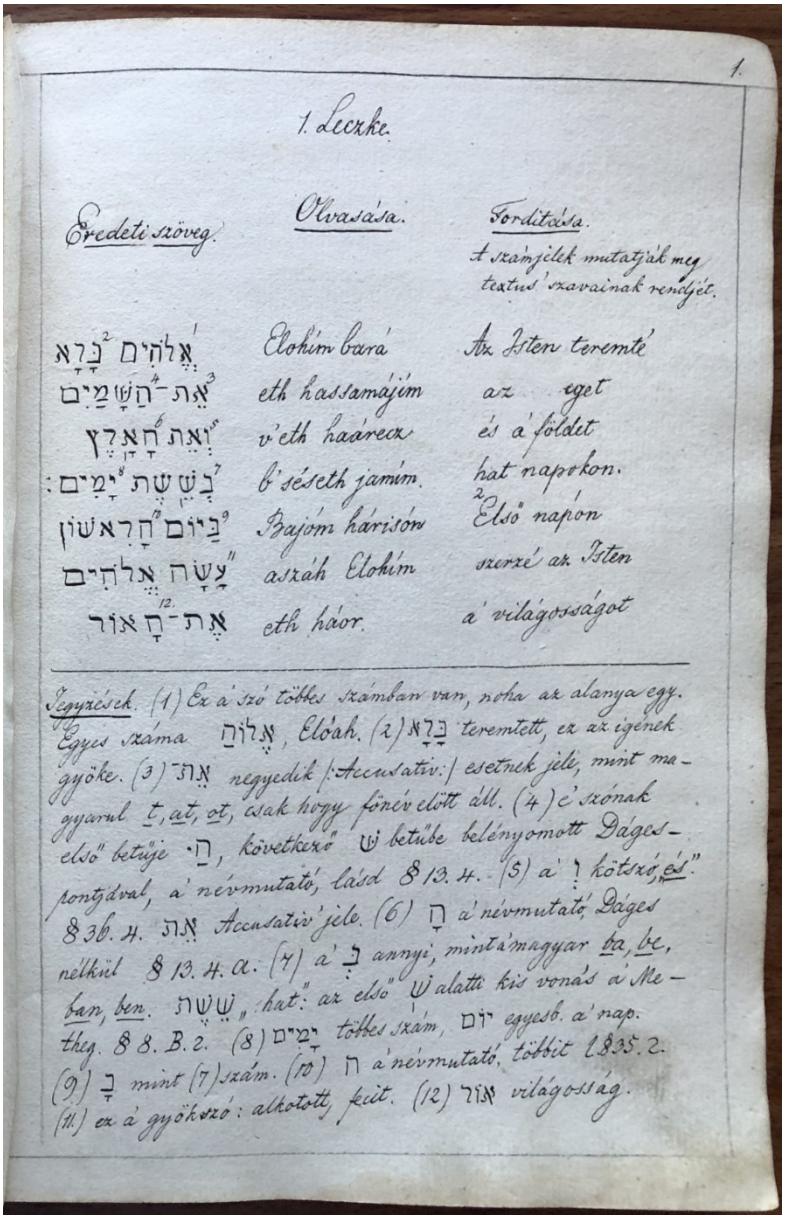
a' költő, a nyelvbúvár-is tudományt meríthet annak kincseiből.
A magyar nyelvnek míves is oka, miért pirulnia a hebrán' mindenik alkotmánya egyszerü ugyan, de elmés-is, a' héber nyelvnek szerencsésebb hanga pedig, az arab, az Atlasztól a' holdbéreznek-ig és a' Szerecsen-honon túl az Indus partjaig uralkodik. Általjában a legujabb történetek napkeletre vonják tekintetünket s a' mi honunk-is napkeleti országokhoz szorosabb kapcsolatba jönni látszik.

Ezen szempontból vévén fel a' dolgot, talám nem épen haszontalan munkát vállaltam magamra ezen könyv készítésével, mellyet ezennel a' tudós közönség' birálatának átadok: reménlhető szerencsés foganatja tervét fogja igazolni, mellyet kidolgozásában követtem, s melly szerint dolgoznom az egyes leczkék végén feljegyzett hasonszavakról-is fog ítélni. Talám ezek a magyar és héber nyelv' mellyebb összehasonlitására vezetendenek.

Pósón, tavaszelő. 1841.

a' Szerző.

3. függelék: Előbeszéd *(második oldal)*



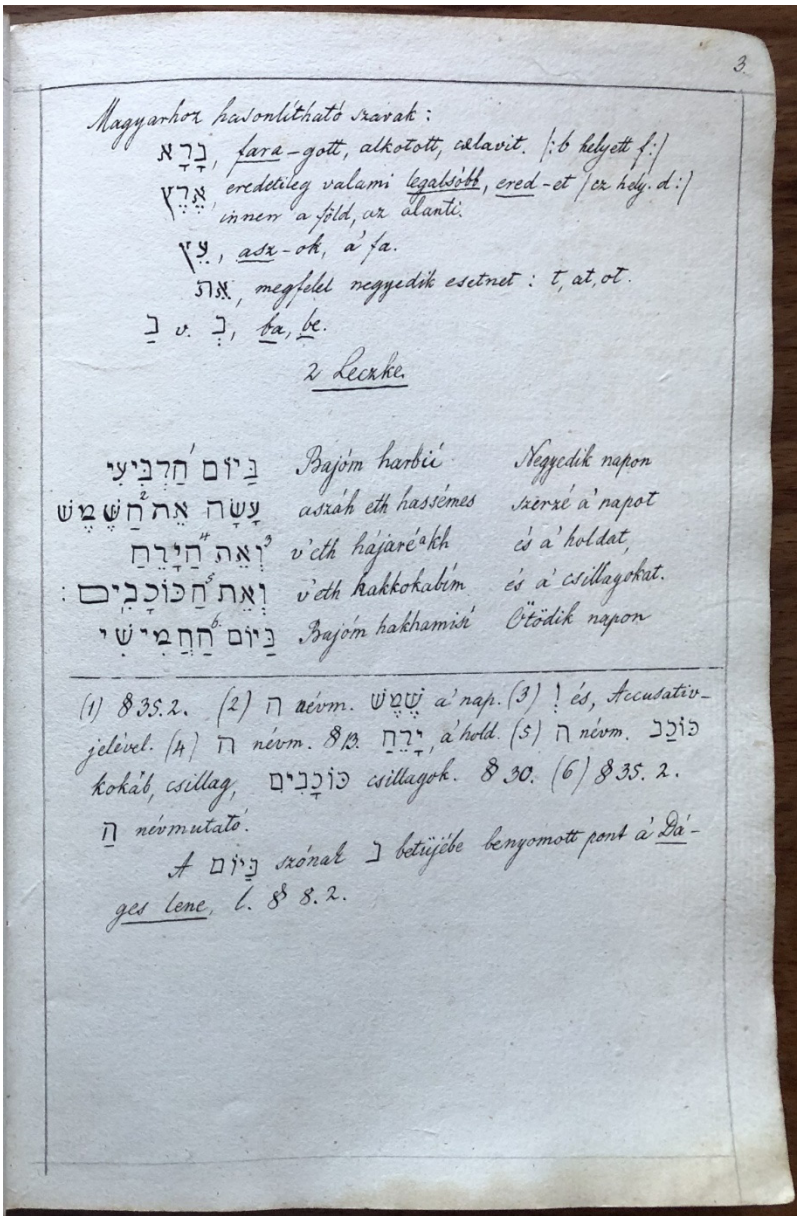
1.

1. Leczke.

Eredeti szöveg.	Olvasása.	Fordítása. (A számjelek mutatják meg textusi szavainak renáját.)
1 אֱלֹהִים 2 בָּרָא	Elohím bará	Az Isten teremté
3 אֵת־ 4 הַשָּׁמַיִם	eth hassamájim	az eget
5 וְאֵת 6 הָאָרֶץ	v'eth haáreca	és a' földet
7 בְּשִׁשֶּׁת 8 יָמִים :	b'séseth jamím.	hat napokon.
9 בְּיוֹם 10 הָרִאשׁוֹן	Bajóm hárisón	2 Első napon
11 עָשָׂה אֱלֹהִים	aszáh Elohím	szerzé az Isten
12. אֵת־ הָאוֹר	eth háor.	a' világosságot

Jegyzések. (1) Ez a' szó többes számban van, noha az alanya egy. Egyes száma אֱלוֹהַּ, Elóah. (2) בָּרָא teremtett, ez az igének gyöke. (3) אֵת־ negyedik [:Accusativ:] esetnek jele, mint magyarul _t, _at, _et, csak hogy főnév előtt áll. (4) e' szónak első betüje ה·, következő ש betübe belényomott Dágespontjával, a' névmutató, lásd § 13. 4. (5) a' ו kötszó, és" § 36. 4. אֵת Accusativ' jele. (6) הָ a' névmutató, Dáges nélkül § 13. 4. a. (7) a' בְּ annyi, mint a' magyar ba, be, ban, ben. שֵׁשֶׁת „hat:" az első ש alatti kis vonás a' Metheg. § 8. B. 2. (8) יָמִים többes szám, יוֹם egyesb. a' nap. (9) בָּ mint (7) szám. (10) ה a' névmutató, többit l. § 35. 2. (11) ez a' gyökszó: alkotott, készit. (12) אוֹר világosság.

4. függelék: 1. Leczke *eleje*



3.

Magyarhoz hasonlítható szavak:

בָּרָא, *bará* – gott, alkotott, teremtett. [b helyett f.]

אֶרֶץ, eredetileg valami legalsóbb, ered-et [ez hely. d.] innen a föld, az alanti.

עֵץ, asz-ok, a' fa.

אֵת, megfelel negyedik esetnek: t, at, et.

בְּ v. בָ, *bá*, *be*.

2 Leczke.

בְּיוֹם חֲרְבִיעִי	Bajóm harbií	Negyedik napon
עָשָׂה אֶת־הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ	asáh eth hassémes	szerzé a' napot
וְאֵת הַיָּרֵחַ	v'eth hájaréakh	és a' holdat,
וְאֵת הַכּוֹכָבִים:	v'eth hakkokabím	és a' csillagokat.
בְּיוֹם חֲמִישִׁי	Bajóm hakhamisí	Ötödik napon

(1) § 35. 2. (2) ה névm. שֶׁמֶשׁ a' nap. (3) ! és, Accusativ-jelével. (4) ה névm. § 13. יָרֵחַ, a' hold. (5) ה névm. כּוֹכָב kokáb, csillag, כּוֹכָבִים csillagok. § 30. (6) § 35. 2. הַ névmutató.

A יוֹם szónak ב betűjébe benyomott pont a Da-ges lene, l. § 8. 2.

5. függelék: 1. Leczke *vége*

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Ottilia LUKÁCS[1]:

Remembering or Forgetting Jerusalem? The Cultural Trauma of Exile

Abstract.

Using the Babylonian siege and exile as a case study, the paper examines how collective trauma was transformed into cultural memory and became constitutive of communal identity. The paper asks what enables a destroyed city to remain "alive" and how Jerusalem came to function as the singular idealized city of ancient Judah. Engaging the memory theory of Jan Assmann and the concept of cultural trauma developed by Jeffrey C. Alexander, it analyses two distinct trauma management strategies reflected in biblical texts. Ezekiel interprets the destruction theologically, framing exile as divinely ordained punishment and thereby rendering the catastrophe meaningful within a framework of guilt and repentance. In contrast, an anonymous psalmist preserves an emotional and symbolic attachment to the ruined city through an oath of remembrance and loyalty. Both figures function as cultural carriers who integrate the trauma of exile into the community's self-understanding. By sustaining Jerusalem as a central reference point in cultural memory, they ensure that the destroyed city endures as a marker of collective ethnic and religious identity.

Keywords: cultural memory, cultural trauma, Ezekiel, Psalm 137, Babylonian exile

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Introduction

Based on archaeological evidence,[2] we know that the land of Judah did not remain empty after the Babylonian siege, as described in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Ez 39:28–29).[3] Rather, life in Judah continued without Jerusalem, albeit with a drastically decreased population.[4] In brief, following the deportations and the destruction of the city's central buildings – the Temple and the royal palace –, Jerusalem was left deserted, and the remains of the city were used as a source of building stone by the local population.[5]

We can formulate the questions as follows: What keeps a city alive? More precisely: what keeps a destroyed city alive? What strengths and values did Jerusalem possess that enabled it to survive its physical destruction? How and why did Jerusalem become the only "idealized city" of ancient Judah?

Using the siege of Jerusalem as an example, this paper will reflect on how collective traumas become part of a community's cultural memory and shape its collective identity drawing on the memory theory of J. Assmann and the concept of cultural trauma of J. Alexander.

Definitions of Trauma and Cultural Memory

The "trauma of Babylonian exile" is a simplified expression that incorporates many traumatic events such as destruction, siege, deportation and resettlement, and new start in a foreign socio-cultural and political milieu that we would call today "forced

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2 LIPSCHITS, Oded (2021): *Age of Empires: The History and Administration of Judah in the 8th–2nd Centuries BCE in Light of the Storage-Jar Stamp Impressions*. Pennsylvania, Eisenbrauns.

3 See further the concept of "the myth of empty land". For example, LIPSCHITS, Oded (2003): *Where Is the "Myth of the Empty Land" to Be Found? History versus Myth.* In: Lipschits, Oded – Blenkinsopp, Joseph (eds.): *Judah and Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*. Winona Lake (IN), Eisenbrauns. 55–74.

4 FINKELSTEIN, Israel (2024): *Jerusalem. The Center of the Universe: Its Archaeology and History (1800–100 BCE)*. SBL Press.

5 KŐSZEGHY, Miklós (2023): *Jeruzsálem – Egy rejtőzködő város története*. Budapest, Martin Opitz Kiadó. 184.

migration" and "culture shock", which also involve the loss of religious and political stability. All these events have a profound impact not only on an individual but also on a communal level.[6]

Ruth Poser summarizes the attitudes towards traumatic experiences, highlighting two fundamental yet contrary impulses:

> [O]n the one hand, the violence that victims have suffered preoccupies them and constantly intrudes on their thoughts; on the other hand, victims try as hard as they can to ward off feelings of anxiety, pain, and helplessness, and to protect themselves from everything connected with the trauma. The term *intrusion symptoms* is used to describe states in which victims relive the traumatic situation; they include intrusive thoughts, nightmares, and flashbacks. Contrasting *constriction symptoms* may appear as psychological numbing, rigidity, and social withdrawal.[7]

Furthermore, in agreement with other scholars, Poser highlights the term *desymbolization*, which is used to describe the total breakdown of meaning that occurs during traumatization. Desymbolization is a kind of "defensive mental state in which psychic space can be said to be frozen, experience cannot be accessed, and mental connections are destroyed", resulting in a lack of meaning and a sense of control.[8] Thus, healing processes can be considered as processes of (re)symbolization. According to Poser, the concepts *desymbolization* and *resymbolization* bring together the individual and collective traumatization. Consequently, considering biblical accounts of exile as "trauma literature" is not just a historical record of the traumatic events but also a means of facilitating the healing and recovery process.[9]

According to the scholarly agreement, a collective trauma can refer to the physical, psychological, or mental impacts of catastrophic events on groups, societies, and nations.

A collective trauma becomes a transgenerational trauma precisely through passing down, as it is considered an indispensable element of the community's cultural memory and identity. It is also important to mention Varmik D. Volkan's idea of the "chosen

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6 See, for, instance KELLE, Brad E. (2009): Dealing with the Trauma of Defeat. The Rhetoric of Devastation and Rejuvenation of Nature in Ezekiel. In: *JBL*. 128. 469–490.

7 POSER, Ruth (2023): Ezekiel as Trauma Literature. In: Carvalho, Corrine L. (ed.): *The Oxford Handbook of Ezekiel*. New York, Oxford University Press. 438.

8 KÜHNER, Angela (2002): *Kollektive Traumata-Annahmen, Argumente, Konzepte: Eine Bestandsaufnahme nach dem 11. September*. Berlin, Berghof Forschungszentrum. 58–63.

9 POSER 2023, 439.

trauma",[10] which belongs to the conscious transgenerational trauma, as it refers to a community's collective decision to incorporate a catastrophic or traumatic event into its identity through various forms of representations. The chosen trauma therefore represents an essential unifying power for members across generations.[11]

A socio-cultural approach to collective trauma has been discussed more recently, which goes beyond a purely psychological interpretation of trauma. One of the leading scholars in this field is Jeffrey C. Alexander, who introduced the concept of "cultural trauma". Alexander clarifies that cultural trauma is not an automatic consequence of the catastrophic events, experience of suffering, discomfort, or pain. Rather, the collective experience of suffering and despair become trauma when the acute discomfort enters into the core of the group's sense of its own identity.[12] Furthermore, this happens when the social and historical circumstances make it possible to create powerful symbolic representations and convincing metanarratives that are produced by influential actors, e.g. intellectuals who have interest in interpreting and reinterpreting the past events and integrating them into the community's collective identity, defining in this way its future.

At this point, the cultural memory theory of Jan Assmann is of crucial importance, as it describes how memory works within a remembering community. Although Assmann does not focus primarily on traumatic events, his approach is very helpful in discussing and understanding the dynamics, i.e. the role of agents and of cultural-theological products that contribute to transforming collective catastrophic events into cultural traumas. Cultural memory as it is defined by J. Assmann "refers to one of the exterior dimensions of the human memory, which initially we tend to think of as purely internal… However, the contents of this memory, the ways in which they are organized, and the length of time they last are for the most part not a matter of internal storage or control but the external conditions imposed by society and cultural context."[13]

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[10] VOLKAN, Vamik D. (2001): Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity. In: *Group Analysis*. 34, 1. 87 ff.

[11] Op. cit. 89 ff.

[12] ALEXANDER, Jeffrey C. (2004): Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma. In: Alexander, Jeffrey C. – Eyerman, Roy – Giesen, Bernhard – Smelser, Neil J. – Sztompka, Piotr (eds.): *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*. University of California Press. 10.

[13] ASSMANN, Jan (2011): *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*. Cambridge University Press. 5.

Furthermore, the cultural memory is inevitably selective and involves the process of "remembering" the elements of the past that should not be forgotten under any circumstances – in other words, the past of a community as it is remembered and not how it happened. This type of connection to the past provides bases for the collective identity of the remembering group because it reaffirms the group's identity time and again. Therefore, it becomes one of the key reference points for the community to express its identity. Moreover, cultural memory belongs to the sphere of conscious reflection, which does not occur spontaneously within a group. Rather, it is distributed by "special carriers" such as priests, teachers, or scribes.[14]

In our case, Ezekiel, the prophet of the exiled Judeans, and the psalmist representing the musicians in Babylonia act as special carriers.

Traumatic Discourse in the Book of Ezekiel: Jerusalem

There is no doubt that the trauma of exile is central to the theology and content of the book of Ezekiel. The experiences of the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem and the deportations are articulated in various ways. In my previous research, I studied the identity markers found in the Book of Ezekiel such as the Sabbath, rewritten history, and an exclusivist ideology. My current research focuses more on the trauma of exile that motivated Ezekiel to develop these markers of identity.

Due to the limitations of the paper, I will present but a few examples of traumatic guilt in Jerusalem as described in the Book of Ezekiel below.

The first mention of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 4:1–8 announces the impending siege of the city through a symbolic act: the laying of a brick, the construction of siege-works, and the building of a siege wall against it.

> And you, O mortal, take a brick and set it before you. On it portray a city, Jerusalem; **2** and put siegeworks against it, and build a siege-wall against it, and cast up a ramp against it; set camps also against it, and plant battering rams against it all around. **3** Then take an iron plate and place it as an iron wall between you and the city; set your face toward it, and let it be in a state of siege, and press the siege against it. This is a sign for the house

[14] Op. cit. 33–40.

> of Israel. […] **6** When you have completed these, you shall lie down a second time, but on your right side, and bear the punishment of the house of Judah; forty days I assign you, one day for each year. **7** *You shall set your face toward the siege of Jerusalem, and with your arm bared you shall prophesy against it*. **8** See, I am putting cords on you so that you cannot turn from one side to the other until you have completed the days of your siege. (Ez 4:1–3.6–8)

Secondly, in Ezekiel 5, the guilt and punishment of Jerusalem – its destruction and exile – are specified further, beginning with the dreadful act of using a sharp sword as a barber's razor.

> But she has rebelled against my ordinances and my statutes, becoming more wicked than the nations and the countries all around her, rejecting my ordinances and not following my statutes. Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Because you are more turbulent than the nations that are all around you, and have not followed my statutes or kept my ordinances, but have acted according to the ordinances of the nations that are all around you; therefore thus says the Lord GOD: I, I myself, am coming against you; I will execute judgments among you in the sight of the nations. And because of all your abominations, I will do to you what I have never yet done, and the like of which I will never do again. (Ez 5:6–9)

The following images related to the punishment of Jerusalem are even more dreadful: "Surely, parents shall eat their children in your midst, and children shall eat their parents; I will execute judgments on you, and any of you who survive I will scatter to every wind" (Ez 5:10).

Thirdly, chapters 8 and 9 discuss the further wickedness of Israel and of Jerusalem and their deserved and inevitable punishment by God. The following two chapters (Ez 10–11) belong to this prophetic vision and tell of the glory of the Lord, rising and leaving the threshold of the house of God because of Jerusalem's abominations (Ez 10:18). Ezekiel 11 goes on to discuss the foreshadowed punishment of the "city". Notably, the name "Jerusalem" is not mentioned at all. Hence, the text suggests that Jerusalem is abandoned by God. Ezekiel 11:13 poses the prophet's desperate question about the future of the remnant of Israel: "Ah Lord GOD! Will you make a full end of the remnant of Israel [שְׁאֵרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל]?" In response, the oracle of promise is pronounced:

a new covenant is promised to the exiles, emphasized by the fact that after leaving the sanctuary and Jerusalem, the glory of the Lord goes to the exiles by the River Chebar:

> Then the word of the LORD came to me: **15** Mortal, your kinsfolk, your own kin, your fellow exiles, the whole house of Israel, all of them, are those of whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, "They have gone far from the LORD; to us this land is given for a possession." **16** Therefore say: Thus says the Lord GOD: Though I removed them far away among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a little while in the countries where they have gone. **17** Therefore say: Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples, and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel. […] I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. (Ez 11:14–17.19–20)

Fourthly, in Ezekiel 16, the life of Jerusalem, the "city wife" is presented, starting from her birth as an unwanted baby girl who was treated cruelly, being thrown into an open field without receiving the most essential care. In fact, she was left to die (vv. 4–5). However, God found her and took pity on her, protecting her until she was grown up. In verse 8, God passed by the young woman-Jerusalem, who was "at the age of love". He covered her nakedness, swore to her, and entered a covenant with her, giving her beautiful clothing and jewellery. Jerusalem became the bride of God: a prestigious woman and the delight of her divine husband.

> The word of the LORD came to me: Mortal, make known to Jerusalem her abominations, and say, Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth were in the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in cloths. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you out of compassion for you; but you were thrown out in the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born. I passed by you, and saw you flailing about in your blood. As you lay in your blood, I said to you, "Live! and grow up like a plant of the field." You grew up and became tall and arrived at full womanhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare. I passed by you again and looked on you; you were at the age for love. I spread the edge of my cloak over you, and covered

> your nakedness: I pledged myself to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. Then I bathed you with water and washed off the blood from you, and anointed you with oil. I clothed you with embroidered cloth and with sandals of fine leather; I bound you in fine linen and covered you with rich fabric. I adorned you with ornaments: I put bracelets on your arms, a chain on your neck, a ring on your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. (Ez 16:1–11)

However, Jerusalem became ungrateful and unfaithful, committing the most serious of abominations (e.g. engaging in foreign cults and forming coalitions with great empires such as Egypt and Assyria). Her insatiable sexual appetite leads her to commit adultery with Egyptians, Assyrians, Canaanites, and Chaldeans (vv. 28–29). She is even described as a "brazen prostitute" (v. 30). Hence, Jerusalem is presented as a guilty, unfaithful, and treacherous woman whose wickedness was greater than that of Sodom or Samaria. She betrayed and humiliated her husband. As a punishment, she is destroyed and humiliated. Consequently, Jerusalem returns to her former state of being "naked and bare" (v. 39), as in her childhood.[15]

> But you trusted in your beauty, and played the whore because of your fame, and lavished your whorings on any passer-by. You took some of your garments, and made for yourself colourful shrines, and on them played the whore; nothing like this has ever been or ever shall be. […] How sick is your heart, says the Lord GOD, that you did all these things, the deeds of a brazen whore; building your platform at the head of every street, and making your lofty place in every square! Yet you were not like a whore, because you scorned payment. Adulterous wife, who receives strangers instead of her husband! Gifts are given to all whores; but you gave your gifts to all your lovers, bribing them to come to you from all around for your whorings. So you were different from other women in your whorings: no one solicited you to play the whore; and you gave payment, while no payment was given to you; you were different. […] I will judge you as women who commit adultery and shed blood are judged, and bring blood upon you in wrath and jealousy. I will deliver you into their hands, and they shall throw down your platform and break down your lofty places; they shall strip you of your clothes and take your beautiful objects and leave you naked and bare. (Ez 16:15–16.30–34.38–39)

[15] FURMAN, Rafael (2020): Trauma and Post-trauma in the Book of Ezekiel. In: *OTE*. 33, 1. 44.

Fifthly, Ezekiel 23 builds on the theme of Ezekiel 16 by describing Jerusalem as a "city wife". While Ezekiel 16 focused on a single woman, Ezekiel 23 tells the story of two wicked sisters, Oholah (Samaria) and Oholiba (Jerusalem), who are married to God. Both sisters commit adultery with lovers from different nations. The chapter opens with the accusation of adultery (v. 3), stating that Jerusalem's guilt is even more serious because she witnessed the fate of her older sister, Oholah, yet failed to learn from it. Instead, she continued her abominations, turning to foreign gods and making wrong political decisions, such as forming a coalition with Assyria and Babylonia, who desecrated her with "their harlotry" (v. 17). Jerusalem's punishment is pronounced again: destruction, the deportation of her sons and daughters, and shame and ridicule at the hands of the Babylonians. This is consistent with Deuteronomy 22:22, which sentences an adulterous woman to death.

> Mortal, there were two women, the daughters of one mother; […] She did not give up her whorings that she had practised since Egypt; for in her youth men had lain with her and fondled her virgin bosom and poured out their lust upon her. Therefore I delivered her into the hands of her lovers, into the hands of the Assyrians, for whom she lusted. […] Her sister Oholibah saw this, yet she was more corrupt than she in her lusting and in her whorings, which were worse than those of her sister. […] When she carried on her whorings so openly and flaunted her nakedness, I turned in disgust from her, as I had turned from her sister. […] They shall come against you from the north with chariots and wagons and a host of peoples; they shall set themselves against you on every side with buckler, shield, and helmet, and I will commit the judgment to them, and they shall judge you according to their ordinances (Ez 23:2.8–9.11.18.24).

Chapter 33 recounts the report of a refugee messenger from Jerusalem, announcing, "In the twelfth year of our exile, in the tenth month, on the fifth day of the month, someone who had escaped from Jerusalem came to me and said, 'The city has fallen!'" (Ez 33:21).

In summary, the depiction of Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel corresponds to the symptoms of constriction summarized by Poser. The distance from Jerusalem is also evident in the vocabulary used. The name "Jerusalem" appears 26 times in chapters 4–36. The more neutral term "city", which can carry negative connotations, appears 43 times, evenly distributed throughout the book. To highlight the significance of this number, it is worth noting that the name of Jerusalem appears 106 times in the Book of Jeremiah.

Ezekiel, a prophet of the exiled people, a survivor of war and deportation, and a man who was forced to leave his city and the sanctuary to which he presumably belonged as a priest, distances himself from Jerusalem and the trauma associated with its loss. The examples I provided are clear evidence of *desymbolization* and *resymbolization*.

Thus, we see an example of the struggles experienced by people who have been traumatized, which manifest mentally in the form of humiliation. This humiliation is caused by forced migration, which can deprive people of their socio-religious and cultural existence. In many cases, this goes hand in hand with the guilt and shame experienced by trauma survivors. Ezekiel's trauma is closely related to the concept of traumatic guilt, as detailed in Ezekiel 5 and subsequent chapters up to Chapter 33.

From a trauma-informed perspective, we can argue that this attitude stems from the "cultural trauma" whereby the prophet distances himself from the catastrophe and shapes his group's identity. By presenting Jerusalem as a wicked city that deserved its fate, the prophet makes the whole unacceptable situation bearable and provides hope for the future in the form of restoration and an eternal covenant.

> Say this to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: As I live, surely those who are in the waste places shall fall by the sword; and those who are in the open field I will give to the wild animals to be devoured; and those who are in strongholds and in caves shall die by pestilence. I will make the land a desolation and a waste, and its proud might shall come to an end; and the mountains of Israel shall be so desolate that no one will pass through. Then they shall know that I am the LORD, when I have made the land a desolation and a waste because of all their abominations that they have committed. (Ez 33:27–29)

Traumatic Discourse in Psalm 137

Psalm 137, one of the most famous psalms, reflects the despair of the deported community as seen through the eyes of the psalmist. Like Ezekiel, they were presumably either survivors of the deportations or witnesses to the fall of Jerusalem, or descendants of these people. They suffered from the trauma of exile, which, as I have previously argued, can be considered a "cultural trauma".

Before turning to the text, it is worth briefly mentioning the recurring elements of the communal lament psalms:

– Plea: address to God, complaint, petition, motivations, imprecation;
– Praise: assurance of being heard, payment of vows, doxology and praise.[16]

In this respect, Psalm 137 is a very unusual psalm. Some elements of the laments are omitted: most notably, the address to God, the request, the motivation, the doxology, and the praise. This makes it truly authentic, as it speaks of the deepest point of suffering, where there is no room for compliance with religious sentiment.[17]

Another peculiarity of this psalm is that it addresses Jerusalem, a city, rather than God. The *structure* of Psalm 137 can therefore be outlined as follows:[18]

I. Suffering (vv. 1–4)
By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and there we wept
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there we hung up our harps.
For there our captors asked us for songs, and our tormentors asked for mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How could we sing the LORD'S song in a foreign land?

II. Loyalty (vv. 5–6)
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
let my right hand wither! (literally: Let my right hand forget about me!)
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.

III. Despair: curses against Edom and Babylon (vv. 7–9)
Remember, O LORD, against the Edomites
the day of Jerusalem's fall,
how they said, "Tear it down! Tear it down!
Down to its foundations!"

[16] BRUEGGEMANN, Walter (1985): *The Message of the Psalms*. Augsburg Fortress. 54–56.
[17] LUKÁCS, Ottilia (2024): Panaszzsoltárok, ellenségzsoltárok: Van-e helyük az ima műfajában? In: Zamfir, Korinna et al. (eds.): *„Megmutatom szentségemet" (Lev 10,3). Tanulmányok a szent megmutatkozásairól Nóda Mózes 65. születésnapjára*. Budapest – Cluj-Napoca, Szent István Társulat – Verbum. 425–426.
[18] LUKÁCS 2024, 425.

O daughter Babylon, you devastator!
Happy shall they be who pay you back
what you have done to us!
Happy shall they be who take your little ones
and dash them against the rock!

In what follows, I will turn to the second part of the oath of allegiance in verses 5–6. The keywords of the oath, "forgetting" and "remembering", also centre on Jerusalem. The chiastic structure, organized in a protasis–apodosis form, creates an irrealis construction that reinforces the oath's message, namely, "It is impossible to forget Jerusalem!"

A Protasis
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
B Apodosis
let my right hand wither! (literally: Let my right hand forget about me!)

'B Apodosis
Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth,
'A Protasis
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.

Although the cultural trauma is the same as in the case of Ezekiel, an entirely different attitude is evident here. The psalmist, presumably speaking on behalf of a group of musicians who were possibly cultic singers in the Temple of Jerusalem, conveys his distress, helplessness, and despair at being exiled. Indeed, this psalm conveys the impossibility of fully communicating the trauma. He describes their despair and humiliating situation, saying that their tormentors expect them to sing carols of Zion in a foreign land, far from Jerusalem. Their tense condition and overwhelming emotions prevent them from singing; instead, they swear allegiance to Jerusalem. Jerusalem is the most precious heritage of the exiled group, the holiest city, the only place where one can sing songs of Zion and praise God with sincerity. The dramatic aspect of this oath is that it is presumably made to fallen Jerusalem. This attitude is more consistent with the previously mentioned intrusion symptoms, which are characterized by the inability or unwillingness to distance oneself from the traumatic situation.

Concluding Remarks

Returning to our main question of "What keeps a destroyed city alive?", we consider the trauma-management strategies employed by the exiled community through the lens of their special carrier figures such as Ezekiel and an unknown psalmist.

As it transpires from the above-quoted passages, the exiled people maintained their ethnic identity and connections to Jerusalem, while developing a *modus vivendi* in the new geo-socio-political environment. We observed two distinct coping strategies that incorporated the trauma of exile into the community's self-perception. Drawing on the theories of Jeffrey Alexander and Jan Assmann, we could gain a better understanding of how these strategies worked: they kept the cultural memory of Jerusalem as a reference point for the deported group's identity.

Ezekiel maintains a mental and emotional distance from Jerusalem. He interprets the trauma of exile in the light of the Priestly and Deuteronomistic theology, which renders it comprehensible. The survivors, due to their feelings of guilt and shame, often blame themselves instead of their Babylonian perpetrators. This notion of traumatic guilt is evident in the Book of Ezekiel, particularly in passages relating to Jerusalem, where the collective catastrophe of exile is treated as a deserved punishment for the abominations committed at all levels of society. The historical perpetrator, the Babylonian king, is seemingly exempt. Ezekiel goes so far as to state that God alone is responsible for the exile; the Babylonians are merely instruments of punishment in his hands.

As the psalmist approaches the subject of the fall of Jerusalem, his intention is to ensure that its memory remains alive. In the form of a prayer, the speaker addresses Jerusalem and makes a heart-wrenching oath of allegiance. This is presumably addressed to the destroyed city.

In both cases, the phenomenon of chosen trauma relating to Jerusalem became a marker of collective ethnic identity. Accordingly, the prophet Ezekiel and the psalmist assume the role of cultural carrier, responsible for the preservation and dissemination of Jerusalem's cultural memory.

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László BOGNÁR[1]:

Theological Reflections on the Narrative of Kieślowski's Television Series *Dekalog*[2]

Abstract.

This study examines the relationship between Krzysztof Kieślowski's television series *Dekalog* and the biblical Ten Commandments, whose extra-diegetic position raises the question of the title's theological legitimacy. It challenges the assumption that the series was influenced by Tadeusz Żychiewicz's contemporary work on the Decalogue and instead proposes a non-legalistic, non-deontic interpretation in which the commandments appear as expressions of freedom grounded in divine love and covenantal trust. Drawing on interdisciplinary theological and philosophical sources, the study highlights convergences across Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant traditions. It argues that the liberating character of the Decalogue is reflected in the narrative's openness and in its address to the viewer as a free agent. The analysis of selected episodes – especially One, Two, and Ten – demonstrates how the series integrates the Decalogue as a horizon of freedom, a reading further supported by Kieślowski's later work and the socio-political context of the series' production.

Keywords: *Dekalog*, Ten Commandments, freedom, commandment, love

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1. Introduction

Krzysztof Kieślowski's television series *Dekalog* takes its title from the Bible. The word "Dekalog" appears in the opening credits of each episode. Yet the biblical Ten Commandments do not explicitly figure within the plotlines. Where they do surface, they exert no discernible influence on either the characters or the course of events. The *Dekalog* television series stands as a complete and coherent work of art; it does not require supplementary legitimation. Kieślowski's undertaking is neither the dramatization nor the illustration of a theological concept, nor is it a confessional work.

Nevertheless, the question remains legitimate: is there a theological warrant for foregrounding the biblical Ten Commandments in the very title of the narrative – and for doing so in the manner adopted by the series? Which interpretation of the Decalogue might substantiate the choice of title? Is there a dimension of meaning, a hermeneutical layer, or an ethical-theological message within the biblical Decalogue that the television series renders accessible, discloses, or integrates into itself? Or is the allusion to the Ten Commandments merely an act of artistic arbitrariness – perhaps even a marketing device intended to attract viewers' attention?

It is a matter of fact that the television series bears the title *Dekalog*. Consequently, it is neither artificial nor extraneous to examine, from a theological perspective, the narrative's mode of relation to the Ten Commandments.

A comparison suggests itself between the television series and Tadeusz Żychiewicz's homiletic work on the Ten Commandments, *Dziesięcioro przykazań*, first published in 1983, with a third edition appearing in 1986 – an indication of its popularity in Poland. The first episode of *Dekalog* was broadcast on 10 December 1988; the remaining episodes followed in the subsequent year. A considerable number of viewers may well have been familiar with Żychiewicz's book. Andrzej Garbowski even suggests that Kieślowski and his co-screenwriter, Krzysztof Piesiewicz, were themselves acquainted with Żychiewicz's work and may indeed have been influenced by it.[3]

[3] GARBOWSKI, Christopher (1996): Kr*zysztof Kieślowski's Decalogue Series. The Problem of the Protagonists and Their Self-transcendence*. Boulder – New York, East European Monographs – Columbia University Press. 6: "Tadeusz Żychiewicz published an essay collection on the Ten Commandments, […] whose influence appears to be evident in certain aspects of their films."

It is questionable whether the Żychiewicz influence can be confirmed by philological means.[4] The present study argues that Żychiewicz and Krzysztof Kieślowski relate to the biblical Ten Commandments in fundamentally different ways.

This study seeks to substantiate the hypothesis that – contrary to Żychiewicz's approach – the narrative decisions of the television series can be brought into alignment with other theological interpretations of the biblical Ten Commandments. This applies, first, to the extra-diegetic presence of the Decalogue; second, to the image of God articulated in the first episode; and third, to the correspondence discernible between the openness of the narrative and the commandment understood as a bearer of human freedom.

2. Kieślowski's Television Series and Its Relation to the Biblical Ten Commandments

2.1. The Series Is Not Casuistic

The Ten Commandments appear solely in the opening credits. Yet, alongside the word "Dekalog", one finds not ordinal but cardinal numbers. The titles therefore do not assign the individual episodes to specific commandments.

2.2. The Creators – And the Narrative Itself – Leave the Connection between the Commandments and the Individual Episodes Undecided

Neither the plotlines nor the filmmakers' statements clarify which confessional division or enumeration of the Ten Commandments is to be regarded as normative.

The commandments do not possess a pre-established or predetermined meaning within the narrative to which the characters – or the viewers – must subsequently conform. Rather, what becomes accessible is that dimension of their meaning that discloses itself

[4] Garbowski (1996) does not specify where or in what form such Żychiewiczian influence may be identified. Neither Stok (1993) nor Krall (2017) mention Żychiewicz in connection with the circumstances surrounding the genesis of the series (STOK, Danusia (ed.) (1993): *Kieslowski on Kieslowski*. London – Boston: Farber and Farber; KRALL, Hanna (2017): *Fantom bólu. Reportaże wszystkie*. Kraków, Wydawnictwo Literackie. 685–687, 1107–1111, 1127–1128, 1216–1217).

to the characters within their concrete situations of action, in the attunement of their lived experience – what, here and now, becomes available to them.

The assignment of particular commandments or prohibitions to the stories of specific episodes thus becomes the viewer's creative hermeneutical task, one that can only be undertaken by accompanying the protagonists along their path.

According to the filmmakers, a single commandment may be connected with more than one episode.[5]

It appears that Krzysztof Kieślowski does not, in general, consider it possible to establish an unequivocal correspondence between a given situation and a specific commandment. With regard to the moral boundary crossings of everyday life, he rejects "any description or exact definition of right and wrong […] I think that an absolute point of reference does exist."[6]

The commandments exert no plot-organizing function; they do not motivate or propel the characters, nor do they surface within their deliberations. No one explicitly names them.

The narrative does not stage an encounter between viewer and commandment outside the action itself.

In two distinct senses, the narrative remains open.

First, the opening credits offer the viewer the possibility of interpreting the characters' actions in relation to the biblical Ten Commandments. Yet they also grant the freedom to recognize – or not to recognize – the potential for such a correlation and, if recognized, to interpret accordingly.

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[5] CIMENT, Michel – NIOGRET, Hubert (1989): Entretien avec Krzysztof Kieslowski à propos de Décalogue. In: *Positif* [*Revue de Cinéma*]. 346(décembre). 36–43. (The interviews published as CIMENT – NIOGRET 1989 and CIMENT 1989 are cited from the Hungarian translation: CIMENT, Michel (1991): Szikár történetek véletlenekről és sorsokról. Beszélgetés Krzysztof Piesiewicz forgatókönyvíróval és Krzysztof Kieślowski rendezővel [Disciplined Stories of Accidents and Fates: A Conversation with Screenwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz and Director Krzysztof Kieślowski]. In: *Filmkultúra*. 27, 4. 48–54). CIMENT–NIOGRET 1991, 52: "[Kieślowski:] Certain films could be exchanged – the sixth with the ninth, the fourth with the seventh." In the same issue of the journal, Krzysztof Piesiewicz remarks of *Two* that it is "least connected to the commandment it illustrates" (CIMENT, Michel (1989): Entretien avec Krzysztof Piesiewicz. In: *Positif* [*Revue de Cinéma*]. 346(décembre). 33–35, qtd in CIMENT 1991, 48).

[6] STOK 1993, 149.

Second, the stories are open-ended. If one compares the television series with the published *Screenplay*[7] and with the two feature films derived from episodes *Five* and *Six* – *A Short Film about Killing* (1988) and *A Short Film about Love* (1988) –, it becomes apparent that within the same narrative framework the same characters are endowed with different character traits. As a consequence, the plotlines unfold differently and culminate in distinct outcomes.

3. The Example of *Two*

In the case of *Two*, the question arises: which commandment is transgressed – and by whom – in the published screenplay and in the televised version?

3.1. The Chief Physician

If the term "Progresja" in the diagnosis of Andrzej, Dorota's husband, is to be understood as indicating improvement in his condition,[8] then the Chief Physician swears a false oath to Dorota.

In the *Screenplay*, the Chief Physician swears (falsely) by God (*Bóg*),[9] thus invoking the divine name deceitfully and in vain. In the televised episode, he does not explicitly swear by God; yet a false oath is, *par excellence*, directed against God. Even if no harm ultimately ensues, such an act would still constitute transgression in the mode of *pesha* – that is, as culpable breach.[10]

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[7] Hereafter, references to the screenplay in the main text refer to the following volume: KIEŚLOWSKI, Krzysztof – PIESIEWICZ, Krzysztof (1990): *Dekalog. Scenariusze filmowe.* Chotomów, Verba.

[8] The actors' performances also allow the diagnosis ("Progresja") to be interpreted as referring to the progression of Andrzej's illness – that his condition is worsening –, in which case the Chief Physician's oath would not be false. The narrative appears deliberately to leave the meaning of the diagnosis undecided. See KICKASOLA, Joseph G. (2004): *The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski. The Liminal Image*. New York, Continuum. 179; cf. STADLER, Eva M. (2016): Visual Reverberations: Decalogue Two and Decalogue Eight. In: Badowska, Eva – Parmediani, Francesca (eds.): *Of Elephants and Toothaches. Ethics, Politics, and Religion in Krzysztof Kieślowski's Decalogue*. New York, Fordham University Press. 84, 87.

[9] KIEŚLOWSKI – PIESIEWICZ 1990, 56.

[10] Cf. RAJ, Tamás (2003): *Bibliaiskola. A szentírás kulcsszavai és szállóigéi*. Budapest, Makkabi. 36. In the Septuagint, *pesha* is most often rendered as *adikia*, more rarely as *anomia*.

The Chief Physician's false oath violates the Catholic enumeration of the Eighth Commandment insofar as it would cause harm to Dorota (the birth of the child could expose her adulterous relationship).

According to the Reformed enumeration, the Chief Physician violates the Ninth Commandment, since he bears false witness against his neighbour. Dorota and the Chief Physician are neighbours, residing in the same apartment building, and the exposure of adultery would indeed work against her. Yet the adultery is not exposed – or at least it does not leave a stain upon Dorota's marriage. In *Five*, Dorota appears visibly pregnant, standing beside her now-recovered husband; they seem happy. Thus, even indirectly, the Chief Physician's oath does not turn against her.

In the televised episode, the Chief Physician violates the Jewish enumeration of the Second Commandment and the Reformed enumeration of the Third. When Dorota asks whether he believes in God, he replies that he has his own god – that is, he acknowledges another object of ultimate allegiance.[11]

3.2. Dorota

Dorota ultimately gives birth to her child and therefore does not transgress the commandment "You shall not kill." The Ten Commandments do not recognize sin committed in thought (*peccare cogitatione*); accordingly, it cannot be held against her that she had previously scheduled an abortion.

Within the narrative, Dorota is not adulterous; indeed, she breaks off her relationship with her lover. In the Chief Physician's apartment, she expresses repentance for her dissatisfaction with what her husband offers her.[12]

Dorota invokes the name of God disingenuously when she urges the Chief Physician to seek absolution from God for his refusal to state whether her husband will die.

In the *Screenplay*, Dorota confesses to the Chief Physician that she does not believe in God.

[11] In the *Screenplay*, he responds with a simple "yes". Cf. GARBOWSKI 1996, 100.

[12] Cf. KICKASOLA 2004, 177–179.

3.3. Which Commandment Motivates the Two Characters?

Dorota's appointment for an abortion should not be assessed from the perspective of the free exercise of reproductive self-determination, since that freedom is not curtailed. No one obstructs her decision, nor does anyone attempt to persuade her otherwise.[13]

Dorota is nearly divided against herself: she would sacrifice both her unborn child and her motherhood as an act of atonement in order to preserve the unstained integrity of her marriage. Everything hinges, for her, on her husband's recovery. At the same time, she also awaits his death so that she might give birth (as she herself notes, given her age, this is her last opportunity). Dorota is helpless and uncertain; she sees no way out of the dilemma. She evades decision by making everything contingent upon the Chief Physician.[14] In doing so, she relinquishes precisely her own self-determination.

Dorota assigns responsibility for the abortion to the Chief Physician ("do not feel that your conscience is clear – within an hour I will have an abortion", she tells him in the televised episode). This strikes the Chief Physician deeply, for according to his professional ethos he deals with health and illness but does not decide matters of life and death.[15] If Dorota transfers responsibility for the abortion to him, then he does not decide in her place; rather, vested with that responsibility, he decides according to his own judgment – in favour of the life of the unborn child.

Both Dorota and the Chief Physician seek to protect the life of the foetus. Without ever articulating it explicitly, the commandment "You shall not kill" animates their decisions. *Two*, therefore, is most closely associated with the Fifth Commandment. Both characters avoid transgressing it: the Chief Physician by exercising his freedom and moral autonomy, accepting the possibility of a wrong decision; Dorota by relinquishing her autonomy, withdrawing herself from moral accountability, and thereby stepping outside the order of the commandments. Dorota does not violate the Decalogue – yet this does not, in itself, render her virtuous.

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[13] Cf. KRAKUS, Anna (2018): *No End in Sight. Polish Cinema in the Late Socialist Period*. Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press. 101.

[14] Cf. KRAKUS 2018, 100; GARBOWSKI 1996, 81.

[15] Cf. KRAKUS 2018, 102.

3.4. Kieślowski's Narrative Is Not Causal

A causal reading is deontic in character. One invariably hears, within the logic of cause and effect, the semantic overtones of the "inevitable" and the "necessary". Read causally, *Two* appears to suggest that the Chief Physician can uphold the commandment "You shall not kill" only at the cost of violating the prohibition against false oath. This leads to the conclusion that obligation towards God obstructs obligation towards one's fellow human being. Such a conclusion is misleading: it attends neither to the singularity of the situation nor to the particularity of the person. Nor, in the other episodes of the television series, is it self-evident which commandment should serve as the decisive norm. The very act of weighing such matters is itself moral knowledge – indeed, itself a virtue –, for one searches in vain within the biblical Decalogue for any ranking among the commandments. A causal reading does not assist in the moral assessment of the characters.

The Chief Physician assumes responsibility for his transgression. With regard to the prohibition of false oath, he accepts his position as a lawbreaker in order, with respect to the Fifth Commandment, to see – and to present – himself as law-abiding, even virtuous. Dorota, by contrast, refuses to assume responsibility for her own frailty and culpability.

In *Eight*, during her seminar, Zofia analyses the events of *Two*. According to her interpretation, what matters is simply that "the child lives" – that it was born.[16] This pragmatic perspective retrospectively renders irrelevant the path (the means) that led to the goal, suspending the moral dimension of personal decision. It restricts the assessment of action to the mere presence – or absence – of the intended outcome, thereby emptying morality of substance. The act is deprived of its wider horizons (community, God, past, future, sustainability, and so forth), severed from its context, and thus withdrawn from interpretive scrutiny.[17]

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[16] Cf. STADLER 2016, 87–89.

[17] From a hermeneutical perspective drawing on Aristotle, virtue cannot dispense with *phronēsis*, that is, with the application of normative measures to the particular situation and to the acting person (cf. GADAMER, Hans-Georg ([2]2004): *Truth and Method*. Rev. ed. London – New York, Continuum. 311: "the task of moral knowledge is to determine what the concrete situation asks of him – or, to put it another way, the person acting must view the concrete situation in light of what is asked of him in general"; 312: "An active being […] is concerned

The irony of *Eight* lies in the fact that this very approach is proposed by the professor of ethics herself.[18]

4. What May Theologically Legitimate the Series' Choice of Title?

Does the extra-diegetic position of the biblical Ten Commandments distort their meaning – or restrict access to them?

The television episodes are not didactic dramas; they do not present their stories through the causality of sin–sinner–punishment–atonement. The unfolding of events and the behaviour of the characters are not driven by the Ten Commandments. Nor does the narrative, at the close of the stories, awaken either its characters or its viewers to the relevance or truth of the commandments. The narrative does not presume to possess surplus knowledge in relation to its viewers concerning the Decalogue. The narrative of the television series is not omniscient.[19]

with what is not always the same but can also be different. In it he can discover the point at which he has to act"; 315: "What is right, for example, cannot be fully determined independently of the situation that requires a right action from me."). The moral credibility of virtue lies in the fact that the norm – and its applicability to a given situation and person – can always be reconsidered.

[18] In Eight, Elżbieta attends Zofia's seminar as a guest. At the time of the narrative, she is a Holocaust researcher living in New York. She is the former Jewish girl whom Zofia had promised to help hide in 1943, only to break that promise – invoking precisely the prohibition against bearing false witness. After hearing Zofia's argument, Elżbieta confronts her with this past action. Zofia excuses herself by claiming that she acted in the interest of the Kedyw (the counterintelligence division of the Home Army operating underground). Yet despite her later concern for the girl, Zofia did nothing to find out what had become of her. She does not adhere to her own pragmatic principle that the child's life is paramount. It appears that she invokes her ethical principles primarily to compensate for her earlier transgression (cf. ŽIŽEK, Slavoj (2001): *The Fright of Real Tears. Krzysztof Kieślowski between Theory and Post-theory*. London, British Film Institute. 116; WACH, Margarete (2014): *Krzysztof Kieślowski. Zufall und Notwendigkeit*. Marburg, Schüren. 309; GARBOWSKI 1996, 19).

[19] On the term "omniscient narration", see BORDWELL, David (1985): *Narration in the Fiction Film*. Madison (Wisconsin), The University of Wisconsin Press. 57–61, 65–66.

5. The Difficulty of Deriving Theological Legitimation for the Title from Żychiewicz's Book

Tadeusz Żychiewicz's work presupposes readers for whom biblical texts function self-evidently as sources of orientation – readers who display an interest in the commandments and attribute authority to them.[20]

For such readers, Żychiewicz offers illumination on the commandments by presenting them as law. His homiletic and popularizing intention would scarcely be served by a theological argument elaborated through philological minutiae. His approach is casuistic, insofar as he associates particular cases with the commandments as illustrative examples to which they may be applied. It is also causal, in that he draws conclusions for everyday human life from the observance – or violation – of the commandments.

Żychiewicz advances several arguments in support of the necessity and legitimacy of the commandments: a) when persuasion proves ineffective, commandments become necessary; b) the commandment, by analogy with instructions for use, is practical and beneficial; c) the mode of life proposed in the commandments accords with human dignity and freedom; d) the violation of the commandments does not diminish either their credibility or God's creative being; e) for God the Father – who is also Father to humankind – it is a source of joy if His Son is loved. The Decalogue encourages love towards one's fellow human beings and towards the surrounding world; without such love, love for Jesus cannot be realized.[21] In his legitimation of the commandments, Żychiewicz does not invoke God's liberating act in Egypt.

His book speaks of freedom in several senses. He first identifies two deficient modes of freedom. One meaning of freedom is licence, or unbounded permissiveness[22] – something the Decalogue cannot prevent, though the law cannot be blamed for the detrimental consequences that follow from it.[23] The other is autonomy, which Żychiewicz treats critically as self-legislation; for him, autonomy signifies the denial of the validity of laws and commandments.[24]

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[20] ŻYCHIEWICZ, Tadeusz (1983): *Dziesięcioro przykazań*. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Wydawnictwo Calvarianum. 6.

[21] Op. cit. 8–12.

[22] Op. cit. 9–11, 16–17, 57, 86–87, 92.

[23] Op. cit. 11, 87, 92, 127.

[24] Op. cit. 7.

While the first meaning might suggest that the law guarantees a good life, this is counterbalanced by his remark – attached to the second – that the commandments provide only firm ground for human existence; they do not exempt one from failure or hardship.[25] In a third sense, freedom consists in respecting the divinely ordered structure of the world assigned to humanity.[26]

6. A Possible Theological Legitimation

6.1. Developing an Interpretive Argument

A line of thought may be constructed – drawing upon mutually resonant texts by Franz Rosenzweig, André LaCocque, Paul Ricoeur, and Jan Assmann – that affirms the television series' connection to the biblical Ten Commandments.

6.1.1. The Decalogue Addresses all Persons Universally

Accordingly, every viewer may feel personally addressed.

Rosenzweig, interpreting Psalm 115 (113B):16 ("[the Lord] has given the Earth to humankind"), writes: "'to humankind' – not to the community of Israel; in its belovedness and in trust, the community knows itself as unique, yet in the act of love only as human, […] as the other in general – as the neighbour."[27]

According to Assmann,[28] "it does not play a decisive role whether the Exodus from Egypt is historical or fictional, for its truth and validity rest upon what stands upon it – and this concerns not only Judaism but also the religions that emerged from ancient Judaism, Christianity, and Islam."

LaCocque approvingly cites Walter Harrelson,[29] who maintains that the commandments apply "to every individual and to every group of individuals at all times and in all places".

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[25] Op. cit. 127, 26, 118.

[26] Op. cit. 109–110.

[27] ROSENZWEIG 1988, 281 [All translations of originally non-English texts/quotations are mine throughout the article unless otherwise stated.].

[28] ASSMANN, Jan (2022): Der Mann Mose und Gottes Gesetz. In: *Zur Debatte*. 52, 2. 36.

[29] LACOCQUE, André (1998): „Tu ne commettras pas de meurtre" Exode 20,13. In: Lacocque, André – Ricoeur, Paul: *Penser la Bible*. Paris, Éditions du Seuil (Essays). 155.

6.1.2. The Decalogue as Orientation in a Disordered World

During the production of the television series, contemporary Polish social and private life – according to Kieślowski and Piesiewicz – was marked by the absence of order: chaos, intolerance, inner division, and fragmentation. Set against this, the Ten Commandments may be seen as offering orientation to the individual within the world of social being.

According to Assmann, "both tablets of the stele upon which God inscribed the Ten Commandments […] pertain to the entirety of the life-order of God's people."[30]

LaCocque maintains, "the commandments attend to rightly ordered social relationships", and in his interpretation, the Torah is nothing other than "orientation, a way of life, education, pedagogy".[31]

6.1.3. Only through the Commandment of Love Can a Community of Human Beings Come into Being

In the Third Book of Part Two of *The Star of Redemption*, Franz Rosenzweig comments on the injunction "Love your neighbour." It is important to note that the cited formulation does not include the phrase "as yourself", as one might expect on the basis of Lev 19:18, Matt 22:39, or Mark 12:31. According to Rosenzweig's interpretation, "with this commandment, the soul leaves the paternal home of divine love and ventures forth into the world".[32] In the absence of the commandment of neighbourly love, "the mere blessedness of the soul immersed in God's loving gaze relapses into enclosure".[33] A few pages later, Rosenzweig writes, "the world is the other pole towards which neighbourly love strives".[34]

6.1.4. The Commandment Is Love

According to Rosenzweig,[35] the commandment of love ("you shall love me") is the manifestation of the loving God directed towards the human being loved by Him.

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30 ASSMANN 2022, 41.
31 LACOCQUE 1988, 109, 115.
32 ROSENZWEIG 1988, 229.
33 Op. cit. 1988, 230.
34 ROSENZWEIG 1988, 243; cf. also op. cit. 238; LACOCQUE 1998, 118.
35 ROSENZWEIG 1988, 199–201.

For the one who loves, the command is the only possible verbal self-communication of divine love.

For Ricoeur, the apodictic laws may be called divine "by virtue of their proximity to the commandment of love, a commandment that arises from love, which is God".[36]

6.1.5. The Commandment Is Not Law

According to Rosenzweig,[37] because the love of the lover lives in the present – and because the commandment of love arises from the moment and is pure presence[38] –, it is "incapable of becoming law". Law, by contrast, "reckons with temporalities – with the future and with duration", whereas God commands "today", and it is "today" that His voice must be heard.

Rosenzweig further maintains[39] that the remaining commandments of the Decalogue, though they may assume the outward form of law "from without and as if subsequently", remain commandments: they are the unfolding of the one and first commandment.

LaCocque rejects the claim that the Decalogue constitutes law. His arguments include the following: a) the books of the Torah do not designate the Decalogue as law but as "ten words" (*dix paroles*); b) the Decalogue leaves significant domains of human action unregulated; c) its apodictic formulations do not constitute covenantal contract stipulations; d) it contains no sanctions; e) it derives its authority from itself rather than from external coercive power; f) in its negative formulations, compassion, anticipation, and confirmation are the determining modes of relation; g) as an existential ground, the commandment precedes law.[40]

6.1.6. The Commandment as the Guarantee of Human Freedom

According to Raj, Rosenzweig, and LaCocque,[41] although the human response expected by the commandment of love is obedience, the command's foremost significance

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[36] RICOEUR, Paul (1998): Une obéissance aimante. In: LACOCQUE – RICOEUR 1998, 190.

[37] ROSENZWEIG, Franz (1988): *Der Stern der Erlösung*. Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp. 197–198.

[38] Cf. ROSENZWEIG 1988, 182, 197.

[39] Op. cit. 197, 239.

[40] LACOCQUE 1988, 122–123, 109, 117–118.

[41] RAJ 2003, 24 ; ROSENZWEIG 1988, 296–297; LACOCQUE 1988, 107–108.

lies in human freedom and its protection. Following the initial address, the Decalogue continues to speak to the human being in their freedom of interpretation, decision, and action.[42]

LaCocque advances several arguments:[43] a) obedience does not constrain the scope of human agency;[44] b) the Decalogue establishes no "binding order" to which the human being is compelled to submit; c) its predominantly negative form preserves the freedom of inventive initiative.

Ricoeur maintains that loving obedience – mandated by divine love through the divine command – is not an obstacle to moral autonomy but rather its support.[45]

Rosenzweig further observes that human freedom is "boundless in relation to God", extending even to the freedom to tempt God[46] and to be tempted by Him.[47] The weight of this freedom may be illuminated by the Lord's Prayer: *mé eisenenkēs hēmas eis peirasmon* (Matt 6:13; Luke 11:4) – where *peirasmon* may be understood as temptation, or trial.

6.1.7. The Relevance of the Decalogue in the Light of Comparable Historical Circumstances

The presentation of the Ten Commandments as orientation – as horizon – is also warranted in the television series by virtue of analogous historical circumstances.

The development of the screenplay, the production process, and the broadcast of the series took place during a period marked by the curtailment of citizens' rights; the end of Poland's military dictatorship was not yet foreseeable.

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42 Cf. LACOCQUE 1998, 154–155, 147.

43 Op. cit. 123–125, 134–135.

44 Op. cit. 125 – he further maintains that "the aim of the Decalogue is by no means to create for God an immobile human partner".

45 RICOEUR 1988, 192, 190, 177–178.

46 ROSENZWEIG 1988, 297. Cf. ROSENZWEIG 1988, 295: "in relation to the Redeemer, the human being […] does possess the freedom to act – or at least the freedom to decide". Cf. MOLTMANN, Jurgen (1993): *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press. 272: "God is free in himself and at the same time interested in his covenant relationship and affected by human history."

47 Cf. ROSENZWEIG 1988, 296: "if […] the freedom of prayer manifests itself in the possibility that the human being can tempt God, might the human being's being tempted by God be the precondition of this freedom?"

As Assmann observes:[48] "YHWH […] founded a religion built upon faith and fidelity." Within this new religious formation, lawgiving is removed from the sphere of politics. It emerged "in a situation characterized by the complete loss of kingship, state, temple, and territory […] no longer dependent upon state, kingship, or territory", which compelled the Jewish people "to relinquish external stabilizing factors".

7. The Example of One (The Application of the Theological Hermeneutical Framework within the Television Series)

7.1. Temptation: A Theological Reading of One

In the *Screenplay* version, the first episode follows the dramaturgical pattern of sinful protagonist – sin – punishment. Paweł's death may indeed be interpreted as divine punishment inflicted upon his father, Krzysztof, who has transgressed the First Commandment by turning against God and by idolizing the artificial intelligence he himself has constructed.[49]

In the televised version of the first episode, however, there is no indication that Krzysztof is an idolater. His conduct is neither atheistic nor anti-religious; his rationality is consistently accompanied by critical self-reflection. Paweł's death – drawing on Rosenzweig's reflections – may rather be understood as a trial directed by God towards Krzysztof, to which Krzysztof responds by counter-tempting God: he overturns the altar. In this way, *One* may be said to portray the freedom entrusted to the human being in the biblical Ten Commandments.

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[48] ASSMANN 2022, 41, 39.

[49] Cf. KIEŚLOWSKI–PIESIEWICZ 1990, 17–18, 20, 28, 30–32. The following interpretations apply only to the *Screenplay*, not to the televised version (they do not take into account the differences between the two): ŽIŽEK 2001, 118; HALTOF, Marek (2004): *The Cinema of Krzysztof Kieślowski. Variations on Destiny and Chance*. London – New York, Wallflower – Columbia University Press. 82; SOBCHACK, Vivian Carol (2004): The Expanded Gaze in Contracted Space: Happenstance, Hazard, and the Flesh of the World. In: Sobchack, V. C.: *Carnal Thoughts. Embodiment and Moving Image Culture*. Berkeley, University of California Press. 90; GOLD, Moshe (2016): Decalogue One. Witnessing a Responsible Ethics of Response from a Jewish Perspective. In: BADOWSKA – PARMEDIANI 2016, 60.

According to Rosenzweig,[50] God "must tempt the human being; He must […] deceive him. […] so that he [the human being] may have the opportunity […] freely to believe and to trust in it. Conversely, the human being must also reckon with the possibility that God merely 'tempts' him, so that in the midst of all his struggles he may preserve his trust."

In *One*, this "trust" (*Vertrauen*) appears when, after his son's death, Krzysztof enters the church,[51] where – through the tears of Mary – God may manifest His compassion with the grieving father.[52]

7.2. Mercy: An Alternative Theological Reading of One

If we accept Rosenzweig's claim[53] that "compassion [*Erbarmen*] is precisely not love", then an interpretation of the final scene of *One* drawing on Walter Kasper may be distinguished from a Rosenzweigian reading.[54]

The prophet Hosea (Hos 1:6, 9; 11:8–9) speaks of God preparing to reject Israel, yet ultimately changing course as pity arises within Him for His people. Kasper[55] interprets this as meaning that "mercy [*die Barmherzigkeit*] prevails in God over justice". God's mercy is not the mere "whim" of an angry deity, nor is it "cheap grace". The prophet's

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[50] ROSENZWEIG 1988, 296.

[51] Cf. BUBER, Martin (2017): Gottesfinsternis. Betrachtungen zur Beziehung zwischen Religion und Philosophie, In: Buber, Martin: *Werkausgabe Bd. 12*. Gütersloh, Gütersloher Verlagshaus. 437: when we speak of religion, we essentially mean "holding fast to God" (*das Festhalten Gottes*). This does not signify "holding fast to our faith in God" but rather "holding fast to the existent God".

[52] Cf. GARBOWSKI 1996, 92; GOLD 2016, 60. By contrast, Mary's solidarity with the father's grief is denied in HALTOF 2004, 83; ŽIŽEK 2001, 118; SOBCHACK 2004, 97; BARTLEY, William (2014): Faith, Doubt, and Chiasmus in Krzysztof Kieślowski's Decalogue I. In: *Journal of Religion and Film*. 18, 2(October). 16; COATES, Paul (1999): The Curse of the Law: The Decalogue. In Coates, Paul (ed.): *Lucid Dreams. The Films of Krzysztof Kieślowski*. Trowbridge, Flicks Books. 96.

[53] ROSENZWEIG 1988, 193.

[54] This resonates with Moltmann's observation (1993, 272): "Love is the source and the basis of the possibility of the wrath of God. The opposite of love is not wrath, but indifference."

[55] KASPER, Walter (2019): *Barmherzigkeit. Grundbegriff des Evangeliums – Schlüssel christlichen Lebens.* Freiburg – Basel – Vienna, Herder. 66–69.

words indicate that "God's holiness […] does not reveal itself in justified wrath […]; rather, God's divinity is manifested in mercy". In the prophetic text, the phrase "in your midst" signifies that "in His mercy, God […] paradoxically reveals Himself as one who is wholly near to us".[56]

Kasper's reflections resonate with those of Jürgen Moltmann: "God is interested in the world to the point of suffering", and "He enters not only into the situation of the limited creature, but even into the situation of the guilty and suffering creature. […] In his 'indwelling' in the people he suffers with the people, […] feels sorrow with the martyrs."[57]

7.3. Narrative Openness

One also exemplifies the manner in which Krzysztof Kieślowski integrates the biblical Ten Commandments into his narrative conception as freedom and liberation.

The previously noted differences between the *Screenplay* and televised versions illustrate how open the narrative remains in its handling of characterization and plot construction.

8. The Biblical Ten Commandments in *Ten*

Ten is exceptional in that it refers to the biblical Ten Commandments *expressis nominis et verbis*, albeit in the mode of negation, within the lyrics of the framing song performed by Artur, the lead singer of an alternative neo-avant-garde band. In the opening sequence, he sings: kill, murder, destroy, fornicate, commit adultery, indulge in lust all week long; on Sunday beat your mother, your father, your sister; beat the weaker one and steal, because everything around you is yours (*wszystko jest twoje*).[58] In other words, the human being is free to violate the commandments. This resonates with Rosenzweig's view that the human being is free even to tempt God.

[56] Cf. also KASPER 2019, 51.

[57] MOLTMANN 1993, 271, 273.

[58] The *Screenplay* includes the film's opening song only in Scene 15 and provides its lyrics there (KIEŚLOWSKI – PIESIEWICZ 1990, 280). It neither indicates nor reproduces the coda and its text. What Artur urges in the opening is addressed by the prophets (cf. Jer 7:9; Hos 4:2). Kasper's interpretation of Hosea may aptly be related to the television series.

At the end of the episode, the continuation of the opening is heard: "Darkness and malice, mockery and lies, lies all week long, all week long. You are the only hope, the sole ray of hope. You are everything. Everything depends on you (*wszystko jest twoje*)!"[59] Accordingly, the closing resonance of the series suggests that the human being is likewise free to transform the corruption of the world.

9. Trois couleurs: Bleu

Kieślowski's feature film trilogy – projecting onto the screen the ideals of the Enlightenment (liberty, equality, fraternity) – attests to his sustained engagement with the question of human freedom. A theological reading of the television series that understands the biblical Ten Commandments as a bearer of freedom thus stands in continuity with the director's later oeuvre.

The freedom-themed instalment of the trilogy, *Trois couleurs: Bleu*, presents freedom in its multivalence. After her husband's death, Julie's actions initially manifest freedom as release from constraint. She moves out of their shared home and plans to sell it. She relinquishes the task of preserving her husband's musical legacy. She seeks to part with the material remnants of his life and withdraws from public visibility. Yet her independence does not take the form of selfishness. She secures the continued existential stability of her household employees and of her mother, who suffers from dementia. She declines the advances of her admirer – her husband's collaborator – without violating his human dignity. She acts in solidarity, supporting the prostitute who lives in her apartment building.

A decisive turning point occurs when it emerges that her husband had a lover who is now pregnant. From this moment on, the narrative portrays Julie's actions as freedom in a substantive sense: as self-determination, self-activity, and the unfolding of her own possibilities and capacities. Julie re-chooses herself within the newly opened situation. She leaves the house she shared with her husband to his lover and the unborn

[59] The phrase "everything is yours [*wszystko jest twoje*]" in the opening may refer to objects available for theft, but also to the unrestricted possibility of transgression – the line thus subverts Paul's words (1 Cor 3:22: *wszystko jest wasze*). At the close of the episode, the same line appears to refer instead to the choice of the good. Kickasola (2004, 241) does not take into account that the song's lyrics differ at the end of the episode from those at its beginning.

child; she reciprocates her admirer's love; together they orchestrate her husband's unfinished composition – a musical setting of Paul's *Hymn to Love* (1 Cor 13).

10. Conclusions

The study has proposed a reading of the biblical Decalogue that proves illuminating for Kieślowski's television series. Its credibility rests not only on its interdisciplinary grounding – drawing on philosophical, biblical, theological, and historical sources whose interpretations converge – but also on its explanatory force. It accounts for the differences between the screenplay and the televised versions as expressions of narrative freedom in both plot construction and characterization, demonstrating that these divergences are conceptual rather than incidental.

This reading situates the Decalogue at the intersection of commandment, love, and freedom: not as external law but as an address that calls the human being to responsible self-determination. The narrative's openness mirrors this dynamic, inviting viewers to respond interpretively rather than conform normatively. In this sense, the biblical Decalogue functions less as a rule than as a horizon within which freedom becomes meaningful through love.

The centrality of freedom in Kieślowski's later work – most notably in *Trois couleurs: Bleu*, where Julie's decisions unfold between loss and relational renewal – further reinforces this perspective. Both the biblical Decalogue and the series emerge from contexts marked by instability, yet in each case the search for orientation turns away from institutional authority towards trust, responsibility, and relationality. Theologically and hermeneutically, this suggests that the Decalogue may be understood not as a closed norm but as an interpretive event: one that continues to disclose the conditions of human freedom within changing historical worlds.

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Educating for Communion: Orthodox Responses to Pluralism and Extremism

Abstract.

This study examines the challenges contemporary education faces in reconciling religious values within a globalized world characterized by individualism and extremism. The article explores how educational systems can maintain coherence while engaging with diverse perspectives and global influences, proposing pluralistic approaches that support critical thinking and intercultural encounter. Building upon the Ecumenical Patriarchate's document *For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, the study highlights the Orthodox Church's theological commitment to ecumenical engagement as a model for educational responses to religious diversity, grounding interfaith encounter in liturgical theology, Eucharistic communion, and the pursuit of peace.

The study proposes that effective religious education in pluralistic contexts must be both confessional and intercultural, particular and universal, rooted in authentic tradition while capable of meaningful encounter with other traditions.

Key Orthodox concepts such as *theosis* (deification), *phronema* (mind of the Church), *kenosis* (self-emptying), and *philoxenia* (hospitality) provide theological and pedagogical foundations for countering extremism and fostering genuine pluralistic engagement.

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The paper's original contribution lies in applying Orthodox liturgical theology, specifically *theosis*, *kenosis*, *philoxenia*, and *phronema*, as a constructive normative framework for pluralist religious education, moving beyond mere tolerance towards a theologically grounded pedagogy of communion that advances further than existing secular or liberal pluralism models.

By demonstrating that Orthodox liturgical practice functions as a formative pedagogy cultivating dispositions (kenotic openness, eucharistic solidarity, eschatological hope) directly applicable to pluralistic educational contexts, this study shows how strong religious identity and genuine pluralistic openness are not competing values but theologically unified in the Orthodox framework.

The article concludes that the future of education in pluralistic societies depends on developing robust frameworks that balance fidelity to tradition with openness to intercultural encounter, grounded in positive visions of human flourishing, communal life, and divine communion.

Keywords: religious education, pluralism, Orthodox theology, ecumenical dialogue, extremism, liturgical theology, intercultural education, value transmission, globalization, educational ethics

1. Introduction

Many people still look for the salvation of the world in a romantic key, appealing to education and religious, cultural, or even political values as a safe solution to overcome crises and challenges such as individualism and extremism. Today, we witness a crisis of values not because they have become obsolete but because contemporary man no longer believes in them, convinced that they are rooted in a peculiar experience of a particular era. Today, the reference points are different, marked by individualism, progress, and each person has all the freedom to construct their universe of beliefs and values as they wish.[2]

However, suppose we still appeal to values today. In that case, it means we can situate ourselves within a long series of experiences from previous generations that we assume to be valid today for us as well. Values always claim acceptance of a communal experience and place the person in a broader axiological context, in which, as a receiver

[2] DELSOL, Chantal ([2]2022): *Sfârșitul creștinătății. Inversiunea normativă și noul timp*. Transl. and preface by Teodor Baconschi. Bucharest, Spandugino. 55.

of these values, they become, in turn, a transmitter within their community. This is how tradition is born and nourished, itself as the main foundation of an education process, alongside with respect for values.[3]

This study proposes that Orthodox theology offers a distinctive and constructive contribution to these debates. The paper's original contribution lies in two interconnected claims: First, it demonstrates that Orthodox liturgical theology, specifically the concepts of *theosis*, *kenosis*, *philoxenia*, and *phronema*, provides a constructive normative framework for pluralist religious education that moves beyond procedural tolerance towards a theologically grounded pedagogy of communion. Second, it shows that Orthodox liturgical practice functions as a formative pedagogy, cultivating dispositions (kenotic openness, eucharistic solidarity, *philoxenia* 'hospitality') directly applicable to pluralistic educational contexts. This advances beyond existing discussions by providing a theologically coherent account of how strong religious identity and genuine pluralistic openness are not in tension but mutually constitutive, and by grounding normative responses to diversity not in neutral procedural frameworks but in a positive theological anthropology of communion and human flourishing.

At the outset, this paper will examine how the key concepts of pluralism, extremism, values, and dialogue can serve as its conceptual framework.

The term "pluralism" operates on two distinct levels that must be carefully distinguished for educational discourse. Pluralism means a balance between distinction and the factual coexistence, between what we call descriptive pluralism – the factual coexistence of diverse worldviews in a society – and normative pluralism, which means the ethical or political claim that such diversity ought to be affirmed and protected.[4] Descriptive pluralism refers to the empirical fact of diversity, the observable coexistence of multiple religious, cultural, and philosophical worldviews within a given society or educational context. This is a sociological observation: contemporary classrooms, neighbourhoods, and

[3] CHAIKA, Oksana (2024): Bridging the Gap: Traditional vs. Modern Education (A Value-Based Approach for Multiculturalism). In: Gomez, World – Paloma, Filippo (eds.): *Lifelong Learning – Education for the Future World*. *Education and Human Development*. IntechOpen. http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.114068.

[4] KIRCHMAIR, L. (2019): Descriptive vs. Prescriptive Global Legal Pluralism: A Gentle Reminder of David Hume's Is–Ought Divide. In: *The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law*. 51, 1. 48–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/07329113.2018.1557971. WENNEBORG, E. G. (2021): Making Sense of Pluralism: A Neo-Calvinist Approach. *Philosophy of Education Archive*. https://doi.org/10.47925/77.1.131.

nations are characterized by religious and cultural heterogeneity. At a general level, while pluralism emerges spontaneously among ordinary people, normative pluralism involves an external authority that regulates coexistence through rules and norms.

Normative pluralism, by contrast, denotes the prescriptive endorsement of diversity as a positive value, including the promotion of tolerance, mutual respect, and institutional accommodation of difference. Normative responses to diversity involve deliberate curricular and pedagogical choices that affirm diversity while maintaining critical standards.[5]

In educational contexts, this distinction has direct practical implications. A curriculum may acknowledge religious diversity (descriptive pluralism) without necessarily endorsing all expressions of it (normative pluralism). The question for educators is not whether diversity exists, it manifestly does, but how educational institutions should respond: through neutral description, active affirmation, critical engagement, or some combination thereof. Orthodox theology – as this study will demonstrate – offers a distinctive normative framework grounded not in procedural neutrality but in a positive theological anthropology of communion.

One of the main topics in discussion is extremism, which is not just "violence" but the absolutization of partial truth claims, combined with rejection of any kind of dialogue or approach. This is a real challenge for the religious truth and for the dialogue in a pluralistic context.[6] In the context of education, extremism refers to the adoption of ideological positions so rigid and exclusive that they preclude genuine intercultural encounter, critical thinking, and respect for human dignity.[7] Extremism is not merely a political phenomenon but an educational one: it emerges wherever formation processes close off the possibility of encounter with the other, substituting indoctrination for genuine inquiry.

From an Orthodox theological perspective, extremism represents a distortion of authentic religious identity, a contraction of faith into an ideology of exclusion that refuses the kenotic (self-emptying) movement towards the other. Authentic religious formation, by contrast, produces persons capable of maintaining strong convictions while remaining genuinely open to encounter. The educational response to extremism, therefore, is not

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[5] SKEIE, G. (1995): Plurality and Pluralism: A Challenge for Religious Education. In: *British Journal of Religious Education*. 17, 2. 84–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/0141620950170203.

[6] PEELS, R. (2025): What Is It to Explain Extremism? In: *Terrorism and Political Violence*. 37, 1. 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2023.2255902.

[7] Ibid.

the elimination of strong religious identity but its deepening and purification through formation in the theological and spiritual resources of the tradition, resources that, in the Orthodox case, include *kenosis*, *philoxenia*, and the ecclesial mind (*phronema*) capable of discernment.

The generic term of values does not mean generic ideals but normatively binding orientations rooted in communal and historical experience in each community.[8] Values, in the educational sense, are the normative orientations, moral, spiritual, aesthetic, and civic, that communities transmit across generations through formal and informal processes of formation.[9] They are not merely subjective preferences but communally validated principles that situate the individual within a shared axiological horizon. Values claim acceptance of a communal experience and place the person in a broader context in which, as a receiver of these values, one becomes, in turn, a transmitter within the community.

In Orthodox theological anthropology, values are inseparable from the communal and liturgical life of the Church, grounded in the person's orientation towards *theosis* 'deification' and the common good. This understanding resists both individualistic subjectivism, which treats values as private preferences, and abstract universalism, which detaches values from the lived traditions that give them concrete meaning. Orthodox formation cultivates values not primarily through abstract instruction but through participation in the liturgical, sacramental, and communal life of the Church, where virtues such as *kenosis*, *philoxenia*, and solidarity are embodied and practised.

Dialogue, as an educational concept, denotes more than mere conversation: it implies a structured, intentional encounter between persons or communities holding different convictions, conducted with mutual respect, genuine openness to the other's perspective, and commitment to truth-seeking rather than mere persuasion. In religious education, interfaith encounter is both a pedagogical method and a theological virtue.

In the Orthodox tradition, authentic encounter is grounded in the kenotic (self-emptying) disposition of the person who encounters the other as bearing the image of God (*imago Dei*). This theological foundation distinguishes Orthodox approaches to interfaith engagement from purely procedural or instrumental models: the goal is not

[8] WOODS, T. (2015): Practice Educators' Experiences of Facilitating and Assessing Student Values and Ethics Learning: Constructing Dialogue. In: *Social Work Education*. 34, 8. 936–951. https://doi.org/10.1080/02615479.2015.1087997.

[9] Ibid.

merely peaceful coexistence or strategic cooperation but genuine communion, a meeting of persons that respects difference while seeking deeper unity in truth and love. From the orthodox point of view, the dialogue it is not relativistic exchange but truth-oriented encounter grounded in communion.

Having clarified these foundational concepts, we now turn to the broader context of education in a globalized world and the specific challenges posed by religious diversity.

2. The Role of Education in the Transmission of Values

In the spirit of these values, each government or generation invests in education, aiming to create good citizens who share the broader ideals of the community and resonate with the type of culture and civilization the world desires. Education also aims to temper certain accents of extremism and violence against which young people can remain defenceless if they do not have certain solid reference points and values to govern their minds and lives.

The emphasis in education must be placed on values transmitted from the communal level to each subject of education. Each person must then internalize the entire formative process, transforming information into knowledge and knowledge into values according to which they can live. Moreover, here, disciplines and subjects that offer moral competencies and the content necessary for a broader education aimed at a better life can be more clearly highlighted.

3. Challenges of Globalization

Perhaps at this level, globalization, with its inflation of values and pseudo-values with different cultural patterns, strongly promoted, produces an imbalance in the educational system. How exactly does the student resonate with what they learn in school, in the context where they receive, voluntarily, a different kind of education from media consumption and exposure to social networks, which offer powerful models and strong messages that often obstruct the settled and natural course of education?

In this context, a fundamental question is: what should be the correct relationship between education and its exposure to the global world? An autarkic solution would be

completely unrealistic, considering that today we live in a globalized world where unrestricted access to knowledge makes education even more important.[10] Education is viewed in this sense as a set of values that ultimately gives young people the power to discern.

Similarly, a competitive approach would be totally unproductive, placing the subjects of the educational act in the far-from-simple position of learning something at school that is completely dissonant with what they from outside it, thereby generating an inner schism.

4. Towards a Pluralistic Educational Approach

We must be realistic and recognize that no educational system is closed. On the contrary, it enters into dialogue both with the diverse perspectives of its participants and with the wider global world. At the same time, it must be capable of establishing guidelines that ensure its coherence and, above all, protect it from the kind of axiological relativism that can ultimately lead to the dissolution of any educational project.

The solution seems pluralistic, not excluding diversity but seeking to understand it and place it in a broader context, where each element finds its place and meaning. Such an approach does not fear engaging in a dialogue with the wider world but seeks to understand how this can be productive for education and for the formation of young people.

5. An Orthodox Theology of Education for the Common Good

In this context, the Orthodox Church's recent articulation of its social ethos offers a compelling theological framework for understanding how religious communities can engage pluralism while maintaining fidelity to tradition. The Ecumenical Patriarchate's document *For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, published in 2020, presents a comprehensive moral theology, grounded in the recent developments of the society. It analyses contemporary social challenges through the lens

[10] OZÉIAS, Rocha – AMPHAMBALE, Daniel K. – MAC MAHON, Cormac – COETZER, Jon-Hans – MORALES, Lucía (2023): The Power of Education in a Globalised World: Challenging Geoeconomic Inequalities. In: *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice*. 35. 708–723.

of liturgical life and communal witness.[11] This groundbreaking text, endorsed by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and published in fourteen languages, articulates the ecumenical vision that is particularly relevant also for educational contexts seeking to reconcile religious values with pluralistic realities.[12]

The Orthodox Church's approach to ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, as articulated in the document *For the Life of the World…*, offers a robust theological framework for educational engagement. This framework is particularly valuable because it grounds dialogue not in relativism or mere tolerance but in a positive theological vision rooted in liturgical life, Eucharistic communion, and a commitment to peace and human dignity.

The social doctrine of the Ecumenical Patriarchate asserts a special responsibility of the Orthodox Churches for ecumenical dialogue, rooted in the Patriarchate's understanding of the relationship between the Church in general and the Orthodox Church.[13] This responsibility stems from a distinctive hermeneutics of the Orthodox tradition of dialogue and cooperation with other churches, a tradition dating back to the early twentieth century. The Ecumenical Patriarchate positions ecumenism as an integral part of its social doctrine and public mission, viewing ecumenical engagement not as an optional activity but as essential to the Church's identity and witness in the contemporary world.[14]

For the Life of the World… is described as outward-facing, encouraging practical exchanges, and inviting ongoing conversations rather than issuing closed juridical answers. The document's approach to ecumenism reflects a pastoral and dialogical mode of engagement that prioritizes witness and discernment over rigid pronouncements.[15]

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[11] *„Pentru viața lumii". Către un etos social al Bisericii Ortodoxe. Învățătura socială a Bisericii Ortodoxe în viziunea Patriarhiei ecumenice*. Transl. by Dr Viorel Coman and Dr Petre Maican. Oradea, Editura Ratio et Revelatio. 2020.

[12] HAMALIS, P. T. – DEMACOPOULOS, G. E. – PAPANIKOLAOU, A. – PRODROMOU, E. H. – ROMMEN, E. – GALLAHER, B. – HOVORUN, C. – BLACK, M. C. – SIMMONS, K. – THEOKRITOFF, E. – DANCKAERT, L. – PORTER, S. L. (2022): A Fresh Vision for Orthodox Social Ethics: Responses to *For the Life of the World (2020)*. In: *Studies in Christian Ethics*. 35, 2. 179–286.

[13] GULIAMOV, Bohdan (2021): Social Doctrine of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on Ecumenism and Interreligious Relations. In: *European Philosophical and Historical Discourse*. 7, 1. 105–111. Available at: https://ephd.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/ephd_2021_7_1/17.pdf (last accessed on: 26.02.2026).

[14] HAMALIS et al. 2022, 186.

[15] Op. cit. 189–201.

This orientation towards dialogue as an ongoing process rather than a completed achievement provides a model for educational institutions seeking to engage religious diversity without compromising their own identity or mission.

The document's ecumenical vision is particularly significant because it emerges at a time when the Orthodox world faces internal tensions and geopolitical pressures. By affirming ecumenical commitment as central to Orthodox social teaching, the Ecumenical Patriarchate offers a counternarrative to isolationist or nationalist tendencies within some Orthodox contexts, emphasizing the universal and reconciling dimensions of Christian witness instead.

6. Liturgical and Eucharistic Foundations for Dialogue

A distinctive feature of the Orthodox approach to ecumenism in *For the Life of the World*… is its grounding in liturgical theology and Eucharistic communion. The document situates social engagement, including ecumenical encounter, within the life of Christ as experienced in the Eucharistic assembly, thereby establishing liturgical identity as the theological foundation for outward witness and dialogue. This liturgical foundation is not merely decorative but constitutive: the Church's engagement with the world flows from its participation in the divine life made present in the liturgy.

Steven Porter highlights that *For the Life of the World*… presents liturgy not merely as ritual practice but as "the ultimate context for the moral life", thereby grounding ethical and social reflection in the lived reality of worship and communion.[16] This approach contrasts with purely rationalistic or rights-based frameworks for dialogue, instead grounding engagement with others in a sacramental anthropology that sees human persons as created for communion with God and one another.

The Eucharistic foundation for dialogue has profound implications for education. It suggests that authentic engagement with religious diversity requires not just intellectual understanding but a transformation of the person through participation in communal life and worship. Educational approaches to religious pluralism, from this perspective, cannot be purely academic or simply detached; they must involve formation in the practices

[16] Ibid.

of communion, hospitality, and mutual recognition. The liturgical emphasis also highlights the importance of beauty, symbol, and embodied practice in religious education, countering tendencies towards purely cognitive or propositional approaches to religious knowledge.

The theology of communication that informs the Patriarchate's social doctrine further develops this liturgical foundation, framing dialogue as part of Christian responsibility towards peace and human dignity.[17] Communication, in this theological vision, is not merely the exchange of information but a participation in the divine life of communion, reflecting the Trinitarian nature of God as a communion of persons.

7. The Orthodox Affirmation of "Seeds of the Word" in Other Religions

The Patriarchal Document adopts a notably positive stance towards other religions, affirming that they contain "seeds of the Word" and recognizing spiritual truth and value beyond the boundaries of Orthodox Christianity.[18] This theological affirmation provides a foundation for respectful encounter and moral cooperation with non-Christian faiths, moving beyond mere tolerance to genuine appreciation of the work of the Holy Spirit in diverse religious traditions.

The document's language regarding other religions is described as conciliatory and respectful. Secondary sources report that *For the Life of the World*…, or its drafters, describes Judaism as an "elder brother" and notes that Islam can contain "beauty and spiritual truths".[19] Such language supports respectful interfaith engagement and provides a theological warrant for educational approaches that take the truth claims and spiritual insights of diverse religious traditions seriously.

This affirmation of "seeds of the eternal Word" in other religions reflects an old patristic theological tradition that recognizes the universal operation of the divine Logos. The concept, rooted in the writings of early Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, suggests that all truth, wherever it is found, ultimately derives

[17] GULIAMOV 2021, 106.
[18] Op. cit. 108.
[19] Op. cit. 110.

from Christ as the Logos through whom all things were made.[20] This theological framework allows Orthodox Christians to engage other religions with both confidence in their own tradition and openness to learning from others.

For educational contexts, this theological stance offers a middle way between religious relativism and exclusivism. It provides a basis for genuine dialogue that neither reduces all religions to equivalent expressions of a generic spirituality nor dismisses other traditions as entirely devoid of truth. Students can be encouraged to engage deeply with diverse religious traditions, seeking the "seeds of the Word" present in them while maintaining their own religious commitments and identities.

Commentators note, however, that *For the Life of the World…*'s approach to interreligious relations is more expansive than its treatment of relations with other Christian churches. Some judge the document's ecumenical section as relatively conservative because it stops short of affirming the full ecclesial status of non-Orthodox churches.[21] This tension reflects ongoing debates within Orthodox theology about the boundaries of the Church and the ecclesial status of other Christian communities. Nevertheless, the document's emphasis on practical cooperation and moral witness provides a framework for engagement that transcends these unresolved theological questions.

8. Ecumenical Dialogue, Peace, and Resistance to Fundamentalism

The social ethos articulated in *For the Life of the World…* explicitly links ecumenical and interreligious dialogue to the pursuit of peace and the resistance of religious fundamentalism.[22] This connection is crucial in educational contexts, as it frames dialogue not in itself as an end but as a means toward the concrete goals of peacebuilding and the prevention of religiously motivated violence.

The document's emphasis on peace reflects the Ecumenical Patriarchate's longstanding commitment to conflict resolution and reconciliation. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew has been a prominent voice for peace in contexts of religious and ethnic

[20] *„Pentru viața lumii"*, §55. 96.
[21] GULIAMOV 2021, 108.
[22] Ibid.

conflict, and *For the Life of the World…* extends this commitment into a comprehensive social teaching. The document presents dialogue as a pathway to achieving peace, suggesting that mutual understanding and cooperation among religious communities are essential to addressing conflicts that threaten human flourishing.

The resistance to fundamentalism is particularly relevant in educational contexts where young people may be vulnerable to extremist narratives. *For the Life of the World…* offers a theological alternative to fundamentalist interpretations of Christianity, emphasizing the Church's communal, liturgical, and dialogical character. The document's ethos-driven approach, which prioritizes discernment and witness over rigid juridical pronouncements, exemplifies a religious commitment that is both deeply rooted in tradition and open to engagement with contemporary challenges.[23]

Hamalis et al. note that *For the Life of the World…* addresses racism and nationalism with incisiveness, challenging religious identities tied to ethnic or political exclusivism. This critique of nationalism and racism is essential for countering fundamentalist tendencies that often conflate religious identity with ethnic or national identity. By emphasizing the universal and reconciling dimensions of Christian faith, the document provides resources for resisting the instrumentalization of religion for political or ideological purposes.[24]

The connection between dialogue and peace also has implications for how religious education addresses conflict. Rather than avoiding controversial topics or presenting sanitized versions of religious traditions, educators can engage students in a critical examination of how religious communities have both contributed to and worked to overcome violence and division. *For the Life of the World…* models this approach by acknowledging the Church's failures and calling for ongoing conversion and renewal.

The document's vision of theosis, the spiritual process of deification, as fundamentally transforming how individuals act, think, and understand reality, provides a theological foundation for the Church's mission of witness (*martyria*) in addressing peace, human dignity, and ecological crises.[25] This emphasis on spiritual transformation suggests that

[23] HAMALIS et al. 2022.

[24] MILLER, Joyce (2013): Religious Extremism, Religious Education, and the Interpretive Approach. In: *Religion & Education*. 40, 1. 50–61.

[25] SONEA, C. (2022): Theosis and Martyria. The Spiritual Process of Deification and Its Implication for the Mission of the Church. In: *Religions*. 14, 1. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14010012 (last accessed on: 26.02.2026).

resistance to fundamentalism and the pursuit of peace require not just intellectual assent to correct doctrines but a deep personal and communal conversion that reorients the whole person towards God and neighbour.

9. Religious Education in a Pluralistic Context

Religious education faces specific challenges in this pluralistic context. It must find ways to maintain its identity and specificity while being open to dialogue with other religious and cultural traditions. This requires a delicate balance between fidelity to one's own tradition and openness to others.

The Orthodox theological framework articulated in the document already mentioned demonstrates how this balance can be achieved. By grounding dialogue in liturgical life and Eucharistic communion, the Orthodox approach maintains a strong sense of identity and tradition while simultaneously opening towards engagement with others. The challenge is to develop forms of religious education that are both authentic to their own tradition and respectful of and open to other traditions. This means that religious education must be both confessional and intercultural, both particular and universal. The Orthodox model suggests that this is possible when religious identity is understood not as a closed system of propositions but as participation in a living tradition of worship, practice, and communal discernment.

From an Orthodox point of view, the handling of pluralism in educational practice is grounded not in relativistic tolerance but in the theology of communion (*koinonia*) and the living experience of the Church. In the classroom, this issue can be approached through guided comparative engagement, where students encounter other religious traditions while being rooted in the Orthodox understanding of truth, and encouraged to discern the presence of the *logoi spermatikoi* 'seeds of the Word' in different cultural and religious contexts.

Pedagogically, this implies a form of dialogical learning that reflects the ecclesial ethos: students are invited to witness to their own tradition while listening attentively to others, cultivating both fidelity and openness. Dialogue, in this sense, is not the suspension of truth claims or a relativization but an expression of love (*agape*) and respect for the person as created in the image of God. Moreover, Orthodox pedagogy

emphasizes the formative role of liturgical and communal life. Educational practice can include exposure to liturgical experience, symbolic language, and practices of hospitality (*philoxenia*), through which students internalize a mode of relating to the other that is eucharistic rather than confrontational.

10. Addressing Religious Extremism through Education

One of the most pressing challenges facing contemporary education is how to address religious extremism. Education must find ways to counter extremist narratives while respecting religious diversity and freedom of belief.

The Orthodox emphasis on communal discernment, liturgical formation, and dialogical engagement offers resources for addressing extremism. By presenting religious faith as inherently communal and dialogical rather than individualistic and absolutist, this approach counters the isolation and rigidity that often characterize extremist movements.[26] The emphasis on beauty, symbol, and embodied practice in liturgical life also provides an alternative to the reductionist and literalist interpretations of religious texts that fuel fundamentalism.

Finally, in addressing extremism, an Orthodox approach fosters discernment (*diakrisis*) through participation in the life of the community and engagement with the patristic tradition. By integrating critical reflection with spiritual formation, students learn to distinguish authentic expressions of faith from ideological distortions, developing a balanced and holistic understanding of religious identity in a pluralistic world.

Research suggests that effective approaches to countering religious extremism through education include:

A pedagogical framework informed by the liturgical and Eucharistic vision of *For the Life of the World*… must move beyond purely cognitive models of education and instead cultivate the formation of the whole person within a communal and relational context. In this regard, several key dimensions emerge.

[26] LOVAT, Terence (2019): Addressing Religious Extremism through Theologically Informed Religious Education. In: *Journal of Religious Education*. 67, 2. 103–114.

First, the development of critical thinking is essential, yet it must be understood not as isolated rational analysis but as discernment formed within tradition and community. Students are thus encouraged to evaluate religious and ideological claims critically while remaining attentive to the interpretive frameworks and spiritual practices that shape communal understanding.

Second, intercultural and interreligious dialogue becomes a central educational objective. Such dialogue is not limited to the exchange of ideas but involves structured engagement that fosters mutual recognition, cooperation, and the cultivation of trust between different religious and cultural communities.

Third, this approach entails a value-based orientation that emphasizes fundamental human goods – such as dignity, peace, and justice – while also respecting the particularity of religious traditions and their distinctive moral and spiritual contributions. In this sense, universal values are not abstracted from tradition but are encountered through it.

Finally, media literacy assumes increasing importance in a digital and fragmented public sphere. Students must be equipped to evaluate information critically, to identify ideological manipulation, and to recognize extremist narratives and recruitment strategies. Such competencies are indispensable for responsible participation in contemporary society and for resisting forms of radicalization that distort both religious and secular discourses.

The Orthodox theological framework adds to these approaches by grounding them in a positive vision of human flourishing rooted in communion with God and others. Rather than a simple critique on extremism, this approach offers a valuable alternative vision of religious life that is both deeply traditional and genuinely open to dialogue and engagement.

The Orthodox Church's contribution to countering extremism in education is not defensive or reactive but positive and prophetic. It proclaims, "God became human so that humans might become god", according to Saint Athanasius the Great. This is the ultimate antidote to extremism: a vision of human destiny so exalted, so beautiful, so all-encompassing that it renders violent ideologies pale and impoverished by comparison.

When young people encounter the beauty of holiness in the liturgy, the wisdom of the Fathers in spiritual texts, the love of Christ in authentic community, and the call to theosis in their own lives, they find what extremism falsely promises but cannot deliver.

The task of Orthodox education is therefore not primarily to construct argumentative refutations of extremism, but to embody and proclaim the Gospel in its fullness, offering a coherent and transformative vision of human life. This vision is at once ancient yet ever new, being deeply rooted in the apostolic tradition while remaining capable of addressing the existential questions of every age. It is particular yet universal, grounded in the concrete life of the Orthodox Church and its doctrinal and liturgical identity, yet open to all humanity through its emphasis on communion and the shared destiny of humankind. At the same time, it is mystical yet practical, uniting participation in transcendent worship with a concrete commitment to social ethics, peace, and human dignity.

Such an educational ethos is also firm yet humble: it bears witness to the truth with confidence, while engaging others with respect and without coercion, cultivating a dialogical attitude rooted in love (agape) rather than ideological confrontation. Finally, it is challenging yet compassionate, calling the human person to repentance and transformation, while simultaneously offering mercy, healing, and acceptance within the life of the ecclesial community.

In this perspective, the Orthodox approach does not represent a compromise between opposing positions but rather a "royal path" of balance, integration, and spiritual discernment. It reflects the evangelical paradox of the "narrow way that leads to life" (Matthew 7:14), understood not as restriction but as a path of freedom through communion, shaped by the mystery of the Cross and the hope of the Resurrection. As such, Orthodox education proposes not merely a critique of extremism but a living alternative: a form of life grounded in truth, sustained by worship, and fulfilled in love.

Key Orthodox Concepts for Educators

A theological approach to education informed by the vision of *For the Life of the World*… can be further articulated through several key Orthodox concepts that offer both spiritual depth and practical relevance in addressing pluralism, extremism, and the formation of values.

Theosis (Deification): The ultimate goal of human life is union with God – becoming "partakers of the divine nature" (2Peter 1:4). This teleological vision provides a horizon of meaning that transcends the reductive and often nihilistic narratives proposed by extremist ideologies.

Phronema (Mind of the Church): Authentic understanding is formed within the communal life of the Church rather than through isolated individual interpretation. Critical thinking, therefore, is exercised as ecclesial discernment, integrating reason, tradition, and spiritual experience.

Nepsis (Watchfulness): Spiritual vigilance against deception and temptation extends beyond ascetic practice to include critical awareness of ideological manipulation. This concept offers a valuable framework for media literacy and for recognizing the subtle dynamics of radicalization.

Kenosis (Self-Emptying): Grounded in the Christological model of Jesus Christ (Philippians 2:5–8), *kenosis* emphasizes humility, self-limitation, and service to others. It stands in direct opposition to the pride, domination, and absolutism characteristic of extremist worldviews.

Sobornost (Conciliarity): The Church embodies a form of unity that preserves diversity through communion. This conciliar vision offers a constructive alternative to both authoritarian structures and radical individualism, making it especially relevant for navigating pluralistic contexts.

Philoxenia (Love of the Stranger): Hospitality towards the other is a central Christian virtue. It enables genuine openness to persons of different religious and cultural backgrounds while maintaining the integrity of one's own identity, thus providing a theological basis for interreligious dialogue.

Apophatic Theology (Negative Theology): The recognition of the limits of human knowledge before the mystery of God cultivates epistemic humility. This stance serves as an antidote to ideological rigidity and the false certainties that often underpin extremist positions.

11. Conclusions

Education in a world marked by individualism and extremism requires a delicate balance between maintaining educational coherence and engaging with global diversity. The solution lies not in isolating education from global influences or in uncritically accepting all perspectives but in developing robust frameworks for critical engagement that preserve what is valuable while remaining open to dialogue and growth.

The Orthodox Church's theological vision, as articulated in *For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church*, offers a compelling model for this engagement. By grounding dialogue in liturgical theology, Eucharistic communion, and a commitment to peace and human dignity, the Orthodox approach demonstrates how religious communities can maintain strong identities while engaging authentically with pluralism. The affirmation of "seeds of the Word" in other religions provides theological warrant for respectful encounter and cooperation. At the same time, the emphasis on communal discernment and liturgical formation offers resources for resisting fundamentalism and extremism.

Religious education must find ways to be both faithful to its own traditions and capable of meaningful dialogue with others. This requires well-trained educators not only in academic knowledge but also in the spiritual and communal practices of their traditions, curricula that are thoughtfully designed to balance particularity and universality, and communities committed to the challenging yet necessary work of education.

The future of education in pluralistic societies depends on our ability to navigate these challenges with wisdom, courage, and commitment to both truth and dialogue. The Orthodox theological framework demonstrates that such navigation is possible when rooted in a positive vision of human flourishing, communal life, and divine communion. Only through such an approach can we hope to address the pressing challenges of our time while preparing young people for meaningful and productive lives in an increasingly interconnected world.

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Dieter H. W. BRANDES[1]:

The Role of Religions and Cultures in Conflicts

Abstract.

All major religions claim to call for peace in their messages and to actively contribute to peace in times of conflict. However, it must be noted that the scriptures of all religions also contain texts that can be interpreted as calls to violence. The question arises whether in conflicts such as the Balkan Wars, the Northern Ireland conflicts, Israel/Palestine, or even the Crusades, belonging to a religious community is the basis and trigger for military actions, or whether religious differentiation is only a reinforcing consequence of other conflict-promoting factors.

Research largely works with Vilhelm Aubert's conflict typology, distinguishing between *interest conflicts* (disputes over scarce goods) and *value conflicts* (morality, religion, ideology, rule). Since people are more easily mobilized in *value conflicts* and the willingness to use violence and to be a victim increases, rulers today, as in the past, are striving to ideologically charge *interest conflicts* and transform them into *value conflicts*.

After an extensive treatment of examples (Crusades, Balkan War, Northern Ireland conflict, etc.), this study concludes: Many collective long-lasting conflicts in Europe initially suggest religious causes. However, a differentiated examination shows that it is not the religious origin but rather the differentiation from the other culture and the inherent fear of the foreignness of others that is usually the dominant basis for enmity.

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Examples of worldwide peace initiatives based on religious grounds are listed, which demonstrate that religions are "experts" in processing memories (Healing of Memories) for peacekeeping and for sustainable reconciliation between nations, cultures, and religions.

***Keywords**:* religious conflicts, cultural identity, peacebuilding, interfaith dialogue, reconciliation

Introduction

All major religions claim to be peaceful and to contribute to peace in times of conflict. But what is the reality? Are "religions inherently violent due to their claim to truth... [and] do they, despite all their human appearance, always harbour a totalitarian core, or are religions merely instrumentalized and misused"?[2]

Now the question arises: "Is religion, or belonging to a religion/confession / religious community, the basis or the trigger for military actions, or is religious differentiation rather a reinforcing consequence of other conflict-promoting factors?"[3]

To investigate this question, it is helpful to consider which role religions can play in conflicts. And to follow this, it is necessary to understand how conflicts arise and according to which criteria they proceed.

1. Clarification of Interest Conflicts and Value Conflicts

It is first necessary to understand "which conflict mechanisms and internal logics come into play in conflict realities and what consequences this entails".[4]

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[2] WEINGARTH, Markus A. (2016): *Frieden durch Religion? Das Spannungsverhältnis zwischen Religion und Politik*. Gütersloh, Bertelsmann Stiftung. 8. [All translations of originally non-English texts/quotations are mine throughout the article unless otherwise stated.].

[3] BRANDES, Dieter (2026a): *Versöhnung durch Erinnerung – Healing of Memories in Europa an ausgewählten Beispielen*. Book series: Kirche–Konfession–Religion, vol. 89. Goettingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. Chapter: *7.1.3.1. Die Rolle von Religionen in Konflikten.*

[4] WEINGARTH 2016, 8.

The term "conflict" originates from the Latin *conflictio* 'collision', 'dispute' or *confligere* 'to collide', 'clash', 'fight', 'argue'. It means that "certain intentions or purposes of two or more parties collide with each other".[5]

The conflict can arise from the fact that the parties involved pursue different goals or that they have the same goals but one side wants to impose itself over the other to achieve the realization of goals more quickly or exclusively.

Research largely follows Vilhelm Aubert's conflict typology, distinguishing between interest conflicts and value conflicts.[6] Aubert identifies interest conflicts as those based on the scarcity of goods or power positions that are claimed by various parties alike.[7]

A value conflict, on the other hand, "is based on a dissent regarding the normative status of a social object".[8] This can be disagreements over values, positions, and facts, or about hierarchization and the correct application of values.[9] These different backgrounds of conflict lead "to a specific intensity and dynamics of the resulting conflicts and to their own strategies for resolving or civilizing these conflicts".[10]

a) Interest Conflicts as a Dispute over "Scarce Goods"

Interest conflicts concerning the distribution of scarce goods or the securing of access to them can relate to material resources, such as water or land, or to existential needs of life such as income and future prospects. However, they can also be about security and power positions (e.g. political offices).

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5 Op. cit. 9.

6 AUBERT, Vilhelm (1963): Competition and Dissensus: Two Types of Conflict and of Conflict Resolution. In: *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 7, 1(March). Thousand Oaks (California, USA), SAGE Publications, Inc. 27.

7 AUBERT, Vilhelm (1972) [German transl.]: Interessenkonflikt und Wertkonflikt: Zwei Typen des Konflikts und der Konfliktlösung. In: Bühl, Walter L. (ed.): *Konflikt und Konfliktstrategie – Ansätze einer soziologichen Konflikttheorie*. Nymphenburger Texte zur Wissenschaft ntw. Munich, Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung. 180, 182.

8 Op. cit. 183.

9 Op. cit. 184.

10 WILLEMS, Ullrich (2015): Die Unterscheidung von Interessen- und Wertkonflikten. In: *Wertkonflikte als Herausforderung der Demokratie*. Wiesbaden, Publisher Springer Nature. 11.

Louis Kriesberg identifies the condition for the occurrence of interest conflicts as the fact that "at least one of the parties must feel that the distribution of equally valued goods or positions is unsatisfactory".[11] However, the unsatisfactory distribution must "be attributable to actions of another party or at least not be changeable without disadvantages for other parties".[12]

According to Markus A. Weingarth, conflicts of interest are generally carried out in three ways:

- the right of the stronger,
- the strength of the right,
- communication to reach a compromise.[13]

(1) The so-called "right of the stronger" is actually not a right but simply the "power of the stronger".[14] Thus, "conflict parties in political disputes often believe too often that they can force success through military threat and finally violence [...] and only agree to negotiations when a military victory seems unattainable in the face of all expectations".[15] However, by then, many people have already lost their lives, and cities have been reduced to ruins and ashes.

(2) According to the "strength of law" as a method of conflict resolution, the parties involved call upon a court to have it decide who is in the right. However, the prerequisite is that:
   - courts also ensure the enforcement of this law, in the extreme case by threatening and applying force;
   - there exists a "functioning and universally recognized system of the rule of law"[16] (including independent judges and unhindered access to the courts).

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[11] KRIESBERG, Louis (1982): Social Conflict Theories and Conflict Resolution. In: *Peace & Change – A Journal of Peace Research*. 8, 2–3. 36. Cincinnati (Ohio), University of Cincinnati.
[12] Ibid.
[13] WEINGARTH 2016, 9–11.
[14] Op. cit. 10.
[15] Op. cit. 11.
[16] Op. cit. 10.

(3) The "most constructive form of conflict resolution" is dialogue with the goal of "reaching an agreement on a compromise".[17]

In cases where the opposing interests are not completely opposed, however, a consensus is generally sought in processes of negotiation (bargaining). The central mechanism of civilized solutions to interest conflicts is "a compromise in the form of mutual concessions on parts of the claims initially made".[18]

The tendency to resolve conflicts through compromise is also "encouraged by the fact that other conflict resolution methods, such as court decisions (...), carry the risk of losing everything".[19]

However, even if an interest conflict escalates, for example, "when the strategic positions of the parties are very asymmetrical or the parties simply insist on their positions",[20] there is still the fundamental possibility of reaching a compromise through dialogue in the course of the conflict. Weingarth refers to it as "the advantage of interest conflicts that even after the outbreak of violence, a settlement through compromises, concessions, and interest balancing is still possible".[21]

On the other hand, this is much more difficult in the case of resolving value conflicts.

b) Value Conflicts and Their Conflict Potential

In value conflicts, the dispute is not about the distribution of scarce goods or securing access to them, about resource access or power positions, but about ethical, moral, religious, cultural, and ideological foundations. It is about worldviews and about models of governance and society.

It is about "values, and thus also about culture, tradition, education – about all that is subjectively important and decisive", and thus about "identity, which makes a person, group, ethnicity, or nation what they fundamentally are"[22] Value conflicts are "irreducible conflicts", in which "compromises are naturally much more difficult".[23]

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17 Op. cit. 11.

18 AUBERT 1972, 181.

19 WILLEMS 2015, 12.

20 AUBERT 1972, 185.

21 WEINGARTH 2016, 11.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid. Weingarth gives this example: "The recognition of universal human rights is incompatible with the discrimination of women, blacks, or homosexuals."

Value conflicts are, "far more frequently than interest conflicts ... aggressively pursued"[24] and escalate into acts of violence – because, in value conflicts, it often "comes down to everything". A defeat could "endanger one's own identity as a spiritual basis for life and existence", and "to prevent this, no sacrifice is too great, up to the sacrifice of one's own life".[25]

Weingarth identifies three "severe consequences"[26] as follows:

- In value conflicts, people are more easily mobilized and more willing to take action.
- In value conflicts, the readiness for violence increases.
- In value conflicts, the readiness to be a victim increases.

The compromise as a conflict resolution appears less promising in value disagreements. The search for a compromise is often viewed in value conflicts as "not infrequently as illegitimate (cow) trade for moral principles".[27] This is the case when there seems to be only an either–or option and when "compromises are only considered dilution, if not betrayal of the good cause, of the truth".[28] Moreover, conflicts about values and truth also have a public character at all times. Thus, the negotiating parties often act far less autonomously in the search for compromise solutions than in interest conflicts when it comes to exchanging conditions for compromises.[29]

Vilhelm Aubert points out, however, that dissent over values and truth does not necessarily have to lead to open conflict. This applies, for example, when bearers of opposing values and beliefs live in separate social groups or societies.[30] An example can be the ethnic coexistence between the Romanian, Hungarian, and Saxon ethnic groups in Transylvania. There was discrimination against individual groups over the centuries – particularly against the Romanians –, but conflicts were openly expressed only in individual cases, because the ethnic groups largely lived in separate social and societal groups.

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[24] WILLEMS 2015, 12.
[25] WEINGARTH 2016, 11.
[26] Op. cit. 13.
[27] WILLEMS 2015, 12.
[28] WEINGARTH 2016, 12.
[29] AUBERT 1972, 183 f.
[30] Cf. op. cit. 183.

As another example, the peaceful coexistence of social groups with different religious orientations in the Principality of Moldavia can be mentioned, where the other religious affiliation was respected through religious tolerance (examples: Armenians and Lipovans). Religious tolerance was also realized – with limitations – in Dobrogea as the Sanjak of Tulcea in the Ottoman Empire.

Louis Kriesberg also emphasizes that for violent escalation over value conflicts, the disputed values must also be "incompatible". This is the case when individuals or groups with different value perspectives are in a social relationship that sets these perspectives in opposition.[31] This can involve professional or personal social power struggles, but it may also be about power and ownership claims over other ethnic groups as in the wars in Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo.

c) Conspiracy Theories and Echo Chambers

An extreme expression of value conflicts can be conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories have existed throughout human history for centuries. They fascinate people time and again and are often a dangerous phenomenon of social dynamics. They often arise in times of social and/or economic uncertainty and fear. When people do not understand or do not want to understand the complexity of the current social, economic, and political reality, they seek simple explanations. Instead of accepting complexity, people look for the explanation in a hidden power, a secret network pulling the strings in the background, or in an ostensibly clear culprit or an ostensibly identifiable guilty group.

Unexplained or threatening events, such as wars, pandemics, or economic crises, generate fear and foster conspiracy theories that no longer make the events seem inexplicable and senseless but rather orchestrated by clearly identifiable actors. Conspiracy theories are associated with a strong need for social belonging. This belonging to a group is connected with perceived similar values, which aim to impose these values as a "wake-up community of like-minded individuals" with a sense of superiority, even over a supposed "manipulated majority", if necessary, also through violence.

People who adhere to conspiracy theories usually operate in a largely mental and often also physically enclosed space. Cass Sunstein coined the term "echo chamber" to

[31] KRIESBERG 1982, 33.

describe this phenomenon,[32] the term being a metaphor that refers to a physical media space that is shielded from acoustic environmental influences. In the social sciences, this term refers to "a metaphorical space where statements are amplified and interference, such as differing opinions, are swallowed".[33] In echo chambers, "group-dynamic opinion formation processes occur in personalized information environments", where "like-minded individuals mutually confirm their own opinions time and again like an echo, while contact with differing opinions diminishes".[34] In this way, the participants develop "the impression of representing a majority opinion that they increasingly articulate from this understanding".[35] The spread of conspiracy theories is facilitated by the functioning of modern media such as the Internet and, in particular, social networks, which allow information to be disseminated unfiltered in media echo chambers, where like-minded individuals reinforce each other. Manipulated algorithms amplify this effect by preferentially showing content that is emotionally stirring, to which conspiracy theories are particularly well suited.

History also shows that echo chambers form in social mega-spaces. The social consequences of conspiracy theories can be significant. Thus, pogroms against certain social or religious groups have always broken out over the centuries when epidemics, wars, or economic hardships have burdened people. Then, there arose hatred and violent attacks against the lives and possessions of religious, national, or ethnic minorities, often with the tolerance or support of state powers.

Conspiracy theories also arise in the ideological-political sphere, as illustrated by accusations in the vicinity of Stalin that the Ukrainian kulaks[36] would steal crop yields,

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[32] SUNSTEIN, Cass R. (2001): *Republic.com*. Princeton – Oxford, Princeton University Press. 252 – under *Current Affairs*, the following is stated: "See only, what you want to see, hear only what you want to hear, read only what you want to read."

[33] HEIM, Mario (2020): Echokammer. In: Artsiomenka, Katja – Pöttker, Horst (eds.): *Journalistikon – Wörterbuch der Jorunalistik*. Herbert von Halem. Available at: https://journalistikon.de/echokammer/ (last accessed on: 24.02.2026).

[34] DEUTSCHER BUNDESTAG (WD 10 - 3000 - 007/22) *„Echokammern" und „Filterblasen" in digitalen Medien*, Ausarbeitung des Wissenschaftlichen Dienstes WD 10 - 3000 - 007/22. Berlin, Deutscher Bundestag. 8.

[35] Ibid.

[36] The term "kulak" (from the Russian *кулак* 'fist') was originally used in Russian for relatively wealthy farmers. (cf. HILDERMANN, Manfred (1998): *Geschichte der Sowjetunion 1917–1991*.

even though Stalin himself allowed these to be collected in order to use the yields for the necessary foreign currency for his ambitious, gigantic industrialization projects. The result was an unprecedented famine catastrophe that claimed the lives of up to 6 million people throughout the Soviet Union.[37]

A different example is the long history of discrimination and persecution that preceded the Nazi genocide of the Roma over five centuries in Europe. After the initial tolerance of the Roma following their migration to Europe in the 14th-15th centuries, their political leaders were then suspected of being Ottoman spies during the Ottoman Wars.[38] Another accusation was that they would endanger the hereditary health of ordinary citizens.[39]

And even the easily refutable conspiracy theory that the Roma were allegedly stealing children persisted for centuries.[40]

In the political sphere, conspiracy theories weaken trust in state institutions, science, and the media. If central opposing information sources are seen as "part of a conspiracy", a rational discourse becomes nearly impossible. In cases of extreme escalation, they lead to violence – as in attacks on government buildings or medical personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic in some African countries. In the religious sphere, conspiracy theories have repeatedly led to the persecution of religious groups, at times culminating in genocidal violence.

Munich, C.H. Beck. 292). During the forced collectivization of agriculture ordered by Joseph Stalin from 1928 to 1933, the term "kulak" was largely extended to all independent farmers. Within the framework of *dekulakization*, and following selection by a "triumvirate committee", hundreds of thousands were deported as "class enemies" to labour camps, and many of them were shot (op. cit. 393).

37 Extensively reported in the chapter 5.3.5. *Holodomor, der vergessene ukrainische Genozid*, in BRANDES 2026a.

38 Cf. JACOBS, Fabian – RIES, Johannes – STOFFERS, Nina (2007): The Christian Churches and the Roma/Gypsy in Europe. In: Brandes, Dieter (ed.): *Reconciliatio nr. 1 Healing of Memories in Europe – A Study of Reconciliation between Churches, Cultures and Religion*. Leipzig Evangelische Verlagsanstalt. 209.

39 REICHSGESETZBLATT RGBl 114/1935 *Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes* (*Marriage Health Law*) vom 18.10.1935. p. 1246.

40 Extensively reported in chapter 5.3.7. *Der Genozid Porajmos (Verschlingen) an den Roma in Europa.* In: BRANDES 2026a.

2. The Role of Religions and Cultures in Conflicts

a) Causes Underlying the Instrumentalization of Religion in Conflicts

The increased willingness for commitment, violence, and sacrifice in value-based conflicts has been exploited by rulers for centuries. Thus, "[r]ulers today, as then, have been striving to ideologically frame conflicts of interest and transform them into value conflicts."[41] For this purpose, "secular ideologies such as nationalism, communism, or National Socialism are initially available. They are all capable of inspiring followers towards a higher ideal that transcends material interests and human desires."[42]

Then, humanistic aspects such as "well-building and girls' schools, freedom, human rights, and democracy" are often highlighted, even though it is rather "about geostrategic power politics or economic concerns" and military means are employed, because, "according to the message, it's about values, not interests".[43]

A particularly effective method of transforming conflicts of interest into value-based conflicts is, however, the religious framing. If this succeeds, one achieves a "double effect", because it is no longer just "about ethical questions of right and wrong" but rather "about a struggle of good against evil, a struggle of the good ('us') against the evil ('the others')".[44] Because "evil must be combated with all strength", and "this sacred purpose justifies all means"; and thus violence "is not only legitimate, but it is recommended", and "violence, however brutal and despicable it may be, is considered a form of 'worship'".[45]

The instrumentalization of religion for violent conflicts is a recurring phenomenon in world history. In this case, religion is not lived as a spiritual orientation or ethical system but is deliberately used for political, economic, or power-strategic purposes. Religious beliefs, symbols, and identities serve as means for the mobilization, legitimation, and emotionalization of violence.

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41 WEINGARTH 2016, 13.

42 Op. cit. 14.

43 Ibid. Weingarth refers to an essay by Robert F. Kennedy Jr.: *Die Geister, die wir riefen*, in *Publik-Forum* 7/2016, p. 16–17. Kennedy writes about the deployment of the American military in Syria.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid. Weingarth adds, "According to this understanding, the highest level of such service to God is to sacrifice one's own life in a suicide bombing and, in doing so, drag as many followers of evil as possible into death with you."

The role of religions, often perceived as malevolent in violent conflicts, is "not rooted in any inherent aggressive or violent tendency of religions themselves but in the logic of classical conflict mechanisms",[46] namely in the transformation of conflicts of interest into value-based conflicts in the context of power and ownership claims. Religions "prove to be the most effective means in the transformation of interests into value conflicts".[47] That is why they are also readily used by violent leaders "to increase their chances of success".

The instrumentalization of religion functions particularly effectively because religious beliefs are deeply rooted in personal identity. Those who believe they are acting in the name of divine truth often feel their actions are morally justified or even obligatory. This moral absolutism reduces willingness to compromise and increases readiness for violence. At the same time, religious symbolism enables strong emotional mobilization, as it promises meaning, willingness to sacrifice, and community. Historical examples of this are abundant:

The Crusades in the Middle Ages were officially depicted as religiously motivated campaigns for the "liberation" of sacred sites. However, in addition to the religious dimension, particularly political power interests, territorial expansion, and economic motives played a decisive role. Religion served here as a framework for identity formation, morally justifying complex political goals and mobilizing broad segments of population to participate. The most striking example of this is the Fourth Crusade, as termed by Pope Innocent III, which was officially supposed to "reconquer Egypt" but ended with the conquest of the Christian (!) Constantinople.

Another example is the Northern Ireland conflict, which is often described as a dispute between Catholics and Protestants. Although organizations like the Irish Republican Army (IRA) cited confessional affiliations, the core issues were national, social, and political. Religion primarily served as a unifying and dividing factor here, rather than as the actual cause of violence. It acted as an amplifier of collective religious belonging and deepened existing social divisions.

Similarly, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina can be mentioned here, which is often described as a conflict between Muslims and Orthodox Christians. In reality, it was about power interests of the Serbian side, ideologically framed within the Vidovdan (Kosovo)

[46] Op. cit. 15.
[47] Ibid.

myth, according to which the Serbian army would have defended the Western world against the Muslim Ottomans.[48]

And, of course, terrorist organizations such as the so-called Islamic State must be mentioned, which adduce religious texts and traditions to justify violent acts. In doing so, theological contents are selectively interpreted and extracted from their historical and ethical context. The goal is to recruit followers, sharpen enemy images, and religiously legitimate political claims to power. The religious language confers upon actions a seemingly higher authority and at the same time makes a differentiated public debate more difficult.

It is, however, important to distinguish between religion as a system of belief and its political instrumentalization. Since the sacred texts of "all major religions contain individual verses or entire texts in which violence appears to be ordered by God or even carried out by Him", conflict leaders "can refer to and rely on such traditions of religiously legitimized violence".[49] However, the major world religions contain a variety of ethical traditions that emphasize peace, compassion, and justice. Violence usually arises not from religious teachings alone but from their deliberate reinterpretation in the context of social, political, and economic conflict of interests.

b) The Role of Conspiracy Theories in the Instrumentalization of Religion

Religious conspiracy theories have been an integral part of human cultural and religious history for centuries. They arise or are rekindled especially in times of social crises, political upheavals, or cultural uncertainty and exert their influence at the intersections of belief, power, fear, and social insecurity. In their structure, they resemble secular conspiracy theories, but are particularly effective because they are built on deeply rooted spiritual ideas and symbolic interpretation patterns. When traditional belief systems lose authority or fundamental ethical and religious values change, people often turn to "religiously tinted explanations" to interpret complex events in simple categories. Thus, narratives about "hidden powers", "demonic plans", or "divine trials" arise, which aim to bring order and meaning to a world perceived as chaotic.[50] Such stories link religious motifs (sin, redemption, election) with political and social propaganda.

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[48] It was about the *Battle of Kosovo* on 28 June 1389. It is often overlooked that the Battle of Kosovo also involved troops from Bosnia, the present-day North Macedonia with Montenegro, and also from Croatia (see below Chapter 2 c)).

[49] WEINGARTH 2016, 15 f.

[50] A classic example is the medieval antisemitic conspiracy myths mentioned above.

Particularly grotesque examples of this are the accusations of deicide, ritual murder legends, and allegations of host desecration against Jews. Although, for example, Emperor Frederick II already established a theological commission in 1244 to weaken the ritual murder legend, the conspiracy accusations continued for centuries. The accusations or subsequent convictions of affected Jews often served to enrich others at the expense of the convicted individuals' property and possessions.[51]

The effect of religious conspiracy theories is multifaceted. On the one hand, they foster a sense of community and identity. On the other hand, they unleash destructive forces: They promote intolerance, fear, and violence, weaken trust in institutions, and deepen social divisions.

Internally, religious conspiracy narratives mainly promote polarization. They construct a dualistic worldview: here the "Believers" or "Initiated", there the "Corrupted", "Unbelievers", or "Tools of Dark Powers". This dynamic can weaken democratic institutions. If state courts, parliaments, or media are depicted as part of an anti-religious or anti-national conspiracy, trust in legal procedures diminishes.

Between cultures and nations, religious conspiracy theories can also exacerbate conflicts. Historically, religious minorities have often been smeared as "foreign agents" or "internal enemies". And external political tensions can then be easily interpreted as part of a "holy war", in which one's own nation appears as the defender of the true faith.

c) The Role of Myths and Ideologies in the Instrumentalization of Cultural Identity in Conflicts

Memory "shapes the personality and stabilizes the identity of the [individual] person".[52] Memory also grounds the identity of "groups, societies, and states ... [and] aids in recalling ... a common history and culture".[53] For this, the term "collective memory"

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[51] Extensively reported in the chapter 5.3.6.1 *Antisemitismus als europäisches Phänomen* a) Gottesmord-Vorwurf, Ritualmordlegende, Hostienfrevel-Anschuldigung :Denunziation über zwei Jahrtausende, in: BRANDES 2026a.

[52] EKLKOFER, Volker (2017): *Erkenntnisse der Gedächtnisforschung*. In: *Erkenntnisse der Gedächtnisforschung*. Bayern 2 / *radio Wissen* / Soziale und politische Bildung 09.02.2017. Available at: https://www.br.de/radio/bayern2/sendungen/radiowissen/soziale-politische-bildung/gedaechtnisforschung-kollektiv-100.html (last accessed on: 20.06.2020).

[53] MOLLER, Sabine (2010): Das kollektive Gedächtnis. In: Gudehus, Christian – Eichenberg, Ariane – Welzer, Harald (eds.): *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung – Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*. Stuttgart, Metzler-Poeschel. 86.

was developed by Maurice Halbwachs.[54] Individual memory and collective memory are interrelated.

Individual memory shapes the uniqueness of each individual through personal experiences. The collective memory forms the positive binding force and identity in the family and in the cultural, religious, social, and national group.[55]

This applies to both the ethical-moral and cultural reference group. And so it also applies particularly to the religious bond. For example, the sacred elements that are significant for Christian identity, such as the sacraments of baptism and communion, are justified through the collective memory that Jesus Christ established them. And so, for instance, the Christian teachings of loving one's neighbour and mercy, the commandments of peace and reconciliation, etc. are also based on the belief that God established them through Jesus Christ.

But collective memory is not a networked computer memory that stores real historical events, but it rather "rests on common rituals, symbols, and stories".[56] Thus, a special part of collective memory consists of myths.

The term "myth" originates from the ancient Greek *μῦθος* (Latin: *mythus*). It "means something like narrative, speech, or legendary story", but it is "not to be confused with legends, fairy tales, or myths".[57] Myths are considered to be meaningful and explain the world in some way. This means they are designed to give (events or things) a meaning. Myths "can be understood as a practical guide, as they convey a comprehensive worldview".[58]

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[54] HALBWACHS, Maurice (1991): *Das kollektives Gedächtnis*. New Edition. Frankfurt am Main, Fischer Wissenschaft.

[55] Even though this seems to give precedence to collective memory over individuality, Sabine Moller reminds us that the "subject of memory and recollection (...) always remains the individual [because] there will never be two people who occupy identical positions in the same groups" (MOLLER 2010, 86).

[56] ASSMANN, Aleida (2013): *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur – eine Intervention*. Munich, C.H. Beck. 17.

[57] DETZEL, Alina (2023): *Mythos: Eine einfache Definition*. Focus online. Munich. 17.03.2023. Available at: https://www.focus.de/wissen/begriffe/mythos-eine-einfache-definition_409d9b01-dbd7-43d8-a810-0ce8f65b496e.html (last accessed on: 20.02.2026).

[58] Ibid.

Myths are stories that usually relate to a real or assumed historical event. However, a myth is not identical with the history behind it, but it is rather formed around the meaning attributed to an event.

So was the story of Moses's people crossing the Red Sea initially a neutrally remembered event. It was passed down from generation to generation as a story of deliverance from the Egyptian army, and it was eventually written down (Exodus 14:27–28). Along this path, this narrative was finally identified in Israel as the founding myth of the people of Israel, ethnically, religiously, and culturally.[59]

Another example is the myth of the Rütli Oath as the founding myth of Switzerland. Myths are reinforced in religious communities as well as in cultures and nations. They are community-forming (also for cultures and nations) and, together with the rituals and symbols associated with them, are important for the preservation of religious communities.

Myths and ideologies correspond to each other. This applies especially to political ideology, described by Yves Bizeul as a "belief complex oriented towards action", in which symbols, myths, ideals, and doctrines form a substrate.[60]

Aleida Assmann warns of the danger when *myths* replace history and become ideology, namely when totalitarian states claim a "monopoly on the past … to silence independent historical writing"[61] and combine *ideology* and *myth* for the purpose of maintaining power. Thus, "demagogues and dictatorships shape the past according to the image of their respective power interests".[62] Therefore, Reinhart Koselleck warns against *political myth-makers*[63] and the danger of a *uniform historical perspective*.

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[59] The fact that this founding myth already early on connected the people of Israel with each other is shown, for example, by the Song of Miriam in Exodus 15:20–21, which many Old Testament scholars regard as the oldest written source and which already presupposes this founding myth: "And Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her out with timbrels dancing around. And Miriam sang to them: 'Let us sing to the LORD, for He has done a wonderful deed; He has thrown the enemy into the sea with His horses and with His chariots.'"

[60] BIZEUL, Yves (2006): Politische Mythen, Ideologien und Utopien. In: Tepe, Peter (ed.): *Mythos. Fächerübergreifendes Forum für Mythosforschung*. Vol. 2: *Politische Mythen*. Würzburg, Köngisgshausen & Neumann. 10.

[61] ASSMANN 2013, 22 f.

[62] Op. cit. 20.

[63] KOSELLECK, Reinhart (2003): *Gibt es ein kollektives Gedächtnis?* Tape recording of a lecture on 6 December 2003 in Sofia at the conference *Pierre Nora. Erinnerungsorte und Konstruktion der Gegenwart*; qtd. from ASSMANN 2013, 18.

As a special example from more recent history, Yugoslavia should be mentioned. In former Yugoslavia, ideological myths played a special role. The myth of defending Christian Europe in the Battle of Kosovo on 28 June 1389 was emphasized by Slobodan Milošević, President of the Socialist Republic of Serbia, on the 600th anniversary on 28 June 1989 during a rally for the Vidovdan Memorial Day in front of more than one million Serbs, Kosovo Serbs, and Montenegrins. He invoked "a return to earlier national [Serbian] greatness"[64] and emphasized, with reference to the myth of Kosovo field, that only the Serbs had defended the West. He did not fail to mention that troops from Bosnia, the present-day North Macedonia with Montenegro,[65] and also from Croatia were involved in the battle, but interpreted their early withdrawal from a battle already lost as a betrayal of the Serbs.[66]

This myth of the Battle of Kosovo, interpreted so differently by the nations involved, played a special role in five acts of commemoration in the 20th century:

- 1914 – on the 525th anniversary, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was shot by the Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip (it served as the immediate trigger for World War I);
- 1921 – the so-called Vidovdan Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was adopted;

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64 CALIC Marie-Janine (2008): Kosovo: der jüngste Staat in Europa. In: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte Jugoslawien, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung (APUZ 32/2008)*. Bonn. Available at: https://www.bpb.de/apuz/31048/kosovo-der-juengste-staat-in-europa?p=0 (last accessed on: 10.08.2020). 2.

65 Following the defeat at the Battle of Maritsa, the final fragmentation of the empire into North Serbia (largely identical to today's Serbia, but without Vojvodina) and South Serbia (including today's North Macedonia and large parts of Montenegro) had become evident by 26 September 1371.

66 In the Battle of Kosovo on 28 June 1989, in addition to the (north-) Serbian troops, troops from Bosnia with King Stepan Tvrtko I. Kotromanić, troops from today's North Macedonia and Montenegro led by Prince Vuk Brankovići, and (probably) troops under Abbot Ivanovci Paližna from Croatia were also involved, i.e. virtually the entire later Yugoslav area, without Vojvodina and Slovenia. Vuk Brankovići is portrayed as a traitor in the later Serbian heroic epic because he "abandoned the Serbs". However, neutral historians emphasize that only the (north-) Serbian troops were decisively defeated by the Ottomans, and that the Bosnian, southern Serbian, and (possibly) Croatian troops retreated unscathed.

• 1989 – more than one million Serbs, Kosovo Serbs, and Montenegrins came to Kosovo Polje[67] for the rally on the 600th anniversary of Vidovdan Commemoration Day to hear the speech of the newly appointed Serbian president Slobodan Milošević;[68]

• 2001 – Milošević was extradited by Serbian authorities to the UN War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague;

• 2008 – an illegitimate separate parliament was founded by the Serbs in Kosovo.

However, Croatia also has its own special myths. Comparable to the Serbian Amselfeld myth, the myth surrounding the victories at Dubica in 1513 and Jajce in 1518 emerged in Croatia. Accordingly, Croats claim that it was actually they who successfully defended Western Europe against the Ottomans through these two victorious battles. Both myths played an ideological role in the particularly brutal double Serbian–Croatian civil war over Krajina in 1992 and 1995.

Further, the myth of the Battle of Sisak on 22 June 1593 played a special role in the Croatian–Bosnian civil war, because in this battle the troops of the Bosnian Paschalik (Bosna Eyâleti),[69] which had been Ottoman for 130 years, were soundly defeated by the Croats under the leadership of Telli Hassan Pasha. The Bosniaks are accused of the betrayal of their Slavic brothers, as the Croats could have otherwise defended southern Europe against the Islamic–Bosnian troops of the Ottomans.

Therefore, while collective memories on the one hand constitute an important cohesive force for cultural, social, state, and also ethical-moral reference groups, on the other hand, a consciously ideologized interpretation of myths and symbols can lead to an externally imposed synchronization of historical perspectives.

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[67] Kosovo Polje is called *Field of the Blackbirds* in translation. Therefore, the Battle of Kosovo is also known as the *Battle on the Field of the Blackbirds*.

[68] On Vidovdan Remembrance Day, 28 June 1989, 600 years after the (lost) battle of Kosovo against the Ottomans, Slobodan Milošević delivered a nationalistic inciting speech at the memorial site of Gazimestan. Many historians consider his speech to be one of the triggers for the subsequent Yugoslav wars, with formulations such as: "Wherever Serbian remains are buried, it is Serbian territory, wherever Serbian blood has been shed, it is the land of Serbian heritage." (NAIMARK, Norman M. (2009): *Flammender Hass – Ethnische Säuberungen im 20. Jahrhundert*. Bonn, Bundeszentrale für die politische Bildung bpb. 223).

[69] The Eyâlet of Bosnia encompassed approximately the entire present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slavonia, and Southern Dalmatia.

d) The Question of the Role of Religions as a Cause or Instrument in Current Conflicts

In conflict situations, there is a religious ambivalence: on the one hand, religion, with its forms of expression in worship, prayer, and the distribution of sacraments, offers a confirmation of security and safety. On the other hand, however, it can also be used to reinforce one's own religious identity to legitimize violence against enemies in (civil) wars.

In the following, we address the question of whether religious certainty functions as a cause or an effect of warfare and other forms of violence, especially when opponents are particularly perceived in terms of their distinct religious-cultural identities.

To put it differently: Does belonging to a religious community serve as the basis and trigger for acts of war and other forms of violence, or is religious differentiation merely a reinforcing consequence of other conflict-promoting factors?

This question will be addressed in this chapter, with a particular focus on former Yugoslavia and on Romania, as both are characterized by a unique combination of Eastern and Western European religious and cultural influences, and, also, by a four-hundred-year-old special confrontation with Islam during the Ottoman period.

Let us first take a look at Transylvania in Romania:

Although there were brief "intense clashes" with Habsburg troops during the fierce re-Catholicization under Empress Maria Theresa, when Orthodox believers resisted forced conversion to the Unia (Greek Catholic), this brief "faith struggle" was also "the only one in Romanian history[!]".[70]

[70] ANDREI, Mirela (2011): Die Geschichte der Kirchen Siebenbürgens – Überblick für den Zeitraum 1740–1848. In: Brandes, Dieter – Lukács, Olga (eds.) ([2]2011): *Reconciliatio nr. 2.2. Die Geschichte der christlichen Kirchen aufarbeiten – Healing of Memories zwischen Kirchen, Kulturen und Religionen – Ein Versöhnungsprojekt der Kirchen in Rumänien*. Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt. 93.; LUKÁCS, Olga (2008): Das Versöhnungsprojekt „Healing of Memories" in Rumänien und die Beziehungen zwischen den Konfessionen aus Siebenbürgen in den 16–17. Jahrhunderten. In: *Ökumene der Zukunft. Hermeneutische Perspektiven und die Suche nach Identität*, eds. Stephen Lakkis, Stefan Höschele, Stefanie Schardien, Frankfurt am Main, Verlag Otto Lembeck. 200–218.; LUKÁCS, Olga (2007): Healing of Memories in Romania. A Protestant Approach to Church. In: *Healing of Memories in Europe. A Study of Reconciliation between Churches, Cultures and Religion*, ed. Dieter Brandes, Leipzig, Evangelische Verlagsanstalt. 86–101.

Also, between Protestants (or their princes) and the Orthodox, there were no religious wars despite reform efforts among the Orthodox Romanians. This also applies to the relationship between Protestants and Catholics, although Protestant princes prevented the appointment of a Catholic bishop for a long time. Similarly, the devastating Thirty Years' War in the Habsburg part of Hungary did not spread to Transylvania.[71]

Further, the brief intermezzo with Despot Vodă Heraclid cannot be called a religious war, either, in the context of the attempted reform in the Principality of Moldavia from 1561 to 1563.[72]

Conclusion: Apart from minor exceptions, there were no notable religious conflicts in Romania between the various denominations.

Now let us look at the national conflicts in former Yugoslavia and see whether or not they can be considered religious wars. The focus should be on the national conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

The assumption that there was a religious conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina could be supported by the fact that religious affiliation in this country largely corresponds to ethnic affiliation. Thus, the majority of Catholics identify as Croatians, the Orthodox as Serbians, and Muslims as Bosnians, and vice versa. However, looking at it as a religious war contradicts the fact that the unification of the Yugoslav nation at the beginning of the 20th century was supported – and created – by all major ethnic groups: Slovenians, Croatians, Serbians, Bosnians, and Macedonians.

For a look back at religious conflicts between Orthodox Christians and Muslims, the memory of the advance of Serbian Orthodox rebels against the Ottomans in 1689 towards Sarajevo and Skopje is particularly illustrative, for consequently, large "parts of the Orthodox population, led by the Serbian Patriarch Arsenije III. Crnojević from Fiume, fled

[71] The decisive factor was that this time it was not the Habsburgs but the Ottomans who held the suzerainty.

[72] The brief peasant uprising was fuelled, among other things, by the fact that Despot Voda angered his subjects "by paying his mercenaries with stolen gold and silver casing of relics and icons, as well as chalices for the Eucharist (cf. VICOVAN, Ion (2011): Die Geschichte der Kirche in der Moldau von 1000 bis 1650. In: BRANDES-LUKACS 2011, 156).

to the Habsburg Empire out of fear of retaliation [by the Ottomans]",[73] to Vojvodina, in order "to found the [new] seat of the Serbian Patriarch in Karlowitz in 1713".[74]

On the other hand, for example, in 1567, the Islamic Grand Vizier Sokullu Mehmed-Pascha confirmed the monk Makarije Sokolovic as the Orthodox Bishop of Peć and with him (re-)established the Patriarchate in Peć.

Thus, can it be stated, with reference to the absence of any major religious oppression or conflict with Holm Sundhausen, that there is no basis for speaking of a "Muslim–Christian religious war, ... within the Ottoman Empire until the beginning of the 19th century, ... [especially since] a widespread forced Islamization ... was not present in the European provinces of the Ottoman Empire".[75]

The situation regarding genocides in 20th-century Europe may, however, be assessed differently. Accordingly, when it comes to genocides, one cannot simply speak of religious conflicts, as violence is exerted only by one side.

Yet, it is a bold thesis to suggest that, in the case of the genocide of Jews, Armenians, and others, fear of groups living according to a markedly different worldview played a particularly significant role.

Thus, transcultural-religious reconciliation initiatives are particularly challenged by generational perceptions of 'otherness'. This way, even in communities where different religious cultures and religions have coexisted in mutual tolerance over long periods, long-standing friendships could break and turn into mutual destruction.

As in Srebrenica, in extreme situations where no sustainable forms of cultural transitions have been established, violent acts, including pogroms, can erupt out between people of different cultures and religions.

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[73] SUNDHAUSEN, Holm (2008): Streiflichter aus der Geschichte Serbiens. In: Renovabis (ed.): *Ost-West Europäische Perspektiven OWEP 4/2008*. Freising. Available at: https://www.owep.de/artikel/64-streiflichter-aus-geschichte-serbiens (last accessed on: 20.08.2020).

[74] They founded in "1713 ... in Karlowitz the [new] seat of the Serbian Patriarch". (BECKER, Uwe (2006): *Vom Vasallen zum Raya*. Nürnberg. Available at: https://www.osmanischesreich.de/geschichte/13-15-jahrhundert/das-amselfeld-ii/ (last accessed on: 14.09.2020)).

[75] SUNDHAUSEN 2008.

This section should be concluded with the following thesis:

Many long-lasting conflicts in Europe initially appear to have religious causes. However, a more differentiated consideration shows that the distinction from the other culture and the inherent fear of the foreignness of others are the dominant basis for enmity.

e) Cultural Identity and Boundary-Making vis-à-vis the Foreignness in the 'Other' in the Emergence of Long-Standing Conflicts[76]

Besides the phenomenon of building boundaries against / dreading the foreignness of the other, the phenomenon of transference also plays a significant role in the behaviour of people in emerging conflicts, especially in the case of genocide. The concept of transference, coined by Sigmund Freud, as a process by which (often repressed) feelings, wishes, experiences, and affections from an earlier time, particularly childhood, are transferred and reactivated in new encounters and social relationships, seems to have played a particular role in the genocide against the Jews and the Roma. Initially, the phenomenon of transference is a helpful process in human psychology that helps us to react very quickly to dangerous situations if necessary. Past experiences are transferred to similar situations. In particular, "complex early childhood relationship experiences and their experiential content, which challenged and shaped the child's attitudes and reactions",[77] are transferred to later life situations. These transfers can extend far into the personal future, which is at first normal and not necessarily problematic.

If supposed or actual negative experiences of previous generations with groups not perceived as foreign are transferred without reflection, these transfers can lead to significant problems and tensions in later relationships. This can include transfers from parents and siblings, as well as from teachers and other caregivers. People "often do not recognize that their reactions in certain situations, their possibly unrealistic or exaggerated

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[76] This section is an English translation of Chapter *7.1.3.2. Kulturelle Identität und die Abgrenzung gegenüber der Fremdheit der Anderen in ihrer Bedeutung für die Entstehung von kollektiven Long-Last-Konflikten, sowie Ansätze zu deren Überwindung*. In: BRANDES 2026a.

[77] BEHRMANN, Irene (2002): *Zurück ins Leben. Erfahrungen mit der ambulanten Regressionstherapie*. Berlin, Mattes-Verlag. 77.

fear and expectations of catastrophe, and their unconscious fear and flight responses... are based on transfers... [and] that their individual components, often separated from each other, are preserved and used for comparison".[78]

The Romanian sociologist and Roma researcher Vasile Burtea describes the following as a significant characteristic of Roma groups' life philosophy: "Roma identity ... revolves around the verb TO BE, in the sense of existing, and not around the verb TO HAVE, in the sense of accumulating."[79] From this develops a seemingly paradoxical Roma life philosophy: "Live only for today and then see what comes; we will see if we get there." For people living in socially unstable conditions or those who fear falling into such conditions, it can be frightening when others, such as the Roma, seem to place little importance on the (existential) security and the continuity of cultures inherent in both Western and Eastern European life philosophies. From this, *conspiracy theories* have also emerged, such as the claim that Roma steal children to sustain their livelihood.[80]

Despite this, no more conspiracy theories about ritual murders and the desecration of the host were raised against Jews in the 19th and 20th centuries; instead, other conspiracy myths had taken their place, such as the myth of the Jews' alleged desire for world domination and the myth of the superiority of the German race.

In transcultural/transreligious societies, it is therefore necessary that people of different cultural-religious identities personally encounter each other in the face of the foreignness of the other and respect their cultural-religious identities. The fact that this has only occurred in a very limited form over centuries, such as in the time of liberalism at the end of the 19th century between Jews and Christians, has been passed down as a distance to the foreignness of the other over extended periods.

A significant step in processes of intercultural understanding is therefore the mutual familiarization with the meaning and importance of different cultural-religious actions and rituals.

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78 Op. cit. 78.

79 BURTEA, Vasile (2011): Die Religiosität der Roma in Rumänien und ihre Beziehungen zu den Kirchen. In: BRANDES-LUKACS 2011, 297.

80 A conspiracy myth that the author himself heard in Germany back in the 1950s.

While, for example, in Transylvania the distinction between languages and cultures never led to larger cultural conflicts, the cultural distinction in Yugoslavia strengthened the nationalist propaganda of the rulers after the Tito era and ultimately led to the phase of civil wars. Eventually, the unprocessed cultural/ethnic distinctions prevailed over the aspiration of a West Slavic United Union. Although there is also a religious distinction between Orthodox Serbs, Catholic Croats, and Islamic Bosniaks,[81] the author maintains that it was not religion that ultimately determined the conflicts, but rather the failure to complete historical processes of conflict resolution.

This does not exclude the possibility that there were emboldened combatants on all sides for whom the religious alterity of the other merely served as a pretext for construing war as a religious conflict. However, such a fanatical orientation is rather to be interpreted as a result of an *identity imbalance*,[82] from which a supposed or real loss or the (perceived) threat to cultural identity may lead to the overemphasis of another identity – here the religious one. The religious fanaticism that is presumably also prevalent in some parts is rather to be understood as a reaction to the perceived cultural disadvantage, as in the case of Bosnians and Croats, or as a fear of the loss of cultural identity, as in the case of Serbs.

[81] HASEČIĆ, Maida – BRKIĆ, Marko-Antonio (2010): The Influence of Religion and Ethical Identity of the Development of Values in Culture and Society of Bosnia Herzegovina. In: Grăjdian, Vasile – Lukács, Olga (eds.): *Reconciliatio nr. 4*. 167: "The overwhelming majority of Catholics identify as Croats, the Orthodox as Serbs, and the Muslims as Bosniaks."

[82] The human identity "moves in a cycle of interpersonal, intercultural, religious, and socio-economic contexts". This construct is a "delicate balance structure that can be destabilized by political events such as expulsion and exile, persecution... or other forms of subtle or open oppression". An "identity imbalance" can arise, which can lead to "various reactions... such as personal depression or specific fundamentalism and overemphasis of a certain identity aspect (e.g. through fanatical political commitment)". (BRANDES, Dieter (2010): Human Identity and "Healing of Memories between Churches, Cultures and Religion". In: Grăjdian, Vasile – Lukács, Olga (eds.): *Reconciliatio nr. 4*. 67 f.

3. Religiously Motivated Peace Initiatives

a) Examples of Religiously Motivated Peace Initiatives[83]

The "most famous peacebuilders in the world to date, Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King", were "remarkably ... not only highly political actors but also deeply religious figures".[84] Yet they are "the best-known – but by no means the only examples of – peacebuilders motivated by religion".[85]

The following are examples of globally based peace initiatives with religious foundations:

In the civil war in *Mozambique*, the Catholic lay movement Sant'Egidio, in cooperation with local bishops, mediated a durable peace agreement in 1992.

After 27 years of civil war in *Angola* with over 500,000 deaths, the Angolan Christian Council Conselho de Igrejas Cristas em Angola CICA mediated a lasting peace agreement and comprehensive social measures for the suffering population.

During the *Rwandan* genocide in 1994, in which Christian (!) Hutu militias and involved Hutu residents slaughtered more than 800,000 Christian (!) Tutsis in just 3 months, Rwandan Muslims resisted and defended fugitive Tutsis in mosques.

After the reign of terror by the Khmer Rouge in *Cambodia*, which resulted in at least two million victims, the Buddhist monk Maha Ghosananda started in 1979, despite significant death threats, "a peace and reconciliation movement that has developed into an important force and a loud voice in politics and society".[86]

In *Nicaragua*, *El Salvador*, and *Guatemala*, "individual Catholic bishops, as well as the World Council of Churches (WCC), the Lutheran World Federation, and Mennonite mediators played a diverse and decisive role in overcoming violent conflicts.[87]

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[83] The following examples are particularly relevant to WEINGARTH 2016, 21 ff as well as to BRANDES 2026a, chapter *Der Weg der Healing of Memories Versöhnungsarbeit durch Afrika und transkontinental* and chapter *6.2. Ausgewählte Beispiele für Versöhnung in Europa nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg.* The references are not individually marked, but direct quotes are named.

[84] WEINGARTH 2016. 22.

[85] Ibid.

[86] Op. cit. 24.

[87] Op. cit. 25.

In *Canada*, since 1975, a "Coalition of Canadian Churches in partnership with Indigenous peoples and community organizations in the Aboriginal Rights Coalition" has been working together and trying to "forge alliances in the fight for justice for the Indigenous peoples in Canada and to advocate reconciliation between the Indigenous peoples, the Christian community, and the Canadian society".88 The United Church of Canada made a "public apology on behalf of the Anglican Church of Canada"[89] on 6 August 1993.

In *Australia*, in the face of a terrible genocide against the indigenous Aborigines, with up to 600,000 victims, a joint initiative by the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) and the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) under the title Cannot be Told Before its Time (CTBT) has begun to address the violent acts in the Residential Schools, the forced adoptions, and the genocide itself.

In *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, the Inter-religious Council IRC-BiH has drafted a bill on religious freedom, which all three ethnic groups finally agreed to adopt as a law in 2004.

In *Germany*, shortly after the end of the war in 1945, the *pastoral letter* of the German Catholic Bishops'[90] Conference and the *Stuttgart Confession of Guilt*[91] by Protestant church representatives began to clearly pave the way back into the global community of states for political representatives.

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[88] LUTHERISCHER WELTBUND (ed.) (2002): *Der kanadische Kontext*, Studienbuch zur Zehnten Vollversammlung des Lutherischen Weltbundes *Zur Heilung der Welt*. Geneva. 27.

[89] Cited from: ENRIGHT, Travis (2010): Canada Background of Reconciliation Process in Canada: Indian Residential Schools. In: Grăjdian, Vasile – Lukács, Olga (eds.): *Reconciliatio nr. 4*. 111. Archbishop Michael Peers: "I accept and confess before God and you our failure in the boarding schools. ... We have forsaken God."

[90] "We deeply regret: Many Germans, including some from our ranks, have been seduced by the false teachings of National Socialism, (…) many have themselves become criminals." (DENZLER, Georg – FABRICIUS, Volker (1984): *Die Kirchen im Dritten Reich. Christen und Nazis Hand in Hand?* Vol. 2. Frankfurt, Fischer-Taschenbuch. 58).

[91] "We reproach ourselves that we were not more courageous in speaking out, not more faithful in prayer, not happier in believing, and not more passionate in loving [in the face of the national socialist regime of violence." (BESIER, Gerhard – SAUTER, Gerhard (1985): *Wie Christen ihre Schuld bekennen: Die Stuttgarter Erklärung 1945*. Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 62).

In 1965, the *East Memorandum* of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD)[92] and the correspondence between Polish and German Catholic bishops[93] paved the way for reconciliation with Poland.

And also the protest movement against the Communist regime in the GDR "could hardly have developed without the involvement of the Evangelical churches, and the 'peaceful revolution' of 1989 would probably not have remained peaceful for long".[94]

The list of examples could be continued. They show that conflicts can be "repressed through the intervention of religion-based actors" and "violence can overcome and reconciliation can be practised".[95] Although, "of course, religiously motivated men and women were not the only actors involved", they still made such "indispensable contributions to de-escalation that no one else was able or willing to make".[96]

b) Characteristics of Successful Inter-religious Peace Actors

According to Weingarth, some of the special characteristics for religious peacebuilders are as follows:[97]

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92 A "refusal to reconcile contradictory legal claims" is described as "fruitless, indeed a danger to the peace between the two peoples". Since "at this level ... the conflict cannot be resolved [therefore] it is necessary to seek a compromise that establishes a new order between Germans and Poles". (EKD – EVANGELISCHE KIRCHE IN DEUTSCHLAND (ed.) (1965): *Die Lage der Vertriebenen und das Verhältnis des deutschen Volkes zu seinen östlichen Nachbarn. Eine evangelische Denkschrift*. Hannover. *Section IV. Völkerrechtliche Fragen*. Available at: https://www.ekd.de/lage_der_vertriebenen_0.htm, (last accessed on: 10.01.2020).

93 The Polish bishops demanded, "in this almost hopelessly desperate situation [there] must not be another Cold War." Instead, it was time for "the beginning of a dialogue". And the German bishops accepted "the offered hands with brotherly reverence" and prayed to God, "that the demon of hatred may never again separate our hands". (DEUTSCHE BISCHOFSKONFERENZ (ed.) (1995): *Dialog, Versöhnung und Brüderlichkeit, Gemeinsames Wort der Deutschen und der Polnischen Bischofskonferenz vom 13. Dezember 1995*. Press release. Bonn. 9 f.).

94 WEINGARTH 2016, 23.

95 Op. cit. 26.

96 Ibid.

97 Op. cit. 29–30.

- Conflict-based *professional qualifications* with "a good knowledge of the conflict in its breadth and depth and at the same time competence in methods of constructive, nonviolent conflict resolution";[98]
- *Credibility* of the actors and "alignment of word and deed, of theological claims and peace policy effectiveness";[99]
- *Emotional conflict competence* of the peacebuilders so that the affected people "feel that a peacebuilder truly and deeply understands their situation, their needs, and their suffering".[100]

However, religious actors often enjoy a "trust premium" compared to political actors, even across religious boundaries, and this can be seen as a "key to successful conflict mediation... literally open doors... enable contacts, and thereby open up spaces for action or negotiation".[101] Moreover, "religious feelings can mobilize people faster than any other level of their identity" and "can represent a valuable potential for promoting non-violence, reconciliation, and peacebuilding in societies and communities torn apart by conflict".[102]

4. Religions and Healing of Memories

Conflicts between cultures and religions have various forms of remembrance as a fundamental background:

[98] Op. cit. 29.

[99] Op. cit. 30.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Op. cit. 30–31.

[102] JUSIĆ, Muhammed (2012): Challenges of Faces the Past. Healing of Memories in Bosnia and Religious Communities – With Special Reference to the Islamic Community and Tradition. In: Kurian, Manoj – Brandes, Dieter – Lukács Olga – Grăjdian, Vasile (eds.): *Reconciliatio nr. 7. Reconciliation between Peoples, Cultures and Religions. Reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina Compared to European-Wide Experiences – The European Interreligious Consultation on "Healing of Memories" Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 3–6 May 2010*. Bonn – Sibiu, Schiller. 206.; BARTA, Zoltán (2025): Az iszlámról más megközelítésben: ellentmondások, polémiák, antimóniák a Koránban, imatípusok, szentkultusz. In: *Teológiai Fórum*. 2025/2. 127–157.

- real memories of suffered injustices;
- traditional memories as a distinction from others;
- founding myths concerning liberation from other cultures;
- discrimination myths against other peoples, races, and religions;
- traditional memories of deportations, war, torture, and genocide.

Therefore, for long-term peace and reconciliation work, it is necessary

a) to mutually process memories, including, if applicable, the recognition of mutual guilt over history;
b) to reflect on one's own potential for peace, reconciliation, and love of neighbour, which, again, is based on memories.

a) Mutual Processing of Memories and, if Applicable, Recognition of Mutual Guilt Regarding History

Religions are "experts" in processing memories and thus responsible for healing them.

> *Healing of Memories* is a methodology to help overcoming frozen history and "hi-stories" (story telling) by putting emphasis on voices that were not heard, ignored, or not acknowledged so far. *Healing of Memories* is a process to deal with current injuries in the wake of oppression, violence, wars, and genocide, as well as to overcome centuries-old, passed down injuries between peoples and cultures. In this way, HoM is an interdisciplinary approach to deal with deeply rooted, painful, frozen history on the cultural, religious, and ethnic level and within personal relationships.[103]

Central elements in Healing of Memories processes are storytelling in a protected space, as well as understanding story listening. Particular attention is paid to a strictly applied dialogue technique,[104] with special regard for radical respect and unrestricted conversation.

[103] BRANDES, Dieter (2016): Reconciliation through Remembering. An Overview about the Methodology of Healing of Memories. In: *Revista Teologică 2/2016, Serie Nouă*. XXVI, 98. 276–277. Publicație Oficială Mitropoliei Aredalului, Sibiu. Available at: https://www.revistateologica.ro/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/REVDRD1.pdf.

[104] Extensively reported by HARTKEMEYER, Martina (2003): Das Geheimnis des Dialogs. In: Egner, Helga (ed.): *Heilung und Heil*. Düsseldorf – Zürich, Walter-Verlag. 11–39.

Healing of Memories as a person-centred *counselling process* began in South Africa after the end of the apartheid regime as an accompaniment to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commissions* (TRC). In 1998, the Institute for *Healing of Memories* was founded in Cape Town with Bishop Tutu as the founder and Michael Lapsley as the leader.[105] *Healing of Memories* was then implemented in other regions of Africa, such as Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia,[106] and subsequently also in Australia, South and North America, Asia, and finally also in Europe.[107]

Thus, the churches acted as advocates against revenge on the tormentors of the previous decades after 4½ decades of apartheid in South Africa. In cooperation with Nelson Mandela, who himself spent 27 years in prison, under the leadership of Bishop Desmond Tutu, the churches began to address the past as a foundation for peace and reconciliation. And for this purpose, they developed a *three-step system*:[108]

(1) Joint Journey through History
(2) Share in the Pain of Others
(3) Shape the Future Together

[105] Extensively reported by BOTMAN, Hayman Russel – PETERSEN, Robin M. (1996) (eds.): *To Remember and to Heal*. Kapstadt – Pretoria – Johannesburg, Verlag Human & Rousseau. Also reported by TUTU, Desmond – OMAR, Dullah (2000) (eds.): *Wahrheits- und Versöhnungskommission Südafrika – Das Schweigen ist gebrochen. „Out of the Shadows". Geschichte – Anhörungen – Perspektiven*. Frankfurt am Main, Brandes & Apel.

[106] A summary description for the path of Healing of Memories in Africa can be found in: BRANDES, Dieter (2023): Healing of Memories. An African Approach to Reconciliation Takes Its Course. In: Sauer, Karin Elinor – Brandes, Dieter – Uwimbabazi, Penine – Nzambimana, Onésime – Ndemo, Mumbere Mbasa (eds.): *Healing through Remembering – Sharing Grassroots Experiences of Peace, Reconciliation and Healing in the Great Lakes Region of Africa, Edition Centaurus – Perspektiven Sozialer Arbeit in Theorie und Praxis* (ECPSATP). Wiesbaden – Villingen-Schwenningen, Springer. 4–5.

[107] *Healing of Memories* on its intercontinental journey to Europe is described, for example, in: BRANDES, Dieter (2013): Heilende Erinnerung – Die Initiative Healing of Memories (HoM) weltweit. In: *Materialdienst MD des Konfessionskundlichen Instituts*. 05/2013. 92–93. Bensheim.

[108] The system will not be discussed in detail herein. It has become the subject of many publications, for example in BRANDES 2016.

In Europe, this process was initially taken up in Northern Ireland[109] and Norway (Church of Norway and Sámi).[110] The Healing of Memories between Churches, Cultures, and Religions finally also found its way to Southeast Europe. In Southeast Europe, Healing of Memories was first used in an ecumenical interdisciplinary reconciliation process in Romania.[111]

The fundamental principle of work in Healing of Memories processes is as follows: The path to reconciliation does not (!) begin with the "dispute over the 'correct memory', but it begins with respect for the individual and collective religious, cultural, and social identity formed by the 'collective and individual memory' of the other".

b) Contemplation of One's Own Potential for Peace, Reconciliation, and Neighbourliness, Which Itself Is Based on Memories

As noted above, all major world religions possess diverse, also textually anchored traditions that not only emphasize peace, mercy, and justice but also urge their active promotion and to take responsibility for leading the processes of non-violent conflict resolution themselves.

Finally, some scriptural quotes from the three Abrahamic religions should be listed.

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[109] Extensively described are the reconciliation processes in Northern Ireland in: FALCONER, Alan D. – LIECHTY, Joseph (1998) (eds.): *Reconciling Memories.* Dublin, The Columba Press.

[110] How the process with the three steps described below could develop was documented for the first time in *Healing of Memories in Norway*, an unpublished document of the commission *Churches in Dialogue* of the *World Council of Churches* (WCC) in Geneva in 2002. The process itself is described in detail in STEFFENSEN, Rolf (2012): The Difficult Talks – Experiences from [the] Reconciliation Process of Norway. In: Kurian, Manoj – Brandes, Dieter – Lukács Olga – Grăjdian, Vasile (eds.) (2012): *Reconciliatio nr. 7. Reconciliation between Peoples, Cultures and Religions. Reconciliation in Bosnia-Herzegovina Compared to European-Wide Experiences – The European Interreligious Consultation on "Healing of Memories" Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, 3–6 May 2010*. Bonn – Sibiu, Schiller. 54–58.

[111] Extensively described in the chapter Healing of Memories Prozesse in Rumänien als Beispiel für Wege zu versöhnter Verschiedenheit zwischen Kulturen und Religionen. In: BRANDES, Dieter (2026b): *Nationen, Kulturen und Religionen in Rumänien – Konfliktgeschichte und versöhnte kulturell-religiöse Verschiedenheit*. Deutsch-Rumänische Theologischen Bibliothek/ DRThB. Sibiu – Bonn, Schiller.

Judaism:

- "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the children of your people. You shall love your neighbour as yourself; I am the Lord." (Leviticus 19:18)
- "The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur, according to Leviticus 23) frees from sins against God, but from sins against a neighbour only after the harmed person has asked for forgiveness." (Talmud – Mas. Yoma 85b; in Talmud – Mas. Yoma, 2a–88a)
- "Exile consists of a long duration of forgetting. But in remembrance lies the secret of redemption." (Israel Ben Eliezer/Baal Shem Tov, 1698–1760, founder of the Polish devotional movement of Hasidism)

Christianity:

- "For if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5:23–24)
- "It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ … and entrusted to us the ministry of reconciliation." (2 Corinthians 5:18–19)
- "It is therefore through us, ambassadors for Christ." (2 Cor. 5:20)
- "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:43–45)

Islam:

- "Then their prophet said to them, 'Indeed, the sign of his kingship is that the chest will come to you, in which there is tranquillity from your Lord and a remnant of what the family of Moses and the family of Aaron left behind; the angels will carry it. Surely in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.'" (Qur'an, Surah 2:248)
- "And if you punish, then punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed. But if you are patient, it is truly better for those who are patient." (Qur'an, Surah 16:126)
- "Do not incite mutual hatred among yourselves. Do not be jealous of one another. Do not turn away from one another, but be servants of Allah, as brothers to each other. It is not permissible for a Muslim to shun his brother for more than three days." (Hadith No. 6065)

5. Conclusions

Religion is often not the primary cause of violent conflicts but rather a factor that intensifies them and provides legitimacy. Many so-called religious conflicts are actually rooted in cultural, national, or political tensions, while religious identity and authority are strategically used by political leaders to support secular interests. To prevent such misuse, critical education, interfaith dialogue, and a clear separation between political power and religious authority are essential.

The *Charta Oecumenica* emphasizes the importance of reconciliation, peacebuilding, and cooperation between churches, cultures, and religions. It calls for overcoming historical hostility among Christian churches, promoting peace between peoples, opposing antisemitism, strengthening dialogue with Jewish communities, encouraging respectful Christian–Muslim relations, and defending religious freedom and open dialogue with people of all beliefs.

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Silviu-Iulian SANA[1]:

Aspects Regarding Ecumenical and Christian Relations of the Greek Catholic Clergy from the Eparchy of Oradea in the Twentieth Century

Abstract.

Based on a specialized bibliography, the present study highlights – both theologically and historically – some important moments of fraternity and communion, of a real ecumenism, between Christians of different confessions in the territory of Transylvania and Partium both during the Second Vienna Arbitration of Hungary (1940–1944) and, especially, during the period of communist Romania. Special attention is paid to the Greek Catholic clergy and their actions, namely the publication – with the consent of the Holy Apostolic See of Rome – of the First Ecumenical Prayer, the ecumenical funeral service for the victims of the June 1944 bombing in Oradea, and Bishop Iuliu Hirțea's practice of ecumenism in prison. The first part of the work discusses the most important document of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church that addresses ecumenism, specifically parts of the text of the Second Vatican Council that define the concept of ecclesiastical unity and introduce the reader to the depth of the ecumenical message of the text. Thus, important theological themes

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in the theology of ecumenism are discussed such as: the perfection of communion, regret, the desire for union, respect, brotherly love, ecumenical work, Christian values, common heritage, the life of others, the shedding of blood. The second part briefly exemplifies the presence of the two Romanian church leaders (Greek Catholic and Orthodox) at the official visit of Regent Miklós Horthy to Cluj in September 1940. The printing of a special prayer to be read by the priest before the faithful during the week of Christian unity in 1942 represents an important step taken by the Greek Catholics – of course, with the approval of Rome – on the difficult path of reconciliation between Christians. The text continues with concrete aspects of Christian solidarity during the war and communist persecution, letting history – both from the archival documents and from the memoirs of the time – speak. A young Orthodox believer, Cornel Onaca, spoke about the real ecumenism of Greek Catholic priests, who, in addition to learning and assisting in their prayers, praised the gestures of Christian charity they made in helping all those in need – about an exemplary priest and about his "holy courage", namely about Bishop Iuliu Hirțea, Matei Boilă, who was incarcerated together with the bishop of Oradea in Jilava Prison. Focused on the period after 1990, the study presents very briefly the ecumenical meetings of the Week for Christian Unity held at the Greek Catholic parishes of Oradea, as well as the ecumenical celebration of the blessing of the waters (on the *Crișul Repede* River) by Bishop Virgil Bercea and the Orthodox Bishop Sofronie Drincec.

Keywords: Greek Catholic, ecumenical prayers, solidarity, communism, memoirs, holy courage

An important document for Catholic Christians seeking to restore church unity by promoting ecumenism is the Second Vatican Council's *Unitatis Redintegratio* (*On Ecumenism*).[2] Conceived in 1964, it can serve as a guide to the past actions of members of a local Catholic church in relation to the other Christian denominations. This guide can provide important elements in ecumenical dialogue precisely so that Christians of different confessions can reach the common goal, that is, Christian unity.

[2] Conciliul Vatican al II-lea. Constituții, decrete, declarații. Revised edition. Bucharest, Editura Arhiepiscopiei romano-catolic de București. 2000. 135–150.

> In recent times more than ever before, He has been rousing divided Christians to remorse over their divisions and to a longing for unity[3] [...] Jesus Christ wants His People to grow and perfects their communion in unity: in the confession of the same faith, in the common celebration of divine worship and in the fraternal harmony of the Family of God.[4] [....] and the Catholic Church embraces them with respect and brotherly love.[5] [...] The Council urges all the Catholic faithful, recognizing the signs of the times, to take an active part in ecumenical work.[6] [...] Catholics must recognize and joyfully appreciate the truly Christian values, springing from the common patrimony, which are found in our separated brothers and sisters. It is worthy and just to recognize the riches of Christ and the works of His power in the lives of others, who bear witness to Christ, sometimes to the point of shedding blood: God is always wonderful and worthy of admiration in His works.[7]

In the light of this important document of Catholic theology emanating from the Second Vatican Council, we revisit the history of the Greek Catholic Church in the *Partium* area that had Christian and ecumenical implications in the twentieth century. Specifically, the present work is an examination of the positive aspects of the Christian charity demonstrated by Greek Catholic priests in their interactions with members of other Christian denominations with whom they coexisted.

The years of the Second World War weighed heavily on the shoulders of Europe whose map was forcibly redrawn by dictators. Following the Second Vienna Arbitration of 30 August 1940, the ecclesiastical territory of the Romanian Greek Catholic Metropolitan Province was divided into two. In the territory ceded by Romania to Hungary, three episcopal residences remained: Oradea, Cluj-Gherla, and Baia Mare, with most of their parishes. The moment of the Hungarian troops' entry into Northern Transylvania was received with enthusiasm by the Hungarian population. On the other hand, the vast

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3 Op. cit. 135. See: https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html. [All translations of originally non-English texts/quotations are mine throughout the article unless otherwise stated.].

4 Op. cit. 137.

5 Ibid.

6 Op. cit. 137–139.

7 Op. cit. 137, 140.

majority of the Romanian population withdrew to their homes, the role of the official reception of the new Hungarian administration being taken over by the church leaders. It was a moment of Christian unity between the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Romanians in Cluj when Blessed Iuliu Hossu sat next to Nicolae Colan and greeted Regent Miklós Horthy. Both stressed that they would be good citizens in the new homeland, asking God's blessing on the rulers.[8]

The ecclesiastical life of the Romanian Greek Catholics continued in the territory of Hungary, with difficulties but also with extraordinary moments of Christian fraternity. A proof of the ecumenical spirit of the Greek Catholic clergy of Oradea is given by the printing in a book of a religious service (prayers) dedicated to the week of Christian unity. This search for unity was conducted in accordance with the doctrine of the Catholic Church at the time, aiming at unity with the Holy Father of all those separated, first of the apostolic (Orthodox) sister churches and then of the others. As proof, there is an article entitled *Let All Be One* from the newspaper *Tribuna Ardealului* no. 392 of 23 January 1942, where Canon Dr Ioan Georgescu is mentioned,[9] who took care of the

[8] ABLONCZY, Balázs (2011): *A visszatért Erdély 1940–1944*. Budapest, Jaffa Kiadó. 56.

[9] Ioan Georgescu – Greek Catholic canon and professor of theology (1889–1969). He was born in Scorei (Sibiu County) and studied theology in Oradea, Budapest, and Vienna (1908–1913). He worked as a professor of religion in Beiuș and Oradea and then as a professor of theology at the Seminary of Blaj. After the Union of 1918, he was employed as a teacher in Constanța and then as Deputy General Director at the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Bucharest. He was ordained a celibate priest in 1931. In 1932, he was promoted to the rank of canon, and in 1934 he was appointed professor at the Greek Catholic Theological Academy in Oradea. He was national director of the Missionary Union of the Greek Catholic Clergy and after 1945 President of ARLUS (Romanian Association for the Improvement of Relations with the U.S.S.R.). After the prohibition of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, he may have been recruited as an informant, producing several intelligence notes under the pseudonym "Vespasian" in Oradea. Later he went to Sibiu, where he had a nephew, being employed as a Russian language teacher. The communist regime imprisoned him between 1960 and 1964. He died in November 1969. (See SANA, Silviu – CIORBA, Tiberiu Alexandru – OSTAHIE, Traian (2022): *Seminarul Tinerimii Române Unite II. Studenți teologi (1792–1948)*. Cluj-Napoca, Mega. 160; SANA, Silviu (2014): *Rezistentul. Episcopul dr. Iuliu Hirțea în dosarele Securității (1945–1979)*. Oradea, Editura Universității din Oradea. 41–42).

publication of the prayer.[10] In the opening words of the article, it was mentioned that the organization of these prayers for Christian unity was done by order of the Holy Congregation of the Eastern Churches. Cardinal Eugen Tisserant's appeal was addressed to all Catholic dioceses and called for the spread of "more and more ... of the custom known as the Octave of Prayers for Christian Unity".[11] The text of the prayer, published in the columns of the newspaper, is different from the one in the book[12] and has a missionary character directed especially at the Orthodox, because it uses formulas "Lord, have mercy on us!" and "Spirit" instead of the new formulas. But there two phrases that show the openness to a real ecumenism: "That the seed of hatred, strife, anger, and division of Christians and of all men may disappear, let us pray to the Lord"; "The achievement of the union of all overall differences of language, blood, and law, let us ask of the Lord!"[13]

Funeral Service for the Victims of the Bombing of Oradea on 2 June 1944

A moment of fraternal Christian communion attended by the Greek Catholic clergy was the funeral service of the 84 victims of the American bombing of Oradea on 2 June 1944. The religious service took place on Monday, 5 June 1944, at 3:30 p.m. in Rulikovsky Cemetery and was opened by Dr István Fiedler, the Roman Catholic bishop who consecrated the coffins of the deceased.[14] This was followed by a sermon delivered by Reformed Dean Béla Csernák. After the Reformed church service, Sándor Thurmezey, dean of the Evangelical Church, spoke. On behalf of the Greek Catholic Church, Petru Iluțiu[15] delivered a sermon and officiated the funeral service. Vasile Popovici, an Orthodox

[10] This prayer was taken from the *Yearbook of the Missionary Union of the United Romanian Clergy*. See *Anuarul Uniunii Misionare a Clerului Român Unit pe anul 1941*. Nagyvárad, Editura U.M.C. – „Patria" nyomda. 180–182.

[11] Ca toți să fie una. In: *Tribuna Ardealului*. 392(23 January 1942). 3.

[12] The text of the prayer in the book has in parentheses the Greek Catholic formula "Lord, have mercy on us" (see *Anuarul Uniunii Misionare*… 1942, 180–182).

[13] Ibid.

[14] Atyánkfiai vére kiált a földről. Eltemettük hősi halottainkat. In: *Nagyvárad*. 126(6 July 1944). 7.

[15] Ibid. Petru Iluțiu is mentioned here as archpriest: „A református egyházi szertartás után *Thurmezey Sándor* evangélikus esperes, a görög katolikus egyház részéről *llutza* [sic!] esperes, míg a görögkeleti

dean, delivered a short sermon and officiated the funeral service.[16] The title of the article symbolizes the moment when spiritual suffering united in prayer all representatives of the various denominations, whether they were Roman Catholics, Evangelicals, Reformed, Greek Catholics, or Orthodox: "The voice of the blood of your father's sons cries out to Me from the earth" (Genesis 4:10).[17]

Christian Fraternity and Ecumenism during Communist Persecution

The abusive establishment of the communist regime in Romania led, as early as 1945, to the elimination of all those who did not agree with the communist doctrine, whether they were political or religious. Those who did not submit to Moscow's satellite regime would be persecuted and eliminated. In particular, those with ties to the West were to be the first to fall victim to the atheist communist regime. At that time, the Catholic churches (Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic) would be subjected to a systematic attack by communist propaganda, these actions culminating in the prohibition of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania by Decree 358 of 1 December 1948. Bishops, priests, and believers were to be imprisoned for their Christian faith. But this belief of theirs would bear fruit in prison, especially among inmates who had been imprisoned for their political or religious beliefs. There, in the cold prison, suffering united everyone, regardless of denomination, as Scripture speaks: "By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53: 11).[18] "Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise" (James 5: 13).

egyház részéről *Popoviciu Vazul* esperes mondottak búcsúbeszédeket es végezték el a temetési szertartást." According to the biographical file, between 1940 and 1948, he was a professor at the Greek Catholic Theological Seminary in Oradea (See SANA – CIORBA – OSTAHIE 2022, 179).

16 Atyánkfiai vére kiált a földről. Eltemettük hősi halottainkat. In: *Nagyvárad*. 126(6 July 1944). 7.

17 The Romanian translation differs from the Hungarian/Latin version and is as follows: "The voice of your brother's blood cries out to Me from the earth" (see *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*. Bucharest, Editura de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române. 2001. 14).

18 Herein the Catholic version of the Bible in English is used. Available at: https://mycatholic.life/bible/rsvce/ (last accessed on: 16.09.2025).

A Young Orthodox Man from Oradea Praying with Greek Catholic Priests

Noteworthy is the testimony of a lay Orthodox believer from Oradea about the ecumenical spirit of the Romanian Greek Catholic clergy and of an imprisoned Hungarian Roman Catholic theological student. Cornel Onaca was imprisoned by the communists for refusing to become a secret agent for *Securitate* and was allegedly portrayed as part of an anti-communist resistance group. In his memoirs, *Witnesses and Martyrs in Communist Prisons*, he mentioned two moments when he met with the Greek Catholic priests from Oradea. At the same time, he also mentions the moment of Christian fraternity when he stayed in a cell with a Hungarian Roman Catholic theologian. As a young man, these encounters influenced his Christian and human creed: the first was during his years of refuge (1940–1945) in Timișoara, when he met the priest and professor Paul Voștinariu. In this regard, he mentioned the following:

> "The good results obtained at school brought me to the attention of the teachers, but especially of those who, like me, were in refuge in Timișoara. One of them was Professor Paul Voștinariu, the former Director of the 'Oltea Doamna' Girls' High School in Oradea, who exerted a positive influence on me, on my intellectual and spiritual training, painstakingly insisting on the content of the conceptions and feelings of the frail human being that I was."[19]

The second moment is related to the period when he was in prison, where he met the priest-professors of the Greek Catholic Seminary in Oradea. This is what he confessed about them:

> There was also a group of Greek Catholic priests recently convicted by the Oradea Military Tribunal. The group of Greek Catholic priests consisted of Bishop Iuliu Hirțea, Gavril Stan, Augustin Olah, Vasile Hossu, Vasile Andercău, Virgil Maxim, and others. Through the mixing and rotation of the detainees that was carried out periodically, we had the chance to be together for various periods of time. Living with these great personalities has changed my convictions and the way I perceive the role and purpose of life, as well as the one after our passage to another world, without worries, troubles, and needs. These personalities decisively strengthened my belief in the existence of God, whom I glorified

[19] ONACA, Cornel (2014): *Martori și martiri din temnițele comuniste*. Oradea, Primus. 24.

> in our prayers, day after day and night after night. The rosary was also the prayer that we recited almost continuously, through its mysteries, convinced of the help and of the fulfilment of our petitions, of the many afflicted. After a while, the cell rotations were resumed, parting with regret from those wonderful people, with whom had I lived part of my life in another world, beneficial, above the ordinary one.[20]

The third moment of Christian communion, experienced in prison by the young Cornel Onaca, was with the young Hungarian Roman Catholic, who was a theology student. Although neither knew the other's language, prayers in Latin united them, thus celebrating moments of Christian fraternal communion.

> After several months of continued solitude, a young Hungarian man was brought to my cell, whose name I no longer remember, a theology student, being of the Roman Catholic religion, from Harghita or Covasna County. [...] I didn't stay for too long with that young theologian, with whom I had a good time, because his case was "closed", and he was probably sent to trial. I never met him again. Where is he? Is he still alive? Has he been liquidated?
> From him we learned and prayed together prayers in Latin, and especially the rosary, encouraging each other and placing great hopes in the future.[21]

Bishop Iuliu Hirțea and Community Prayers in Prison

Among the testimonies of Christian solidarity and ecumenism in communist prisons, in which Greek Catholic clergy were involved, an important place is occupied by those of Dr Iuliu Hirțea, the Auxiliary Bishop of Oradea. He was falsely convicted of the "crime of high treason", more specifically because he remained faithful to the Greek Catholic confession and coordinated the pastoral activities of the clergy and the faithful who, despite coercion, did not convert to Orthodoxy. He was imprisoned for 12 years in the prisons of Oradea, Târgu Ocna, Jilava, Pitești, Dej, and Gherla. The memory of him calls to mind the luminous figure of a true priest and bishop.[22] Those who knew

[20] Op. cit. 178–179.
[21] Op. cit. 71–72.
[22] ANDERCĂU, Vasile (1996): Condamnat de ziua mamei mele împreună cu Episcopul Iuliu Hirțea și Episcopul Vasile Hossu. In: *Vestitorul*. 37(27 June). 8.

him in prison were impressed by his qualities, but especially by the fact that he knew how to live his priestly ministry to the full, despite all the persecutions. Many of them became practitioners again, and some confessed to him that they wanted to join the Greek Catholic confession in the future.[23] In particular, during his imprisonment, some intelligence reports document his pastoral activities – liturgical services, prayers, sermons, discussions – carried out for the benefit of fellow prisoners.[24]

On 5 April 1958, while he was imprisoned in Jilava, the following is mentioned about his pastoral activity:

> "In the evening, in bed, Hirțea Iuliu administered Holy Communion to Boilă Matei, and Sunday they continued the religious service with the help of the choir made up of Cocortoi Cornel, Andreescu Victor, Baumen Emil, and Cercel. These religious services – with the respective sermons – delivered by Hirțea Iuliu continue regularly every Sunday and on religious holidays."[25]

On 5 April 1958, also in Jilava Prison, Bishop Hirțea is surprised by the arrival of a secret agent while praying as a priest with all the prisoners around him:

> In rooms 30–33, the religious service continues to be performed by the detainee, former priest Hirțea Iuliu, with the modified choir, namely: Bauman Emil, Andreevici Victor, Petrescu Eftimie, and Bîrzeanu Ion. The *Creed* and the rest of the prayers are recited by Cercel Dumitru and Ivănescu Petre. The so-called *Rosary* (evening prayer) is also continued, in which the following take part regularly: Bauman Emil, Petre, or Eftimie, Ivănescu Petre, Kilian Iosif and Kilter, Popescu Constantin, Băjenaru George, Cercel Dumitru, and Bîrzeanu Ion.
>
> Also, every Saturday, the sermons delivered by the priest Hirțea Iuliu take place. He continues to take communion daily in the morning with all the above. Preparations are currently being made for the Easter holidays.[26]

But perhaps the most beautiful testimony about the Christian fraternity and the ecumenical spirit of Bishop Iuliu Hirțea towards his fellow prisoners is the one given by Matei Boilă.

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[23] SANA 2014, 20.
[24] Op. cit. 76–78, 241–242, 246–247, 249–250.
[25] Op. cit. 241.
[26] Op. cit. 242–243.

He was imprisoned because he was a member of the youth organization of the National Peasant Party.[27]

> I met him as a truly holy man in the prison of Jilava in 1957 [...]. I want to tell you how I spent Easter in 1957, because it is highly significant for Hirțea's personality and holiness [...]. The priest was very shy, cautious, and fearful in a certain way. That is why his great heroism lay in his holy courage. The courage that overcomes natural tendencies, the courage that overcomes everything and brings you closer Christ […]. And he overcame both his fear and the thought that he might be caught […]. And every day, in the evening, he delivered us a sermon. In turn, we carried out apostolic work and evangelization among the others and gathered them together. Anyone who wished to come came to Cell 9, where he climbed up onto the upper bunk. And there were 100 people gathered, standing crowded side by side. And he would preach to us. He preached very beautifully and with great feeling, overcoming his fear and all these things […]. There were 252[28] people from all walks of life. When Easter was approaching, I said to him: "Monsignor, shall we have a Liturgy at Easter?" so that he would have the opportunity to do so, as he had received some wine and bread clandestinely.
>
> And 2-3 days beforehand, we started preparing for Easter. Those who wished could go to confession and then receive Holy Communion on the holy feasts. And then, at the price of the sacrifice he offered, [...] a miracle happened. Which would never have happened outside.

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[27] SANA, Silviu (2013): *Doi mărturisitori – Părintele Matei Boilă şi Episcopul Iuliu Hirțea*. In: *Vestitorul*. 8(27 February). 12–13.

[28] In another declaration Fr. M. Boilă talk about 240 persons: "I stayed in the Jilava prison, together with Monsignor Hirțea from Oradea. And I can tell you that I had a great satisfaction there, then, that I was in cells 9-12 [...] where there were 240 people crammed into some rooms. Think of 240 people, young people, old people, university professors, former ministers, leading philosophers, workers, peasants, absolutely everyone, Orthodox, Catholics, Reformed, of all categories. An extraordinary heterogeneity. And it was Easter 1957. And Monsignor Hirțea was a particularly shy man, a bit fearful; I shouldn't say fearful, but that's how he was. However, he had wine and bread and everything he needed for the Divine Liturgy. He made 42 sermons during the Easter fast. Every day he preached and gathered people around him [...]. Out of the 242 people, 240 confessed and received Holy Communion. This is quite something! Just, really in an ecumenical spirit, you know. That was the case then. It was something very impressive!" (See SASU, Aurora [Year missing]: *Fragment dintr-un interviu cu părintele Matei Boilă. Arhiva de Istorie Orală a Memorialului Sighet, Fond Aurora Sasu, interviul nr. 1277*. https://www.memorialsighet.ro/matei-boil/ (last accessed on: 16.09.2025).

> Out of 252 people, from all walks of life, 250 confessed [...]. At that time, he was the only priest there. 250 people confessed and received Holy Communion. Extraordinary! [...] I must tell you I have never felt so much joy as I did at that Easter. Nothing can compare to the joy I felt at that moment. I really wondered: Where did this great joy come from? Because I realized then that the 252 people are bound together through Jesus Christ. An extraordinary thing! To have people of all kinds and from all walks of life bound together by the love of Christ. It was a feeling of joy and extraordinary uplifting. I have never experienced such a celebration with such joy as then. This is what he did through the sacrifice he made, through devotion and holy courage. Because he defeated his timid and prudent nature […].
>
> It was something for us, an extraordinary joy. Many would tell me: "You were in prison, and you suffered." "Yes, I suffered, but we lived there with a joy you did not know outside."[29]

After 1990. The Dawn of Freedom and Openness to the West

From a pastoral perspective, the freedom enjoyed by the Greek Catholic Church in the years after the "revolution" of 1989 opened new paths for spreading the Gospel and living out the Christian message in Romania. Every year, the Greek Catholic parishes of Oradea were the "host" of ecumenical meetings in the "Week of Prayer for Christian Unity" set in January on the calendar. Groups of believers and young people of different confessions participated there: Orthodox, Reformed, Baptists, Roman Catholics, who prayed together for the unity of the church. In recent years, during the same week of prayer for Christian unity, each denomination has hosted a prayer service and a teaching session with Christian brothers from the other confessions.[30]

Regarding relations with the Romanian Orthodox Church, profoundly ecumenical moments were few but significant – particularly the blessing of the waters (of the Crișul Repede River), a joint celebration led by the Greek Catholic Bishop Virgil Bercea and the Orthodox Bishop Sofronie Drincec from Oradea, moments praised by the faithful of both churches but later condemned by the Synod of the Orthodox Church.[31]

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[29] Ibid.

[30] *Săptămâna de rugăciune pentru unitatea creștinilor 2025 „Crezi tu aceasta?" (In, 11: 26).* https://www.egco.ro/2025/01/17/comunicat-13/ (15 September 2025).

[31] CHIRILĂ, Mircea (2013): *Ps Virgil Bercea, episcopul Oradiei. „Creștinismul e unul singur. Noi, oamenii, l-am sfâșiat!".* https://www.ebihoreanul.ro/stiri/ps-virgil-bercea-episcopul-greco-catolic-

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The opening of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania to ecumenism was made under the guidance of Rome even before the outbreak of the Second World War. The prayer adapted to the Eastern rite, published in 1942 in Oradea, was – in addition to the old formula consecrated in the Divine Liturgy "for the union of all, let us pray to the Lord" – an important step for the rapprochement between Greek Catholics and the other Christian brothers. But beyond words, that is, theological documents, it was the deeds that indicated the level of Christian charity and, implicitly, of real ecumenism. This is how we have the funeral of the deceased and the communion in prayer of the Roman Catholic, Reformed, Evangelical, Greek Catholic and Orthodox clergy for the victims of the American bombing of Oradea on 2 June 1944. But the most catalytic factor of unity among Christians was the communist period, during which members of all Christian denominations were suffering together. This experience was lived jointly in the prisons of the Romanian gulag, with Christians of different confessions approaching each other in prayer in order to survive the physical and psychological terror inflicted on them. In this climate, the Greek Catholic clergy acted out of their Christian vocation to spiritually assist the detainees, an example being Bishop Iuliu Hirțea of Oradea.

The Greek Catholic Church's ecumenical relations in the 20th and 21st centuries are best summed up as "continuity in diversity and unity". Both before and after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Greek Catholic Church followed Rome's canonical indications in ecumenical dialogue, directions which – for the 20th century – signalled openness to the search for ecclesiastical unity among all Christians. In concrete terms, the personal encounters of Greek Catholic clergy with Christians of other confessions have fostered and continue to sustain genuine ecumenical relations. After the fall of communism, two main characteristics of the ecumenism practised by the Greek Catholic Church in Romania can be observed: that of normality, that is, of the continuity established by the documents of the 2nd Vatican Council – the search for common points of Christian life with all Christian confessions –, and that of tense relations with the Romanian Orthodox Church, especially on the subject of restitution of properties abusively confiscated by the communist regime. Looking ahead, the Greek Catholic Church, faithful to the

al-oradiei-crestinismul-este-unul-singur-noi-oamenii-l-am-sfasiat--105714.html (last accessed on: 27 February 2026).

unifying message of the Sacred Scripture, remains open to continuing the ecumenical dialogue, on different themes and levels, with all Christian confessions within the country as well as abroad.

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Between Unity and Division: The Ecumenical Movement in the Korean Church – History, Characteristics, and Prospects

Abstract.

This article examines the ecumenical movement in the Korean church as a historically layered and socially embodied pursuit of Christian unity. Rather than defining unity only in terms of doctrinal agreement or institutional merger, the article approaches it as a comprehensive field of activity comprising historical development, theological discourse, institutional organization, and ritual practice. Such an approach is necessary because the Korean ecumenical movement has unfolded not simply as an intra-church theological project but as a dynamic response to the political and social crises of modern Korean history. Japanese colonialism, national division, the Korean War, authoritarian modernization, democratization, and contemporary polarization each shaped both the possibilities and the limitations of ecumenical engagement. The article therefore argues that the Korean ecumenical movement must be understood within the entangled history of Korean Christianity and Korean society.

The study proceeds in four analytical stages. First, it traces the historical development of the movement from missionary coordination under colonial rule, through post-liberation reconstruction and denominational schism, to the public activism of the democratization era and the diversification and decline of recent decades. In this process,

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anti-communism, denominational division, and the growth of conservative Protestant organizations emerge as decisive forces that configured the split between ecumenical and anti-ecumenical camps. Second, the article considers the theological dimension of the movement. It shows that, despite the early adoption of broad confessional standards and the later reception of global ecumenical themes such as Missio Dei, Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, and the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace, Korean Protestantism has not produced a broadly shared modern confession of unity. Theological discussion has often remained confined to specialists and has rarely been translated into the ordinary life of congregations.

Third, the article analyses the institutional dimension of Korean ecumenism. The National Council of Churches in Korea functioned for decades as the central organizational vehicle of the movement, linking churches, para-church agencies, and global ecumenical networks, yet its public role has weakened since democratization because of conservative Protestant mobilization, the transfer of activist energy to civil society, and declining international support. At the same time, newer forms of inter-church cooperation, including the Commission on Faith and Order of Korean Churches, suggest that ecumenical life in Korea has not disappeared but has changed its form and field of operation. Fourth, the article explores the ritual dimension of unity through World Communion Sunday, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Easter joint services, and prayers for peace and reunification on the Korean Peninsula. These practices demonstrate that liturgical expressions of unity exist, but they also reveal the continuing distance between ecumenical leadership and congregational reception.

On the basis of this analysis, the article argues that the Korean ecumenical movement has been historically influential but structurally fragile. It has been stronger as a movement for social witness than as a project of visible ecclesial convergence; stronger in national crises than in the patient cultivation of ordinary habits of inter-church trust; and stronger among elite leaders than among local congregations. The future of Korean ecumenism therefore depends on widening participation, renewing theological education, strengthening the role of women, younger Christians, and lay professionals, and recovering the ecclesiological, catechetical, and liturgical dimensions that were often overshadowed by activist urgency. The article concludes that Korean ecumenism still retains enduring significance, not because it has overcome division but because it continues to witness to the claim that the church cannot detach itself from the suffering, fragmentation, and common life of the nation.

Keywords: Korean ecumenical movement, Korean Protestantism, Korean church, Korean church history, NCCK, anti-communism, church unity, democratization, faith and order

I. Introduction

The ecumenical movement is a movement of Christian churches towards visible unity. It is grounded in faith in the one God and in Scripture, and it responds to Jesus's prayer that all may be one (John 17:21). Christians are therefore called to receive unity as God's gift and to embody it in confession, worship, and practice. Yet, in Korea, the movement that sought unity also generated conflict and division. The Korean church thus bears a distinct trauma: the very discourse of unity has often intensified denominational antagonism.

This article examines "unity in the Korean church" not only as doctrinal agreement but as the total field of activities carried out in pursuit of unity. In this broader sense, unity includes the historical development of the ecumenical movement, its theological discourses, its institutional forms, and its ritual practices. Such an approach makes it possible to describe the Korean ecumenical movement more fully than a definition confined to creeds or inter-church agreements.

The discussion proceeds in two stages. Section II surveys the Korean ecumenical movement in four dimensions: history, theology, organization, and ritual. The historical section traces the movement through major social and political transitions; the theological section examines confessions, creeds, and ecumenical theological discourse; the organizational section reviews institutions and networks that carried the movement; and the ritual section considers worship, prayer, and symbolic liturgical practices. Section III then evaluates the status, characteristics, and prospects of the movement by focusing on three questions: the religious landscape in which it operates, the actors who sustain it, and the themes that have defined it.

In this article, "ecumenical movement", "unity movement", and "ecumenism" are used in a broad sense. They refer not only to doctrinal convergence but also to the larger history, institutions, and practices of Christian efforts towards unity. For convenience, churches that have participated in ecumenical organizations are called the "ecumenical side", while those that have opposed them are called the "anti-ecumenical side". Although "ecumenical" is not the exclusive property of any one faction, this distinction remains analytically useful in the Korean context.[2]

[2] For Korean Ecumenical Movement see, JEON, Taek-bu (1979): *Hanguk Ekyumenikal Undongsa* [A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Korea]. Seoul, Hanguk Gidoggyo Hyeobuihoe; LIM,

The scope of the article is limited. Although it concerns "the Korean church", the discussion focuses mainly on the Protestant ecumenical movement, because Korean ecumenism developed historically within Protestantism and has remained centred there. Catholic and Orthodox participation, especially in more recent forms of Christian cooperation, will be noted where relevant, but the argument primarily concerns the Protestant ecumenical field.

II. The Development and Current Status of the Ecumenical Movement in Korea

1. History: The Development of the Ecumenical Movement in the Korean Church

The history of the Korean ecumenical movement must be read within the larger history of Korean society. Japanese colonialism, national division, the Korean War, military dictatorship, industrialization, democratization, and neoliberal polarization all shaped both the possibilities and the limits of church unity. The ecumenical movement was never a purely internal theological development. It emerged at the intersection of church life and national history, and for that reason it often assumed a strongly social and political form.

The first period, from the introduction of Protestantism to the end of Japanese colonial rule, was the formative stage of Korean ecumenism. During the late Joseon Dynasty, foreign intervention intensified and the sense of national crisis deepened. Korean Christians, both Protestant and Catholic, participated in educational reform, enlightenment movements, and nationalist efforts. Protestantism in particular developed in close contact with social transformation. Yet the ecumenical movement itself began not from an indigenous ecclesiology but from missionary coordination. Because missionaries

Hee-guk (2008): Hanguk Gyohoesaeseo Jeongaedoeeo On Ekyumenikal Undong [The Ecumenical Movement as Developed in Korean Church History]. In: *21segi Hanguk Gyohoui Ekyumenikal Undong* [The Ecumenical Movement of the Korean Church in the Twenty-First Century]. Ed. Daehan Yesu Gyo Jangnohoe Chonghoe Ekyumenikal Wiwonhoe [The Presbyterian Church of Korea Ecumenical Committee]. Seoul, Daehan Gidokgyo Seohwe. 287–309.

divided fields and established denominational structures, Korean Protestantism did not form a single institutional church. Even so, missionary and Korean church leaders created cooperative organizations such as the Federal Council of Protestant Missions in Korea, the Bible Society, and the Christian Literature Society. The representative body was the Joseon National Christian Council, founded in 1924.[3]

The background is important. Korean Catholicism and Protestantism both possessed significant self-propagating elements. Catholicism took root through the study of Western Learning by Korean scholars before missionary structures were firmly established, and Protestantism also spread through translated Scripture and Korean evangelists before foreign missionaries came into Korea. Yet this relative indigenous vitality did not produce an indigenous ecumenical structure. What emerged instead was a cooperative system framed by mission boards, missionary conferences, and practical coordination. From the beginning, then, Korean ecumenism bore an ambiguity: it was both a response to the needs of local Christianity and a product of missionary management.[4]

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[3] The Joseon Yesugyo Yeonhap Gonguihoe [the Joseon National Christian Council] was established with a total of 53 representatives from Presbyterian and Methodist churches in attendance. At the time, this organization included not only denominations but also various Protestant organizations as members. The member organizations were the Joseon Presbyterian Church, the American Methodist Conference, the Southern Methodist Conference, the American North and South Presbyterian Church, the Canadian Presbyterian Church, the Australian Presbyterian Church, the American North and South Methodist Church Mission, the British Bible Society, the Joseon Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Canadian United Church Mission, the Joseon Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the Joseon Sunday School Association. The Joseon Christian Literature Society joined in 1930 and the Korean Women's Christian Temperance Association in 1931. Because this organization included both churches and missionary organizations, it was called the Christian Council rather than the Council of Churches.

[4] AHN, Gyo-seong (2009): Haebang Jeon Hanguk Ekyumenikal Undongui Teukjing [Characteristics of the Korean Ecumenical Movement before Liberation]. In: *Gidokgyo Yeoksa Yeonguso Sosik* [News of the Institute of Christian History]. 88. 7–17; AHN, Gyo-seong (2011b): Yeoksaui Hwa hae, Hwa haei Yeoksa [Reconciliation in History, the History of Reconciliation]. In: *Hanguk Gyohesahakhoeji* [Journal of Korean Church History]. 30. 303–332; PARK, Gyeong-su (2011): Hanguk Gaesingyo Chogi Gyohoe Yeonhap Undongui Yusan [The Legacy of Early Church Union Movements in Korean Protestantism]. In: *Jangrogyohoe wa Sinhak* [Presbyterian Church and Theology]. 8. 201–228.; PARK, Sungkon (2021): John Calvin's Ecclesiology and Korean Presbyterian Church. In: *Teológiai Fórum*. 2021/15/1. 42–67.

Through the Joseon National Christian Council, Korean churches entered wider ecumenical networks. In 1925, it joined the International Missionary Council, and Korean representatives participated in international missionary meetings. At the same time, the movement was constrained by colonial rule. Japanese repression, the imprisonment and exile of Christian leaders, missionary accommodation to imperial policy, and conflict over Shinto shrine worship weakened cooperation. The dissolution of the Joseon National Christian Council in 1938 and the absorption of Korean Protestant denominations into the Japanese church order effectively halted ecumenical activity. Even so, this period established two lasting features of Korean ecumenism: its institutional beginnings under missionary leadership and its tendency to link unity with broader political and social concerns.

The second period, from liberation in 1945 to around 1960, was marked by reconstruction, division, and ideological conflict. The end of colonial rule was followed by national division, the establishment of separate regimes, the Korean War, and the first military coup. Churches attempted to rebuild denominational and social structures, but reconstruction proceeded amid bitter disputes over collaboration, legitimacy, theology, and authority. In Korean Protestantism, especially within Presbyterian Church, these disputes resulted in repeated schisms.[5] The Presbyterian Church split into Kosin, Kijang

[5] Much of the discussion on the causes and process of the division of the Presbyterian Church reveals a partisan tendency to emphasize their own legitimacy and justification during the division process. YEON, Gyu-hong (2006): Hanguk Jangrogyohoe Bunyeorui Jeongchijeok Yoin e Daehan Yeongu [A Study of the Political Causes of the Division of the Korean Presbyterian Church]. In: *Jangrogyohoe wa Sinhak* [Presbyterian Church and Theology]. 3. 87–110; LEE, Sang-gyu (2006): 1950nyeondae Hanguk Jangrogyohoe Bunyeolgwa Yeonhab e Daehan Geomto [A Review of Division and Union in the Korean Presbyterian Church in the 1950s]. In: *Jangrogyohoe wa Sinhak*. 3. 47–86; LEE, Sang-gyu (2010): Hanguk Jangrogyohoeseoui Segyegyohoehyeobuihoe (W.C.C.) [The World Council of Churches in the Korean Presbyterian Church]. In: *Gaehyeok Sinhak* [Reformed Theology]. 16. 45–88; KIM, Myeong-bae (2008): Hanguk Jangrogyohoe Bunyeorui Yeoksawa Ilchi Chugu Bangan e Gwanhan Yeongu [A Study on the History of Division in the Korean Presbyterian Church and Ways of Pursuing Unity]. In: *Hanguk Gaehyeok Sinhak*. 23. 241–277; PARK, Eung-gyu (2011): 1959nyeon Hanguk Jangrogyohoe Bunyeore Daehan Jaejomyeong [A Re-examination of the 1959 Division of the Korean Presbyterian Church]. In: *Jangrogyohoe wa Sinhak*. 8. 149–182; LIM, Hee-guk (2011): Hanguk Jangrogyohoei Bunyeorui Yeoksa [The History of Division in the Korean Presbyterian Church]. In: *Jangrogyohoe wa Sinhak*. 8. 39–82; CHUNG Byung-joon (2011): 1959nyeon Hanguk Jangrogyohoe Bunyeol Woninge

(PROK), Tonghap, and Hapdong, while new denominations, such as the Lutheran Church, also appeared. The denominational landscape became more complex than before liberation.

The decisive external factor in this period was the Korean War. The war solidified the division of the peninsula and of the churches. Protestant leaders and believers who fled from the North became a powerful force in South Korean Protestantism and carried with them a strong anti-communist orientation. This anti-communism shaped both Korean society and the churches for decades and later became a major foundation of anti-ecumenical Protestantism. In the postwar South, anti-communism was not merely a political sentiment; it became a theological and ecclesial lens through which ecumenism, social engagement, and even inter-church cooperation were judged.

After liberation, Korean churches resumed contact with the global church. Korean Protestants attended the first assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. Yet from the mid-1950s opposition to the WCC intensified. In 1959, the Presbyterian Church split between Tonghap, which maintained links to ecumenical bodies, and Hapdong, which rejected them.[6] More broadly, major denominations took diverging positions: some joined both domestic and international ecumenical bodies, some joined selectively, and others severed ties altogether. The ecumenical side developed relations with the WCC; the anti-ecumenical side aligned itself more closely with conservative international bodies such as the NAE and, for a time, the ICCC.[7]

The significance of this phase lies in the way institutional and ideological division reinforced each other. Debates over the WCC were never only about ecclesiology. They were inseparable from Cold War politics, the fear of communism, anxieties over doctrinal purity, and struggles over denominational control. The anti-ecumenical position therefore

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Daehan Saeroun Jeopgeun [A New Approach to the Causes of the 1959 Division of the Korean Presbyterian Church]. In: *Jangrogyohoe wa Sinhak*. 8. 183–198.

6 For the relationship between the church divisions of the 1950s and the ecumenical movement, see AHN, Gyo-seong (2011a): Ekyumenikal Gyohoeroseoui Daehan Yesu Gyo Jangnohoe (Tonghap)ui Jeongcheseonggwa Jeungeon [The Identity and Witness of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Tonghap) as an Ecumenical Church]. In: *Jangsin Nondan* [Journal of Presbyterian Theology]. 40. 11–35.

7 PARK, Yong-gyu (2004): *Hanguk Gidoggyohoesa* [History of Christianity in Korea]. 2. Seoul, Saengmyeongui Malsseumsa. 925; KIM, In-su (1998): *Hanguk Gidoggyohoei Yeoksa* [History of the Korean Christian Church]. Seoul, Jangrohoe Sinhakdaehakgyo Chulpanbu. 641.

drew strength not only from theological conservatism but also from a powerful national narrative in which anti-communism functioned as a marker of orthodoxy, patriotism, and moral legitimacy.

This period fixed the basic terrain of Korean ecumenism. Anti-communism, intensified by war, became a major dividing line, and ecclesial conflict hardened into a durable split between ecumenical and anti-ecumenical camps. From this point onward, ecumenism in Korea was no longer a broadly shared Protestant concern but increasingly the project of one side of a divided church landscape.

The third period, from the 1960s to democratization in the late 1980s, was the period of consolidation and greatest public influence for the ecumenical movement. South Korea experienced military authoritarianism, rapid industrialization, urbanization, and widening social inequality. In response, the ecumenical side became deeply involved in democratization, labour struggles, human rights, and, later, national reunification. In the 1980s, it broadened its agenda to include peace and inter-Korean relations. The 1988 "Declaration of the Korean Christian Church on National Reunification and Peace" and the proclamation of 1995 as a national jubilee were among the most visible expressions of this orientation. Urban-industrial mission, Minjung theology, and grassroots church activism supplied much of the movement's energy.

This was also the period in which ecumenism in Korea became more than a denominational programme. It drew on student Christian movements, labour mission, social mission agencies, and theological networks that connected local struggles with global ecumenical discourse. The language of justice, participation, Minjung, and liberation gave Korean ecumenism a distinctive profile within the wider global church. Although these emphases did not always produce doctrinal convergence, they did create a recognizable form of Christian public witness.

By contrast, the anti-ecumenical side tended to support the state-centred anti-communist order and to identify more closely with conservative social forces. Large churches in particular expanded under this arrangement and became socially influential. From the 1980s onward, anti-ecumenical groups mobilized strongly against ecumenical engagement with democratization and reunification.[8] The 1988 Declaration became a

[8] Campus Crusade for Christ, the Korea Presidential (National) Prayer Breakfast, the Christian Businessmen's Association, the ICCC Korea branch, the Korean Christian Anti-Communist League, the National Salvation Mission and the Military Salvation Crusade, and the Unification

major point of contention and helped conservative Protestants organize more effectively in the public sphere.

Despite growing polarization, the ecumenical movement reached its high point in this period. Compared with the 1970s, when ecumenical activism was concentrated among relatively small circles, the movement in the 1980s acquired a more public and inter-church character. It also entered into limited cooperation with Catholics and, at times, with other religious communities, while deepening ties with overseas ecumenical institutions. Much of its work depended on financial and moral support from the global church. In this period, Korean ecumenism became a significant actor within the wider democratization movement and helped shape Christian public witness in South Korea.

The fourth period, from democratization to the present, has been a period of diversification but also decline. Although political democratization advanced, social inequality deepened and the public credibility of Korean Protestantism weakened. Within the churches, anti-ecumenical forces grew stronger, not only among conservative denominations but also among large churches within ecumenical denominations that shared anti-communist and conservative instincts. As a result, the ecumenical side experienced a crisis of representation, leadership, and identity. The status of the NCCK declined, and its fields of activity narrowed.[9]

Several factors account for this shift. First, the establishment of the Christian Council of Korea in 1989 ended the NCCK's effective monopoly as a Protestant

Church defended the conservative social system. Also, mainstream ecumenical leaders and mega churches, such as Han Kyung-jik and Yeongnak Church, became part of the ruling system based on anti-communism. See: CHUNG, Byung-joon (2022): Park Chung-hee Jeonggwongwa Gidoggyo: Gyohoe-Gukga Gwangyee Daehan Yeongusareul Jungsimeuro [The Park Chung Hee Regime and Christianity: Focusing on Research History on Church–State Relations]. In: *Hanguk Gidoggyowa Yeoksa* [Christianity and History in Korea]. 56. 5–39.

[9] SON, Seung-ho (2018a): 1987nyeon Ihu Hanguk Gidoggyo Gyohoe Hyeobuihoei Byeonhwa [Changes in the National Council of Churches in Korea since 1987]. In: *Gidoggyo Sasang* [Christian Thought]. 709. 30–39; SON, Seung-ho (2018b): Minjuhwa Ihu Ekyumenikal Undongui Chimchewa Hwalro Moseok: Hanguk Gidoggyo Gyohoe Hyeobuihoereul Jungsimeuro [The Stagnation of the Ecumenical Movement and the Search for a Way Forward after Democratization: Focusing on the National Council of Churches in Korea]. In: *Hanguk Gidoggyowa Yeoksa* [Christianity and History in Korea]. 48. 31–68; KANG, In-cheol (2012): *Minjuhwa wa Jonggyo* [Democratization and Religion]. Osan, Hansin Daehakgyo Chulpanbu.

representative body. Second, areas once dominated by ecumenical activism, such as democratization and rights advocacy, were increasingly taken up by civic movements and NGOs. Many Protestant activists moved from church-based organizations into civil society. Third, financial support from the global church diminished. These changes weakened ecumenical institutions and encouraged a more denominational and managerial form of church politics within the NCCK itself.[10]

At the same time, the ecumenical movement diversified.[11] It continued to address reunification but expanded into issues such as ecology, women, rural communities, migrant workers, disability, and economic justice. The NCCK reorganized committees around just peace, peace and reunification, economic justice, climate justice, and ecological justice. This represented a shift from grand nationalist or class-centred agendas towards the social and ethical problems of everyday life.

The post-democratization period also brought institutional change. The NCCK became more strongly centred on member denominations, while its regional movement character weakened. Financial insecurity and the growing influence of conservative constituencies affected its internal balance. Yet, even amidst decline, the ecumenical side achieved some visible successes in international exchange, most notably the WCC's 10th Assembly in Busan in 2013. That event did not overcome the division of Korean Protestantism, but it demonstrated that the ecumenical movement still retained international significance.

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[10] SHIN, Jaeshik (2005): Hanguk Simin Undonggwa Gaesingyo: Jeongaewa Jeonmang [Korean Civil Movements and Protestantism: Development and Prospects]. In: *Hanguk Gaesingyoga Hanguk Geunhyeondaeui Sahoe-Munhwajeok Byeondonge Kikin Yeonghyang Yeongu* [A Study of the Influence of Korean Protestantism on Socio-cultural Transformations in Modern Korean History]. Osan, Hanguk Sinhak Yeonguso. 253–277; JANG, Gyu-sik (2018): Minjuhwa Ihu Hangugui Gaesingyowa Siminsahoe [Korean Protestantism and Civil Society after Democratization]. In: *Hanguk Gidoggyowa Yeoksa*. 48. 5–30.

[11] HWANG, Hong-ryeol (2016): Ekyumenikal Undongeseo Bon Hanguk Gidoggyoui Hoesimgwa Byeonhyeogui Gwaeje [Tasks of Conversion and Transformation of Korean Christianity from the Perspective of the Ecumenical Movement]. In: *Seongyo wa Sinhak* [Mission and Theology]. 40. 107–149; HWANG, Hong-ryeol (2014): WCCui Saengmyeong Seongyowa Hanguk Gyohoui Saengmyeong Seongyo Gwaeje [The WCC's Mission of Life and the Tasks of the Korean Church's Mission of Life]. In: *Seongyo wa Sinhak*. 34. 50–70.

Taken together, these four periods reveal the main historical determinants of Korean ecumenism: Japanese colonialism gave it a strong national and social orientation; the Korean War intensified anti-communism; denominational schism divided the Protestant field into ecumenical and anti-ecumenical camps; and democratization both expanded ecumenical influence and, paradoxically, weakened the institutional centrality of church-based activism. For this reason, Korean ecumenism has generally been more movement- than institution-centred. It has sought social witness more often than visible ecclesial union, and that tension continues to shape its present condition.

2. Theology: Confessions of Faith and Creeds in the Ecumenical Movement

From a theological perspective, the Korean ecumenical movement may be examined through confessions of faith, creeds, and the reception of wider ecumenical theology. Yet in this area the Korean church has achieved relatively little visible unity. There is no broadly shared modern confession of faith representing Korean Protestantism as a whole. Apart from the 1932 social creed of the Korean church, Korean ecumenism has not generated a unifying confessional text comparable to its social activism.

Early missionaries adopted the so-called Twelve Articles of Faith, which functioned in parts of Asia as a basic Protestant confession. Because they hoped for ecclesial unity, they used a comparatively broad doctrinal standard at the beginning of the Protestant mission.[12] After denominational divisions, however, each church consolidated its own confessional identity. Among the major Presbyterian bodies, Tonghap, Hapdong, Kijang, and Kosin all received the Twelve Articles in some form, while Tonghap, Hapdong, and Kosin also accepted the Westminster Confession. Tonghap later produced additional confessional statements; Kijang adopted the "Declaration of Faith" in 1972; Hapdong and Kosin adhered more closely to inherited confessional documents.

The details matter because they show that unity in the Korean Protestant church has been sought more often through coexistence than through confessional convergence. Tonghap attempted modest confessional development without breaking with the Westminster tradition, Kijang pursued a more self-consciously contextual confession,

[12] AHN 2011a, 17.

and Hapdong and Kosin treated doctrinal continuity as a marker of orthodoxy. Each position carried an implicit ecclesiology and an implicit attitude towards ecumenical openness. Confessional pluralization thus expressed a deeper division over how tradition itself should be received.

Other member churches of the NCCK followed their own traditions. The Methodist Church maintained its Articles of Religion and later developed a Methodist confession and social creed. The Anglican Church used the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Orthodox Church received the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed. The Salvation Army, Lutheran Church, and Pentecostal denominations likewise retained distinct doctrinal standards. In short, Korean Protestantism has remained confessionally plural.

This confessional diversity is partly historical. Korean Protestantism developed without a stable parish system and without the experience of a state or dominant church. Local church identity became strong, while awareness of the church as a wider catholic reality remained comparatively weak. During denominational division, disputes over power and governance often mattered more than theological dialogue. The result was not only institutional fragmentation but also the hardening of separate theological traditions.

The same pattern appears in relation to ecumenical theology. Korean discussions of ecumenism often identify it simply with WCC theology, but there is no single, unified "ecumenical theology" in Korea. This reflects the character of the ecumenical movement itself, which is a coalition of traditions rather than a system with one official theology. Even so, major ecumenical themes from the global church – Missio Dei, Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, and the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace – were introduced into Korea relatively quickly and influenced movements for democratization, human rights, urban-industrial mission, reunification, justice, peace, and life.

Yet reception was uneven. While Korean scholars introduced the work of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission, including *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* and *The Church: Towards a Common Vision*, these texts had limited impact at the congregational and pastoral level.[13] They were discussed within relatively narrow scholarly and

[13] For the discussion on Faith and Order Commission, see LEE, Hyeong-gi (2009): *Je2cha Batikan Gonguihoe Ihu Roma Gatollik Gyohoei Ekyumenijeumgwa Ekyumenikal Undonge Daehan Yeongu* [A Study of Roman Catholic Ecumenism and the Ecumenical Movement after Vatican II]. In: *Catholic Theology and Thought*. 64. 221–257; LEE, Seung-gap (2011): Sinanggwa Jikje, Geu

denominational circles and were seldom integrated deeply into local church education or ordinary worshiping communities.[14] The ecumenical side often excelled in social interpretation but did less to translate ecclesiological discussion into the everyday language of church formation.

This imbalance helps explain one of the central weaknesses of Korean ecumenism. It has often been more persuasive in ethical and political witness than in articulating why divided churches should understand one another as participants in a common ecclesial reality. Theological reflection on unity therefore remained relatively specialized, while many church members encountered ecumenism chiefly as a political orientation. The gap between ecumenical theology and congregational consciousness thus became one of the major obstacles to reception.

Alongside the reception of global ecumenical theology, Korean churches also developed their own spaces for theological conversation. The Commission on Faith and Order of Korean Churches, which includes Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox participation, has held annual forums and pursued theological dialogue on Christian faith, church life, and contemporary social questions. These efforts have value, but they have not yet generated a broad theological convergence capable of overcoming division between ecumenical and anti-ecumenical Protestants.

Thus the central theological problem remains clear. The historical split of Korean Protestantism has left a deep gap in theological outlook, ecclesiology, and the interpretation

Jisokjeogin Sinhakjeok Daehwaui Yeoksawa Mirae Jeonmang [Faith and Order, Its History of Continuous Theological Dialogue and Future Prospects]. In: *Hanguk Gidoggyo Sinhak Nonchong* [Korean Journal of Christian Theology]. 76, 1. 119–143; SHIN, Jaeshik (2024): Sinanggwa Jikje anaeui Jeonguiwa Pyeonghwaui Sunrye Nonui [Discourse on the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace within Faith and Order]. In: *Sinhak Ihae* [Theological Understanding]. 58; SHIN, Jaeshik (2025): Sinanggwa Jikjeui Choeguen Yeongu Donghyang: Busaneseo Karlsruhekkaji [Research Trends of Faith and Order: From Busan to Karlsruhe]. In: *Sinhak Ihae*. 59.

[14] For the discussion on Church, see JEON, Cheol (2016): 21segi Ekyumenikal Undonggwa Gyohoe Ilchiui Gwaeje: *Gyohoe: Gongdongui Bijeoneul Hyanghayeo*(WCC, 2013)reul Jungsimeuro [The Tasks of Church Unity in the Twenty-First-Century Ecumenical Movement]. In: *Sinhak Yeongu* [Theological Research]. 68. 85–110; PARK, Do-woong (2021): Ekyumenikal Gyohoeronui Jungyo Jujewa Jonghap [Major Themes and Synthesis of Ecumenical Ecclesiology]. In: *Gyohoehyeob Sinhak Wiwonhoe Gyohoeron Simpojium Jaryojip* [Proceedings of the NCCK Theological Committee Symposium on Ecclesiology] (2021.8.26.). 5–26.

of tradition itself. Without addressing that divide, neither a common confession nor a substantial theological unity is likely to emerge. If Korean ecumenism is to achieve something more visible in the future, one crucial task will be the formation of theological language rooted in Korean history, culture, and social reality while remaining open to wider Christian convergence.

3. Organization: Institutions and Organizations in the Ecumenical Movement

The Korean ecumenical movement has been sustained by a range of institutions. Among the best known are the NCCK, the Korean Bible Society, the Christian Literature Society, Christian educational bodies, Christian broadcasting organizations, and student and youth movements. Of these, the NCCK has played the central role.

Its institutional history begins with the Joseon National Christian Council in 1924. After liberation, this body was reorganized several times and eventually became the National Council of Churches in Korea in 1970. Today, the NCCK includes major Protestant denominations and related institutions. Historically, it served as the most important organizational centre of Korean ecumenism, linking domestic churches with the global ecumenical movement and coordinating church responses to major social issues.

The NCCK's importance lay not only in formal representation but also in mediation. It linked denominational churches, para-church agencies, overseas partners, social mission groups, and theological networks. In periods of authoritarian rule, it offered one of the few legitimate public spaces in which churches could articulate social criticism. This mediating function gave it influence beyond its formal size.

Since democratization, however, the NCCK has entered a period of relative stagnation. Externally, the political urgency that once gave ecumenical activism public influence diminished as democratization advanced and civic organizations multiplied. Many activists moved from church structures into secular civil society. Internally, the NCCK became more denomination- and less movement-centred. Conservative voices within member churches grew stronger, conflicts over direction intensified, and institutional politics weakened its capacity to function as an innovative ecumenical movement.

The emergence of conservative Protestant federations accelerated this change. The Christian Council of Korea, founded in 1989 in opposition to the 1988 Declaration,

united a broad range of conservative churches and organizations.[15] It fixed more firmly the division between ecumenical and anti-ecumenical Protestantism and, for a time, became a much larger representative body than the NCCK. It also enjoyed considerable political influence, especially under conservative governments. Although later weakened by internal conflict and scandal, the CCK was succeeded in part by other conservative federations, including the UCCK.[16] These bodies ensured that no single organization could any longer claim exclusive Protestant representation.

Institutional ecumenism was accompanied by other forms of cooperation. Organizations such as the National Association of Korean Christian Pastors sought church renewal and unity at the level of clergy networks rather than denominational structures. Research institutes and Christian think tanks, including the Christian Academy, the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development, and the Korea Theological Research Institute, functioned for many years as intellectual centres of ecumenical reflection. Yet many of these groups suffered from declining overseas support after the 1990s, and their reduced resources contributed to the broader weakening of ecumenical public discourse.[17]

At the same time, the ecumenical field in Korea widened beyond Protestantism. A particularly important development was the establishment in 2014 of the Commission on Faith and Order of Korean Churches. This body includes the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, the NCCK, and several member denominations of the NCCK.[18]

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[15] For a comparison of the NCCK and the CCK, see PARK, Myeong-su (2009): Bangong, Tongil, geurigo Bukhan Seongyo – Hanguk Gidoggyo Gyohoe Hyeobuihoe(NCCK)wa Hanguk Gidoggyo Chongyeonhaphoe (CCK) ui Bigyo *Yeongu* [Anti-communism, Unification, and North Korea Mission: A Comparative Study of the NCCK and the CCK]. In: *Seonggyeol Gyohoe wa Sinhak* [Holiness Church and Theology]. 21. 119–145.

[16] For the Hegemony of Conservative Protestantism in the 1990s, see KANG, In-cheol (2004): Suryeom, Hokeun Hegeomoni?: 1990nyeondae Hanguk Gaesingyo Jihyeongui Byeonhwa [Convergence, or Hegemony?: Changes in the Topography of Korean Protestantism in the 1990s]. In: *Gyeongjewa Sahoe* [Economy and Society]. 62. 18–53.

[17] For information on the status of Protestant research groups since the 2000s, see SON, Seung-ho (2020): 2000nyeondae Ihu Gidoggyo Singkeutaengkeuui Dunhwa [The Decline of Christian Think Tanks since the 2000s]. In: *Gidoggyo Sasang* [Christian Thought]. 744. 41–53.

[18] On the member churches and institutions of the NCCK, see Hanguk Gidoggyo Gyohoehyeobuihoe [National Council of Churches in Korea]. Available at: http://www.kncc.or.kr (last accessed on: 28 March 2026).

Although not formally part of the WCC's Faith and Order Commission, it follows a similar model by promoting theological dialogue, common study, and practical cooperation. Its activities, including the Korean Academy of Christian Unity and the annual Christian Unity Forum, represent one of the most significant recent attempts to move Korean ecumenism beyond the boundaries of Protestant denominational politics.[19]

Even here, however, the limits are clear. Major anti-ecumenical Protestant denominations, especially Hapdong, have refused participation on theological grounds.[20] As a result, the most developed institutional form of all-Korean Christian dialogue still lacks the involvement of a large portion of Korean Protestantism. The challenge is not only to maintain such structures but to broaden participation without erasing genuine theological disagreement.

4. Ritual: Worship and Liturgy in the Ecumenical Movement

If unity is understood as *koinonia*, then it must be expressed not only in statements and institutions but also in worship, sacrament, and prayer. Ritual is therefore a crucial measure of ecumenical reality. In this respect, the Korean church has made meaningful but limited progress.

One representative practice is World Communion Sunday. Since the ecumenical discussions culminating in *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, many churches around the world have observed the first Sunday of October as a sign of Eucharistic fellowship within the one church of Christ. In Korea, however, observance has been partial. Some ecumenically engaged denominations include it in their liturgical calendars, while others do not. This suggests that even among churches formally connected to ecumenical bodies, the liturgical embodiment of unity remains uneven.

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[19] On the themes of the Ilchi Forum [Unity Forum] from the first forum in 2000 to the twenty-first forum in 2025, see Hanguk Geuriseudogyo Sinanggwa Jikje Hyeobuihoe: Ilchi Forum. Available at: http://fno.or.kr/forum (last accessed on: 28 March 2026).

[20] KIM, Gil-seong (2018): NCCKwa Roma Gatollik Gyohoei Choegeun Hwaldonge Daehan Yeongu [A Study of Recent Activities of the NCCK and the Roman Catholic Church]. In: *Sinhak Jinam* [Theological Guide]. 85, 3. 29–71.

Another important practice is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Materials prepared jointly by the WCC's Faith and Order Commission and the Vatican have been translated and circulated in Korea, especially through the Commission on Faith and Order of Korean Churches. Some local congregations observe the week, but it has not become a widely rooted practice across Korean Protestantism. The gap between ecumenical leadership and congregational reception is again evident.

Two more public rituals deserve attention. The Easter joint service, first held in 1947, became a visible symbol of Protestant cooperation in Korea. Yet it also reflected denominational conflict. After Presbyterian division, the ecumenical and anti-ecumenical sides held separate Easter services for a time. Although later efforts restored common celebration, disputes over sponsorship and representational legitimacy continued. The Easter service therefore illustrates both the desire for unity and the competitive politics that frequently accompany it.

The other ritual is the joint Sunday of prayer for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Following the WCC assembly in Busan, churches were encouraged to observe a common Sunday of prayer for peace and reunification. The NCCK also prepared inter-Korean common prayers in cooperation with the Korean Christian Federation in the North. These liturgical acts linked ecumenism with the national question and embodied one of the movement's central concerns. Yet they have remained vulnerable to political shifts and deteriorating inter-Korean relations.

Overall, the ritual life of Korean ecumenism reveals a familiar pattern. Liturgical symbols of unity exist and can be powerful, but they have not yet become widely shared habits across the churches. Ecumenical prayer and worship remain strongest where institutional relationships already exist; they are weakest where denominational suspicion persists.

Ritual therefore discloses both the promise and the incompleteness of Korean ecumenism. Worship can condense in symbolic form what institutions and theological dialogues struggle to achieve. Yet if liturgical practice is not received in local congregations, it remains exceptional and representative rather than formative. The future of ecumenical ritual in Korea depends less on producing new symbolic events than on cultivating repeated habits of shared prayer that can slowly reshape ecclesial imagination.

III. The Status, Characteristics, and Prospects of the Korean Ecumenical Movement

1. The Status of the Korean Ecumenical Movement

The present status of the Korean ecumenical movement can be assessed from three angles: the religious landscape in which it operates, the actors who sustain it, and the themes it has emphasized. These dimensions together show both the movement's continuing importance and its clear limitations.

First, the religious landscape. Korean society is religiously plural and increasingly secular. Recent survey data indicate that the majority of the population identifies as non-religious, while Protestants form only a minority.[21] Since the ecumenical movement in Korea has been largely a Protestant phenomenon, its numerical base within the total population has always been limited. Even within Protestantism, ecumenical participation has involved only part of the church. The split between ecumenical and anti-ecumenical camps, especially among Presbyterians, means that the ecumenical movement effectively represents only about half of Korean Protestantism, and therefore only a relatively small portion of Korean society as a whole. The Korean Ecumenical group might be considered as approximately 10% of Korean population.

Yet numerical limitation does not mean historical insignificance. For much of the twentieth century, ecumenical Christianity exercised influence out of proportion to its size through its role in democratization, rights advocacy, and public ethics. The problem today is that its moral and public authority has declined as civil society has expanded, the prestige of Protestantism has fallen, and conservative Protestant organizations have become more visible in public debate. The ecumenical movement thus remains historically important but structurally marginalized.

[21] Approximately 60% of Koreans are non-religious and 40% of Koreans have a religion: Protestantism 18-20%, Buddhism 16%, and Catholicism 6-11%. 2025 Korean Religion Statistics by Gallup Korea (2026): 2025 *Hanguk Jonggyo Hyeonhwang* [The Religious Situation in Korea, 2025]. Available at: https://www.gallup.co.kr/gallupdb/reportContent.asp?seqNo=1628 (last accessed on: 28 March 2026).

Second, the problem of agency. Organizationally, the NCCK has long stood at the centre of Korean ecumenism. Socially, however, the movement has been carried disproportionately by a particular generation: men shaped by the Korean War, anti-dictatorship activism, and Christian youth or student movements. Many of the most influential ecumenical leaders emerged from the student Christian movement and later moved into church institutions, civic organizations, and public advocacy.[22] Their contribution was immense, but the movement has not reproduced leadership effectively.

This failure has serious consequences. Younger generations have often found greater opportunity in civil society than in aging church organizations. Women and lay professionals have also had limited space within structures increasingly dominated by clergy and denominational politics.[23] As ecumenical institutions became more pastor-centred and bureaucratic, they lost some of the wider participatory energy that once sustained them. The problem of succession is therefore not incidental; it is one of the central reasons for ecumenism's present weakness.[24]

The issue is not only demographic but structural. Older ecumenical leadership was formed in movements where church, academy, and civil resistance were closely linked. That network has largely disappeared. New leaders are formed in a different environment, one shaped by precarious work, digital communication, weakened denominational loyalty, and a more sceptical attitude towards institutional religion itself. Unless ecumenical bodies recognize this altered context, appeals to "the next generation" will remain rhetorical.

Third, the question of theme. Korean ecumenism has been strongly movement-oriented. Its leaders focused on democratization, human rights, and reunification because those were the urgent demands of Korean society, and this gave the movement

[22] The overwhelming majority of the core group of the unity movement came from the Christian youth movement. For the role of the Korean ecumenical movement and Christian youth movement, see CHO, Byeong-ho (2005): *Hanguk Gidok Cheongnyeon Haksaeng Undong 100nyeonsa Sanchaek* [A Stroll through One Hundred Years of the Korean Christian Youth and Student Movement]. Seoul, Ttange Ssein Geulssi.

[23] For an experience of the ecumenical movement from a feminist theological perspective, see SHIN, Seon (2005): Ekyumenikal Undongui Yeojeong [The Journey of the Ecumenical Movement]. In: *Hanguk Yeoseong Sinhak* [Korean Feminist Theology]. 63. 127–134.

[24] SON 2020, 51–52.

public relevance. Yet the strength of this orientation also created imbalance. Compared with ecumenical discussions elsewhere, Korean ecumenism invested less sustained attention in ecclesiology, ministry, sacrament, and the ordinary forms of common church life. For many Christians, "ecumenism" therefore came to signify social participation or political engagement rather than church unity in a fuller theological sense.

More recently, ecumenical concerns have expanded into life issues such as migration, ecology, disability, gender, and economic justice. This shift has opened new avenues of relevance, but it has not solved the problem of reception at the congregational level. The movement still faces the task of articulating themes that can speak both to polarized church constituencies and to local churches that do not identify themselves with classic ecumenical institutions.

A further difficulty is the fragmentation of the Protestant public sphere itself. In earlier decades, ecumenical and anti-ecumenical leaders alike addressed a relatively concentrated church public through denominational newspapers, assemblies, seminaries, and revival networks. Today that sphere is far more dispersed. Digital media, online preaching, issue-based mobilization, and individualized patterns of religious consumption have altered the channels through which authority is produced. This means that ecumenical institutions can no longer assume that official statements, assemblies, or elite dialogues will trickle down into congregational consciousness. If Korean ecumenism is to regain traction, it must learn to work not only through councils and committees but also through pedagogy, media, local worship resources, and forms of communication capable of reaching ordinary believers.

This in turn raises the question of language. Much ecumenical discourse in Korea has remained either highly institutional or highly activist. It has often spoken in the vocabulary of declarations, commissions, and social movements. That vocabulary was historically necessary, but it does not always speak persuasively to congregations formed by devotional practice, pastoral concerns, and local church loyalties. One strategic task, therefore, is translational rather than merely ideological: the movement must render its theological and ethical commitments into language that congregations can inhabit without feeling that they are being conscripted into a partisan camp. Unless ecumenism is narrated as a dimension of Christian discipleship, catholicity, prayer, and common witness, it will remain vulnerable to reduction either to denominational politics or to progressive activism.

There is also a geographical issue. Korean ecumenism has often been concentrated in national institutions, seminaries, and metropolitan networks. Regional ecumenical bodies have weakened, and many local churches encounter ecumenism only distantly, if at all. Yet local reception is decisive. Without regional and congregational forms of encounter, national agreements and commemorative events cannot generate durable change. Future renewal therefore requires not only better theology and wider representation but also a thicker local ecology of shared prayer, clergy relationships, theological education, and common service.

2. Characteristics of the Korean Ecumenical Movement

Several characteristics of Korean ecumenism emerge from this historical survey. First, it developed in a social setting very different from that of the Western churches where modern ecumenism first took shape. Christianity in Korea has always been a minority religion in a multi-religious society. It has never been the unquestioned public religion or an established national church. As a result, Korean ecumenism did not grow out of the management of long-established confessional churches but out of mission, colonization, modernization, and national crisis. This difference helps explain both its dynamism and its instability.

Second, although Korean Christianity itself had strong indigenous elements, the ecumenical movement began under Protestant missionary leadership and remained Protestant-centred for a long time. Cooperation among Protestants, Catholics, and Orthodox Christians is comparatively recent. The historical weight of Protestant denominational formation has therefore deeply shaped the entire field.

Third, Korean ecumenism was from the beginning strongly movement-oriented. It addressed Korean society at large through nationalism, enlightenment, democratization, human rights, labour activism, and reunification. This gave it prophetic force, but it also meant that theological reflection on church unity was often overshadowed by urgent social action.

Fourth, the movement depended significantly on the global church. International ecumenical networks supplied recognition, theological resources, and financial support. These connections strengthened Korean ecumenism, but they also created dependency.

When overseas support declined, ecumenical institutions struggled to sustain their work and to root themselves more deeply in local church life.

Fifth, ecumenism became one of the factors that hardened division within Korean Protestantism. Opposition to ecumenism was never simply theological. It was tied to anti-communism, political conservatism, class interest, and ecclesial power. Consequently, support for or resistance to ecumenism in Korea must be understood as a complex socio-political formation rather than as a narrow doctrinal dispute.

Sixth, there remains a gap between ecumenical elites and ordinary congregations. Ecumenical theology was introduced by scholars and leaders relatively quickly, but it did not spread broadly through congregational education, liturgy, and local church culture. There is still considerable distance between ecumenical institutions and member denominations, between national and regional ecumenism, and between denominational headquarters and local congregations. In this sense, Korean ecumenism has remained thinly rooted among ordinary church members.

These characteristics also suggest why Korean ecumenism has had an unusual combination of strength and fragility. It was strong when linked to national crises and democratizing energies, but fragile when asked to sustain patient, ordinary practices of church reception. It could mobilize around public issues more effectively than it could stabilize durable patterns of inter-confessional trust. This asymmetry remains one of its defining marks.

For that reason, the future of Korean ecumenism may depend on a double movement. On the one hand, it must preserve the historical gains of the classic ecumenical movement – its concern for justice, peace, democracy, reconciliation, and the global church. On the other hand, it must recover dimensions that were comparatively underdeveloped in Korea: ecclesiology, spiritual formation, catechesis, liturgical reception, and ordinary habits of inter-church fellowship. Only by bringing these two poles together can it move beyond the opposition between a movement-centred ecumenism and an institution-centred longing for formal unity.

3. Prospects and Direction of the Korean Ecumenical Movement

The future of the Korean ecumenical movement is difficult to view optimistically. The Korean church today shows stronger tendencies towards maintaining, and even

intensifying, division than towards seeking visible unity. Since their historical separation, both ecumenical and anti-ecumenical camps have built coherent internal worlds of theology, memory, leadership, finance, and institutional survival. Each side has justified its own past and transmitted its identity to subsequent generations. The result is not simply disagreement but the consolidation of separate church ecosystems.

For that reason, any serious pursuit of unity requires more than goodwill. It entails critical engagement with the histories, myths, and power structures through which division has been normalized. Nevertheless, continued work for unity remains necessary. The first task is to widen the scope of ecumenical reflection beyond the existing ecumenical camp. If Korean church unity is to mean anything substantial, it must include the question of how ecumenical and anti-ecumenical Protestants might coexist, communicate, and cooperate without denying their real disagreements.

A second task is honest recognition. Korean Protestantism is divided not only institutionally but also socially, politically, and culturally. Mutual recognition of this reality is a precondition for any future conversation. Respect, communication, and hospitality cannot develop where each side is treated only as an enemy or heretic. Because older generations often remain tied to the trauma and polemics of division, new possibilities may depend on a new generation less shaped by those conflicts.

A third task is ecclesiological. In a situation of deep theological distance, the most promising starting point may not be immediate doctrinal or institutional merger. Instead, Korean churches need renewed reflection on what it means to be the one body of Christ and how that confession bears on common responsibility in Korean society. Cooperation for the common good may provide a practical path towards rebuilding trust where direct debates over confessional or organizational unity quickly stall.

Such cooperation should not be misunderstood as a substitute for theology. Rather, it can create the relational space in which theological conversation becomes possible again. Shared action on poverty, peace, migration, ecology, and public responsibility may not dissolve doctrinal differences, but it can weaken the habits of mutual caricature that have blocked dialogue for decades. In the Korean context, where the trauma of division is deeply institutionalized, practical collaboration may be the most realistic bridge towards fuller forms of unity.

Finally, the issue of education is decisive. Controversy over ecumenism in Korea has been fuelled not only by conviction but also by ignorance, caricature, and the

absence of adequate theological formation. Theological education in Korea has generally been oriented towards the training of clergy for specific denominations and local congregations. It therefore tends to reproduce denominational self-enclosure. If the churches are to move beyond anti-ecumenical hostility, ecumenical triumphalism, and narrow congregationalism alike, they will need forms of theological education that cultivate catholicity, historical self-criticism, and the capacity for dialogue.

This educational renewal also requires a broader social imagination. Future ecumenical leadership cannot be reproduced simply by repeating the models of the democratization generation. It must make space for women, lay professionals, younger theologians, and Christians formed in contexts shaped by migration, ecological crisis, digital media, and deepening inequality. If ecumenism remains confined to inherited institutions and aging leadership cultures, it will continue to narrow. If, however, it becomes a school of catholic imagination and public responsibility, it may still offer the Korean church a way beyond sectarian exhaustion.

IV. Concluding Remarks

The ecumenical movement in Korea is inseparable from the larger historical experience of the nation. It was shaped by colonization, nationalism, war, anti-communism, dictatorship, industrialization, democratization, and contemporary social fragmentation. These forces became the warp and weft from which the distinctive pattern of Korean ecumenism was woven.

This article has examined that pattern through four dimensions: history, theology, organization, and ritual. Historically, the movement moved from missionary coordination under colonialism, through postwar division and ideological conflict, to public activism during democratization and institutional weakening thereafter. Theologically, it revealed strong engagement with social ethics and global ecumenical themes but relatively limited achievement in confessional or ecclesiological convergence. Organizationally, it was sustained above all by the NCCK and related bodies, while also facing competition from conservative federations and the decline of older ecumenical networks. Ritually, it generated meaningful practices of common prayer and symbolic worship, though these remain only partially rooted across the churches.

The status of the movement today reflects its mixed legacy. It has been historically influential but numerically limited, morally significant but institutionally weakened, prophetic in public issues yet insufficiently grounded in the everyday life of congregations. It has also depended too heavily on an older generation of male leadership and has not adequately opened space for women, youth, and lay professionals.

Even so, the Korean ecumenical movement should not be judged solely by its institutional decline. Its enduring significance lies in its witness that the church cannot isolate itself from the suffering, division, and common life of the nation. If a new generation can carry this witness forward with greater theological depth, wider participation, and more rooted ecclesial practices, Korean ecumenism may yet move beyond the trauma of division towards a more genuinely local and catholic form of unity.

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PETHEŐ Attila[1]:

Király József esperes-plébános elleni ítélet a Beneš-dekrétumok alapján

Abstract. Judicial Decision against Dean and Parish Priest József Király under the Beneš Decrees.

This study analyses the 1946 People's Court trial of József Király, parish priest of Csicsó (Číčov), within the framework of the Beneš Decrees and Decree No. 33/1945 of the Slovak National Council. Based primarily on the records of the Komárno District People's Court and supplemented by diocesan and local ecclesiastical sources, the article reconstructs the charges, witness testimonies, judicial reasoning, and verdict in order to assess how post-war retributive legislation was applied to a representative of the Hungarian Catholic clergy in southern Slovakia. Ordained in 1921, Király combined pastoral service with active engagement in Hungarian minority politics. During the First Czechoslovak Republic, he held a leading role in the National Christian Socialist Party at the district level, and from 1939 he served as a member of the Hungarian Parliament. After 1945, these activities became the foundation of accusations that he had contributed to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and supported the "fascist occupation". He was further charged with anti-Soviet agitation and collaboration. The court dismissed several concrete allegations for lack of evidence, including participation in secret meetings and direct incitement. Nevertheless, it found Király guilty of collaboration on the basis of his political functions, interpreting them as structural support for the Hungarian

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regime. On 28 August 1946, he was sentenced to six months' imprisonment, confiscation of property, and five years' deprivation of civil rights, with no right of appeal. The case reveals the predominance of political categorization and collective responsibility over individualized assessment. While mitigating factors – such as Király's documented assistance to persecuted persons and his own arrest by the Arrow Cross regime – were acknowledged, they did not alter the court's fundamental logic. The study's relevance lies in its micro-historical contribution to the historiography of transitional justice in Central Europe. It demonstrates how the Beneš Decrees functioned not only as instruments of accountability but also as instruments of minority policy and post-war state consolidation. By juxtaposing judicial practice with contemporary Catholic episcopal memoranda criticizing collective punishment, the article highlights tensions between ecclesiastical moral discourse and state retribution. As such, the trial of József Király provides an instructive case study for understanding the intersections of minority politics, church–state relations, and legal reckoning in the aftermath of the Second World War.

Keywords: Beneš Decrees, people's courts, Hungarian minority, Catholic Church, collective guilt

Bevezetés – Király József esperes-plébános életútja

Király József 1897-ben Zselízen született. 1921-ben szentelték pappá Bécsben. Tallósi és diószegi szolgálat után, 1923-ban Komáromba került segédlelkésznek, ahol a Katolikus Legényegylet szervezésében járt élen. Ilyen minőségében 200 dél-szlovákiai zarándokot vezetett Mariazellbe. 1927-ben lett Csicsón plébános, 1936. március 7-én esperesnek nevezték ki ugyanott. A Marianum Internátus Egyesület jegyzője volt, a Szent Ágoston Társulat végrehajtóbizottságának a tagja, a Szent István Társulat tagja. 1928-ban az ellenzéki magyar pártok listáján a Komáromi járásban kapott politikai szerepet; egészen 1938-ig töltött be politikai tisztséget.[2] 1929-ben kiadta és szerkesztette a *Szűz Mária Új Virágoskertje* című hitbuzgalmi folyóiratot. 1939 júniusától a budapesti országgyűlés képviselőházának a meghívott tagja volt. 1939 áprilisában a kormányzó *Signum laudis* kitüntetésben részesítette. 1942 májusában a kormányzó a miniszterelnök előterjesztésére Király Józsefnek közhasznú

[2] N. N.: Az egyesült párt népvédő munkája a komáromi járási képviselőtestületben, In: *Prágai Magyar Hírlap*. 17. 48. 6.

érdemei és tevékenysége elismeréséül kormányfőtanácsosi címet adományozott,[3] majd ugyanezen év novemberében a *Komáromi Lapok* szerint Király József országgyűlési képviselőt katonai szolgálatra hívták be.[4] 1943 áprilisában már a Magyar Élet Pártja komáromi választmányi ülésén számolt be a hadikórházakban szerzett tapasztalatairól. 1943. december 17-én az Országgyűlés Király József mentelmi jogának a felfüggesztését kérte Hinléder Fels Jenő[5] Komárom Vármegye Tiszti Főügyészének kérésére, a „közszükségleti cikkek jogellenes elvonása" címén.[6] A kifejezés elsősorban a történelmi jogban, konkrétan a háborús vagy rendkívüli állapotok idején elkövetett bűncselekmények kontextusában értelmezhető. Az 1939. évi II., a honvédelemről szóló törvénycikk a háború idejére vonatkozóan büntetendő cselekménynek minősítette a közszükségleti cikkek jogellenes elvonását. A jogszabályok meghatározták, hogy melyek a közszükségleti cikkek, amelyek közé jellemzően az élelmiszerek, ruházati cikkek, bútorok és tisztítószerek tartoztak. Az Országgyűlés nem fosztotta meg mentelmi jogától Király Józsefet. 1943 végétől passzívvá vált a politikai életben, de képviselői helyét megtartotta, elsősorban a mentelmi jog miatt. A Magyarország német megszállása idején Király József csicsói esperes-plébános már ismert volt a régióban németellenes álláspontjáról és humanitárius tevékenységéről. A Gestapo célkeresztbe vette részben politikai nézetei, részben pedig az üldözöttek segítése miatt. 1944. október 17-én letartóztatták. Az elhurcoltak közül Berecz és Király 1944. december 29-én Tanynál megszöktek a Csillagerődből Sopronkőhidára majd Dachauba tartó menetből, ahogy később erről szólunk. Szökésében és későbbi rejtegetésében kulcsszerepük volt a csicsói irgalmas nővéreknek, akik segítettek neki elrejtőzni üldözőik elől. A szöktetésről a csicsói szájhagyományokat ismerő Nagy Amália amatőr helytörténész elmondásaiból értesülhettünk, aki korábbi visszaemlékezésekre hivatkozva beszélt nekünk erről. Király József ezután Magyarországon bujkált Apor Vilmos védnöksége alatt, majd hazatért. A csehszlovák hatóságok 1945 után a szentgyörgyi internálótáborba viszik Király József csicsói esperest,[7] de erről csupán szóbeli emlékezet él a faluban, írásbeli bizonyítékot nem

[3] Rövid hírek, In: *Komáromi Lapok*. 63[1942]. 22. 6.

[4] Uo.

[5] Hinléder Fels Jenő a Szálasi kormány idején is tisztségében maradt, illetve a neve megjelent a Nyilaskeresztes Párt irodájával kapcsolatos dokumentumokban.

[6] *Képviselőházi Napló*. 1939. XIX. kötet, 1943. december 10. – 1944. november 9. 210.

[7] ROTH, Pavol (1988): *Zberné, internačné a pracovné tábory a tábory nútených prác na Slovensku a v Čechách*. Levoča. 23.

találtunk erre. 1946-ban kezdődik az új rendszer általi meghurcolása, ami rendőrségi kihallgatásokat, elzárást, megfigyelést jelentett. Helytállásával a felvidéki magyar ellenállás és az egyházi humanizmus egyik kiemelkedő példája lett a korszakban.

Letartóztatás, kihallgatások

1946. február 27-én kapta feladatul Ján Parašín őrmester és Jozef Kall-Bosak a komáromi OBR-től,[8] hogy vegyék őrizetbe és hallgassák ki Király Józsefet. 1946. március 19-én történt meg a kihallgatás. Két tanú, Koloman Katona és František Solčan csicsói postamester előtt folyt a kihallgatás államellenes cselekedet miatt.[9] Ők maguk olyan külső személyekként lettek a helyszínre hívatva, mint akiknek van információjuk a bűncselekményt illetőleg. A kihallgatásról írott március 22-i jegyzőkönyvben rögzített tényállás szerint 1938-ban a Felvidék visszacsatolásán dolgozott titokban, és ebből az okból többször vett részt titkos találkozókon Július Sándor csicsói házában. 1938. november 7-én a saját, magyar zászlókkal feldíszített autójával, amin a „Felszabadultunk!" felirat volt a tanúk szerint, ment Medvére és Komáromba, és itt fogadta a magyar honvédeket. Ezen a „várt napon"[10] szónokolt a csicsói szövetkezeti kisbolt előtt is, ahol elsősorban a katonákat üdvözölte, és többek között így fogalmazott: „Felszabadultunk, és bízzunk benne, hogy nem tér vissza a 20 év elnyomás."[11]

1939. június 30-tól a magyar országgyűlés tagja volt. Annak érdekében, hogy ezt a tisztséget zavartalanul gyakorolhassa, egy káplánt kapott a plébániára, aki helyette végezte a szolgálatot a tanúk vallomása szerint. Továbbá 1943. november 4-én őrnagyi rangban vett részt a Vöröskereszt küldöttjeként a keleti fronton, ahol a Nikolajev és Stary Oskol településeken levő hadikórházakban a sérült magyar katonáknak osztott karácsonyi csomagokat. Itt a szovjet hadsereg elleni kitartó küzdelemre is biztatta a katonákat. A Don mellől 1943. december 8-án tért haza, majd 1944 januárjában egy csicsói filmvetítés

[8] A rövidítést Csehszlovákiában használták a „nemzeti felszabadítási harcot" szolgáló rendvédelmi erők megnevezésére.

[9] Ministerstvo vnútra Slovenskej republiky (MVSR), Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, Okresné ľudové súdy (OLS) Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., spis 26/346. Skutková podstata (Tényállás).

[10] Felvidék visszacsatolásának napja 1938-ban.

[11] Uo.

alkalmával, a propagandafilm vetítés szünetében a szovjetek elleni beszéddel agitált. A tanúk szerint azt mondta, hogy senki nem számíthat semmire az oroszoktól, mert azok az állataikkal laktak és napraforgómagot esznek. Király József mint a Magyar Élet Pártjának a tagja buzgón dolgozott ennek a fasiszta pártnak az érdekében, és már 1938-ban hozzájárult Csehszlovákia szétrombolásához, foglalta össze Parašín az 1946. február 27-i 209/46-os parancs alapján levezetett kihallgatáson elhangzottakat a tanúk aláírását nélkülöző iraton. František Solčan postamester szerint Király József már 1938-ban titkos találkozókon vett részt Sándor Gyula csicsói házában, ahol Dél-Szlovákia Magyarországhoz való csatolásán dolgoztak, Csicsón pedig elsőként fogadta a bevonuló magyar katonákat a plébános. Koloman Katona vallomásában elmondta, hogy 1944 januárjában a csicsói moziteremben a Szovjetunió ellen agitált Király József. A jegyzőkönyvet felvevő őrmester szerint ezek az esetek arról tanúskodtak, hogy Király József ellenségesen állt a csehekhez és a szlovákokhoz, annak ellenére, hogy maga is szlovák felmenőkkel bírt. A magyarsággal szimpatizált, sőt magát magyarnak vallotta, és a nevét is magyarosította Král-ról Királyra, ezzel bizonyítva magyar hazafiúi érzéseit.[12]

Király József 1946. március 19-én már mint gyanúsított vett részt a csicsói községházán tartott kihallgatáson, amikor már Jozef Vaška községi elöljáró is jelen volt. A vádakra válaszul tagadta, hogy Dél-Szlovákia visszacsatolásán dolgozott volna titokban, ahogy azt is, hogy Csehszlovákia ellen szólalt volna fel a visszacsatoláskor. Azt elismerte, hogy 1938. november 7-én Medvénél és Komáromban üdvözölte a bevonuló csapatokat, de nem adott hangot Csehszlovákia-ellenes gondolatoknak. Szintén elismerte, hogy a magyar országgyűlés képviselője volt 1939. június 30-tól, és azt is, hogy a Vöröskereszt megbízásából a keleti fronton járt. Az esperes tagadta, hogy a szovjetek ellen folytatott propagandát a hadikórházban vagy a csicsói moziban, hiszen papként ilyet nem is lett volna illendő tennie.

A népbíróságok működése Szlovákiában

A csehszlovákiai népbíróságok ítélkezési eljárása jogilag hasonló alapokon nyugodott, mint a magyarországi, de a célja eltért attól. Itt a pereknek az alapját az 1945-ös Beneš-dekrétumok adták. A rendszer két fő szinten működött: a legfőbb politikai vezetők

[12] Uo.

ügyében ítélkező Nemzeti Bíróság (*Národný súd*) és a regionális ügyeket tárgyaló Járási Népbíróságok (*Okresné ľudové súdy*) szintjén. A járási népbíróságok megközelítőlegesen 20.470 ember felett ítélkeztek Szlovákia területén.[13] Az ügy menete során a vádlott ellen elfogatóparancsot adtak ki, és a tanúk meghallgatása után jogosnak vélt vádpontok alapján a népbíróság elé utalták az ügyet. A tanúk vallomását Csehszlovákiában ebben az időszakban leginkább a kollektív bűnösség elvének vagy a kollaboráció vádjának az igazolására használták. Ezután, amennyiben úgy ítélték meg a vádlottat, internálták vagy fogdában tartották az ügymenet ideje alatt. A népügyész volt az, aki a vádat képviselte a nép nevében, de ő nem csupán a vádat képviselte, hanem döntő befolyással volt a nyomozati szakaszra is. A járási népbíróságok ítéletei ellen sok esetben nem volt helye fellebbezésnek.

Király József a népbíróság előtt

Az 1946. március 28-án kelt levél szerint a 33/1945. Szlovák Nemzeti Tanácsi (továbbiakban: SZNT) rendelet,[14] valamint az 55/1945. törvény 35§ 2. bekezdése szerint a vád letartóztatásra és elzárásra javasolta Király József csicsói plébánost, mert aszerint feltételezhető volt, hogy bűncselekményt követett el a 33/1945. törvény 2–3§ értelmében, és ráadásul a szökés veszélye is fennállhat.[15] Itt szeretnénk jelezni, hogy a vádló, azaz az ügyész, ebben az esetben valószínűleg az 55/1945-ös törvény számát elírhatta, hiszen ez a csehszlovák kormányrendelet a mezőgazdasági termelés irányát határozta meg a háború utáni években.[16] A lényegen azonban ez mit sem változtatott, hiszen 1946. április 4-én

[13] MALATINSKÝ, Michal (2016): Slovensko a retribúcia v rokoch 1945–1948, In: *Securitas imperii*. 1. 166. Prága.; SOMOGYI, Alfréd (2023): A magyar szlovák lakosságcsere hatása a felvidéki református egyházra. In: *Teológiai Fórum*. 2023/1. 120–134.

[14] 33/1945. sz. rendelet a fasiszta bűnösök, megszállók, árulók és kollaboránsok megbüntetéséről és a népbíróság létesítéséről.

[15] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., spis 680/46. Határozat.

[16] 55/1945. sz. kormányrendelet, amellyel felhatalmazza a mezőgazdasági minisztert a mezőgazdasági termeléssel kapcsolatos intézkedések meghozatalára. Elérhető itt: https://www.aspi.sk/products/lawText/1/11881/1/2/narizeni-c-55-1945-sb-kterym-se-zmocnuje-ministr-zemedelstvi-k-opatrenim-v-zemedelske-vyrobe (utolsó megtekintés dátuma: 2026. IV. 25.).

elrendelték a plébános előzetes letartóztatását.[17] Április 8-án a Komáromi Kerületi Bíróság Börtönigazgatósága levele arról tanúskodik, hogy reggel 7 órakor a kolozsnémai rendőrök kollaboráció okán fogdába kísérték a plébánost.[18] A kolozsnémai Parašín őrmester jelentése szerint Király József, Csicsó 37. szám alatti lakost már április 6-án letartóztatták.[19] A nagyszombati püspökség általános helynöke 1946. április 11-i levelében magyarázatot kért arra vonatkozólag a járásbíróságtól, hogy miért tartóztatták le az esperest, és arra kérte a hatóságokat, hogy minél hamarabb folytassák le a vizsgálatot, hiszen a nagyszombati püspökség területén paphiány volt, és az egyházmegye déli részéről 44 katolikus papot utasítottak ki Magyarországra, ez pedig a hívők lelkigondozását hátráltatta.[20] Válaszában az ügyész azt írta a püspöki helynöknek, hogy Király József az SZNT 33/1945. számú rendelete alapján le lett tartóztatva.

Április 10-én vitték az esperest az első kihallgatásra, ahol Anton Bajo jogtanácsos a vád képviseletében ismertette vele az ellene felhozott vádpontokat. Az általa aláírt jegyzőkönyvben elmondta, hogy a vádakat megértette, de nem érzi magát bűnösnek. Saját életrajzi adatokat közölt a jogtanácsossal, és elmondta neki, hogy szolgálata mindenütt egyházi és szociális alapokra támaszkodott. Hangsúlyozta, hogy mindezek miatt lett a keresztény-szocialista pártnak a járási ügyvivője, és ezen a tagságon kívül semmilyen módon nem kötődött az 1938-as visszatérés körüli eseményekhez. Igaztalannak tartotta a vádat, miszerint tevékenyen részt vett az okkupációban, és azt állította, hogy sosem vett részt találkozókon ebből a célból Sándor Gyula házában. Kiemelte, hogy a nagyszombati érsekség engedélyével egyetlen lapban publikált, az pedig a *Szűz Mária Új Virágoskertje* című hitbuzgalmi lap. Tagadta, hogy 1938. november 7-én bármilyen üdvözlő beszédet mondott volna a bevonuló magyar csapatok tiszteletére, illetve kiemelte, hogy nem beszélt a magyar katonákkal. Elmondta azt is, hogy sosem volt az autóján üdvözlő felirat, és ezzel nem is ment a magyar csapatok üdvözlésére, sőt Csicsón a faluvezető hivatalos felkérésére

[17] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., spis 6/446, Letartóztatási végzés.

[18] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., spis 58/46, Őrmester levele Király József elzárásáról.

[19] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., spis 317/46, Őrmester levele Király József letartóztatásáról.

[20] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 19. melléklet, A püspöki helynök levele a népbírósághoz.

vett részt a csapatok fogadásán – ahogy később Komáromban is hivatalos meghívásra érkezett a bevonuló csapatok üdvözlésére –, de beszédet nem tartott. Egy olyan eseményre azonban emlékezett a bécsi döntés kihirdetése után, amikor a csehszlovák tisztnek engedelmeskedve levetette a magyar zászlót a templom tornyáról, de jelezte, hogy a zászlót a tudta nélkül függesztették ki. 1939 elejétől a vármegyei hivatal mellett működő felülvizsgáló bizottság (*preverovacia komisia*)[21] tagjává nevezték ki. Elmondása szerint itt valamennyi állami és közalkalmazotti, illetve papi személy múltját alapul véve ellenőrizték az általuk végzett feladatokra való alkalmasságukat. Vallomása szerint ilyen minőségében lehetősége adódott védelmébe venni Eugen Sikora ógyallai plébánost, Anton Kubík felsőszemerédi plébánost, valamint František Neiber bajcsi plébánost. Egyes magyar soviniszták részéről kifogások merültek fel, de közbenjárásának köszönhetően, annak ellenére, hogy ők szlováknak vallották magukat, a szolgálati helyükön maradhattak. Rajtuk kívül az állami- és közalkalmazottak közül a nemesócsai Ferdinand Roth orvost és a csicsói Michal Rudinskyt is sikerült megmentenie. Elmondta, hogy ezt követően Komáromban az utcán megállította őt Wojtovics Richárd őrmester, aki később a nyilasok vezetője lett, hogy a városi főkönyvelő Herceg István kiutasításában segédkezzen. Ezt ő visszautasította, ezért kellemetlen következményekkel fenyegette meg őt Wojtovics. Ezután a későbbi nyilas vezető fel is jelentette őt, hogy hívják vissza az ellenőrző bizottságból, mert a szlovákokat pártolja. Ezt onnan tudta meg, hogy ezt a levelet később a bizottsági tagoknak megmutatták.[22] Vallomásában elmondta, hogy 1939 júniusában az Esztergomi Érsekség kérésére elfogadta a Magyar Országgyűlésben a képviselői mandátumot a Felvidéki Párt színeiben, ami később fuzionált a Magyar Élet Pártjával, ahol Jaross Andor[23] is dolgozott. Ebben a pártban maradt továbbra is, annak ellenére, hogy Imrédy Béla[24] és Jaross folyamatosan hívták őt az általuk alapított Magyar Megújulás Pártjába. A saját politikai tevékenységéről azt vallotta Király, hogy mindig a szociális-gazdasági terület talaján állva, a saját vármegyéje érdekeit

[21] Ezek a bizottságok vizsgálták, hogy az adott személy hűséges volt-e a nemzethez a Trianon utáni Csehszlovákiában. Később egy hasonló, magyarokat vizsgáló bizottságot alapított a csehszlovák hatóság.

[22] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., Zápisnica (Jegyzőkönyv).

[23] Jaross Andor (1896–1946), felvidéki magyar politikus, 1938-tól a felvidéki ügyek tárca nélküli minisztere volt, majd belügyminiszter.

[24] Imrédy Béla (1891–1946), Magyarország miniszterelnöke.

szem előtt tartva végezte képviselői munkáját. Négy felszólalását említette meg, ahol az árvízvédelem, a tanítóság és az egyház érdekében emelt szót. Jarossék ellenében is hangot emelt a XIII. Piusz pápa békét védő kezdeményezésének támogatására.[25] 1941-ben, amikor Magyarország hadat üzent a Szovjetuniónak, elmondása szerint ő nem vett részt a döntésben, hiszen Bárdossy miniszterelnök ezt csupán bejelentette a törvényhozásban, de nem szavaztatta meg a képviselőkkel. Ekkor több képviselővel megbeszélést tartottak, és közösen elítélték a hadüzenetet. Elmondása szerint a Komáromban tartott havi hivatalos fogadónapjai alkalmával magyaroknak és szlovákoknak egyaránt segített. 1942-ben mint tábori lelkész vonult be, és a Magyar Vöröskeresztnél kellett Budapesten szolgálatra jelentkeznie. Ebben a minőségében került a keleti frontra, ahol a katonakórházak és a vöröskereszt vonatainak ellenőrzése és felügyelete volt a feladata. Karácsony előtt a kórházakban a karácsonyi csomagok kiosztásának szervezése és elvégzése is rá hárult. A katonakórházakban miséket is tartott, és lelki segítséget nyújtott a kórházi kezelés alatt álló katonáknak. Emlékezete szerint 1942 novembere elején érkezett a frontra, ahol mindösszesen néhány hetet töltött. Elmondása szerint még katonai egyenruhája sem volt, csupán a Vöröskereszt egyenruháját és őrnagyi rangjelzését viselte.[26] A németekkel való szövetséget mindvégig ellenezte, amit a fronton töltött idő még inkább megerősített benne. 1943 végén, látva, hogy a német befolyás erősödik a magyar politikára, visszavonult a politikától, de a képviselői immunitás miatt parlamenti mandátumát nem adta vissza. Ezt az is bizonyítja, hogy jelentést tett erről az egyházi főhatóságoknak is, és kérte, hogy az őt helyettesítő káplánt, Benedek Józsefet hívják vissza, hiszen ő a gyülekezetével teljes erőbedobással fog foglalkozni.

Amikor Szálasi 1944. október 16-án átvette a kormányzást, Magyarország német megszállását követően, már másnap, október 17-én letartóztatták őt a nyilasok Wojtovics Richárd és Romhányi Aladár megyei nyilas vezetők parancsára, majd a Monostori Erődbe szállították. Hivatalosan arról tájékoztatták, hogy Vajna Gábor belügyminiszter parancsára tartóztatták le, és 1944. október 27-én azért engedték szabadon, hogy Szálasi 1944. november 3-i megválasztásán szavazhasson a parlamentben. Ő azonban nem vett részt az ominózus ülésen, és levélben tiltakozott az ülésvezetőnél, hogy képviselői immunitását

[25] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., Zápisnica (Jegyzőkönyv).

[26] Uo.

megsértették, és jelezte, hogy többé nem vesz részt az országgyűlés ülésein.[27] Vallomása szerint 1944. november 16-án ismét előállították, és a Csillag Erődbe szállították, ahonnan 1944. december 29-én egy menettel elindították őt is, akkori ismeretei szerint Sopronkőhidára. A menetből azonban Tanynál sikerült elszöknie, és Csicsóra ment Somogyi Antal[28] esperessel, aki szintén vele volt a fogságban. Éppen a faluban tartózkodott Rudinszky Lukács segédjegyzőnél Alojz Androvič, aki Szlovákia budapesti és berlini katonai attaséja volt. Az ő autójával sikerült Apor Vilmoshoz szökniük Győrbe, aki elbújtatta őket. Vallomásában az esperes elmondta azt is, hogy a nyilasok ekkor őrizetbe vették a csicsói zárdában lakó Papp Margit nevű tanítónőt, aki nem volt hajlandó elárulni, hogy hová szökött. A püspökségről Ekecsre utazott, ahol a körzeti parancsnokságon kapott egy hivatalos elbocsátó levelet, amivel szabadon mozoghatott, de rendőri felügyelet alatt állt továbbra is. Erről egy korabeli szabadonbocsátási igazolvány tanúskodik, amit a Magyar Királyi Komáromi Honvéd Büntetőintézet vezetőfoglára fogalmazott a belügyminiszter 19029/VII.a. 1945. sz. rendelete alapján.[29] Visszatért a csicsói plébániára, ahol ekkor hét katona lakott egy nyilas ezredes parancsnoksága alatt, akik amazt a plébánia egyik szobájába zárták. Itt még a vele együtt lakó édesapjával sem beszélhetett, akit később eltávolítottak onnan azzal a váddal, hogy kommunista, ami természetesen leginkább rá nézve volt kompromittáló. Innen újra visszaszökött Győrbe Apor Vilmoshoz,[30] ahol egészen 1945. február 12-ig maradt, hiszen a püspök megbízta őt, hogy szolgálati helyéül foglalja el a Rábaszentmihályi plébániát.[31] Innen február 20. környékén visszament Csicsóra, ahol Bödők József polgármester arról tájékoztatta, hogy a nyilasok körözik, és már német fogságban szerették volna őt tudni. Emiatt visszatért Rábaszentmihályra, ahol május 17-ig tartózkodott, majd újra Csicsóra ment, ahol a letartóztatásáig élt. Rábaszentmihályi tartózkodásáról Barbély Károly plébános állított ki igazolást, benne azzal a megjegyzéssel, hogy kisegítő lelkészként szolgált,

[27] Uo.

[28] Somogyit egyébként a megszálló német hatóságok és Hitler elleni kijelentései miatt tartóztatták le. Apor Vilmos közbenjárására a győri kórház fertőzőosztályán bújtatták mint beteget. 1945 áprilisában ő adta fel az utolsó kenetet Apor Vilmos püspöknek.

[29] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 14. melléklet, Szabadonbocsájtási igazolvány.

[30] Apor Vilmos (1892–1945) boldoggá avatott magyar vértanú püspök.

[31] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 15. melléklet, Apor Vilmos levele.

és három településen tartott nagyböjti lelkigyakorlatokat.[32] Rábaszentmihály község bírája is igazolta, hogy Király József a nyilasok elől menekülve, a győri püspök által lett kihelyezve, és Rábaszentmihályon, Rábacsényben és Bodonhely községekben szolgált 1945. február 12-től május 16-ig.[33]

Arra a vádra is megválaszolt vallomásában, miszerint a csicsói moziban a szovjetek ellen bujtogatott volna. Elmondása szerint 1944 januárjában egy Vöröskereszt által szervezett elsősegélynyújtó tanfolyamon beszélt a keleti fronton megtapasztaltakról és hangsúlyozta, hogy nehéz lesz Európának egy olyan nemzeten felülkerekedni, ahol az anyák több gyermeket nevelnek, és ha kell, akkor napraforgó magon is megélnek. Itt jelezte, hogy semmilyen propagandafilm vetítésén nem vett részt.[34] Maga melletti tanúskodásra kérte, hogy idézzék be Rudinszky[35] Lukács jegyzőt, Mészáros Lajos helyi komisszárt, Sándor György asztalost, Bödők József gazdálkodót, Király Helia tanító-apácát, Rudinszky Valériát és Lukovics Lászlót, a csicsói szövetkezet vezetőjét.[36]

A népbírósági perbe beidézett tanúk vallomásai

A Király József által beidézett tanúk közül Rudinszky és Mészáros aláírásával az iratanyagban egy 1945. június 30-án, Csicsón kelt több oldalas levél található.[37] Ebben tulajdonképpen megerősítik az esperes által állítottakat, sőt egyes kiegészítő adatokat is találhatunk az iratanyagban Király megpróbáltatásait megerősítendő. Csicsói fogságát Czervesz Károly parancsára rendelték el, aki a szeretőjével – egy özvegy hölggyel – együtt szintén a plébániára hurcolkodott be. Ők dobták ki a csicsói plébániáról ekkor kommunizmus

[32] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 12. melléklet, Igazolvány.

[33] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 13. melléklet, Községi bizonyítvány.

[34] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., Zápisnica (Jegyzőkönyv).

[35] Rudinszky neve néhol Rudinszkýként szerepel.

[36] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., Zápisnica (Jegyzőkönyv).

[37] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 16. melléklet, Dokumentumokkal alátámasztott tények Király József csicsói működéséről.

vádjával Király József 77 éves édesapját és a 25 éves Séfer Erzsébet bejárónőt. Ezt azért tartjuk az ügy fontos adalékának, mert jó képet nyújt arról, hogy a nácik által a kommunistákhoz kötött Király felett a Beneš-dekrétumokat felhasználó kommunisták mondtak ítéletet. A letartóztatók egyébként a plébániát magát a kommunizmus és a „ruszofilizmus" melegágyaként jellemezték.[38] Rudinszký Lukácsot 1946. május 8-án beidézték tanúként, aki elmondta, hogy Király mindig becsületes volt és a szlovák kolonisták érdekében is szót emelt, ha szükséges volt. Az esperest egy szociálisan érzékeny embernek állította be, és elmondta, hogy nem dolgozott a visszacsatoláson, ahogy Csicsón sem üdvözölte beszéddel a bevonuló katonákat, hiszen ott Kálnoky Sándor gróf és Kúr Géza református lelkész mondott köszöntőt. Vallott arról is, hogy a *preverovacia komisia* tagjaként sok embernek segített, amiért Wojtovics Richárd feljelentette őt.[39] A másik tanú Rudinszký, született Heney Valéria is megerősítette a korábbiakat, azaz, hogy Király sosem volt a szlovákság ellen, sőt védelmébe vette azokat szükség esetén, ahogy a férje esetében is tette. A harmadik tanú arra emlékezett, hogy a visszacsatolás idején a csehszlovák katonaság jelenlétében az esperes nyugtatta az embereket, nehogy meggondolatlanságot kövessenek el. A negyedik tanú, Bödők József is Király mellett vallott, sőt elmondta azt is, hogy a németek ki is akarták végezni az esperest a faluban. Az ötödik tanú, Lukovics László arra emlékezett, hogy a plébános azt mondta nekik, hogy a németeknél jobb az orosz, mert az orosz békén hagyja a templomot legalább. Sándor Gyula is a plébánost pártolta.

A szlovák nemzetiségű csicsói lakos František Solčan postamester, akinek a vádjai voltak esperese letartóztatásának pillérei, vallomásában elmondta, ő azt hallotta, hogy Király József titkos találkozókon vett részt Sándor Gyula házában, ahol a visszacsatoláson dolgoztak. Azt is hallotta, hogy feldíszített autójával üdvözölte a bevonuló magyar csapatokat és, hogy a bolt előtt szónokolt az esperes. Azt is felhozta ellene, hogy a magyar telefonkönyvben úgy volt feltüntetve Király mint a kormányzó titkos tanácsosa. Továbbá megjegyezte, hogy Király József szlovák származású.[40] A következő tanúmeghallgatásokra 1946. május 25-én került sor. Szűcsné, született Németh Erzsébet azt vallotta, hogy nem emlékszik rá, hogy a fia František Solčan előtt arról beszélt volna, hogy Király József

[38] Uo.

[39] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 21. melléklet, Tanú kihallgatási jegyzőkönyve.

[40] Uo.

Sándor Gyulához járt titkos tárgyalásokra, ahogy arra sem emlékezett, hogy az esperes egyáltalán ott volt-e a magyar csapatok fogadásánál Csicsón. De vallomásában azt is elmondta, hogy nem tud állást foglalni abban sem, hogy a fia, František Solčan szavahihető-e.[41] Katona Kálmán arra emlékezett, hogy az esperes mezőgazdasági munkásokkal találkozott, de azt nem tudta, hogy politikai vagy vallási összejövetelekről volt-e szó. Arra emlékezett, hogy a moziban egy filmvetítésen az oroszországi élményeiről beszélt Király, aki ott elmondta, hogy nagy szegénységben élnek az oroszok, viszont az őket segítő orosz nőket erősnek írta le. Müllerné, született Fodor Márta elmondta, hogy zsidóként Király József két hónapon át bújtatta a kolostorban. Később őt a családjával együtt Auschwitzba deportálták, ahonnan szerencsével hazatért, de az esperesnek mindvégig hálás maradt.[42] Az 1946. május 27-én kihallgatott Fábikné, született Domonkos Eszter, aki Sándor Gyulával szemben lakott, vallomásában elmondta, hogy az 1937–38-as években sosem látta a házba bemenni Király József esperest, de azt tudta, hogy František Solčan-Szűcs családjával nézeteltérése volt a plébánosnak, mert azok nem fizettek a használt föld után bérletet neki.[43]

A népbíróság a döntését tanúk meghallgatása után hozta meg, melyhez a *Komáromi Lapok* egyes számainak tartalmát is alapul vette. Az elítélt elismerte, hogy az Országos Keresztényszocialista Párt járási vezetője volt és ilyen minőségében a járási tanács tagja. Ez a tisztség az ellenzéki magyar pártokban, röviddel Szlovákia megszállása előtt, azt a feltételezést alapozta meg, hogy hozzájárult Dél-Szlovákiát Magyarországhoz való csatolásához, azaz elősegítette a fasiszta megszállókat, amiért helytállónak vélték az SZNT 33/1945. számú rendelete 3.§ szerinti bűnösségét. Meglátásuk szerint magyarországi parlamenti képviselőként történő felszólalásaiban nyilvánosan támogatta a magyar kormányzat politikai irányvonalát, ami már Szálasi előtt is fasiszta volt. Az ítélet szerint így egyértelmű, hogy a vádlott nyilvánosan propagálta a kollaboránsok tevékenységét. A vád több részét is azonban nem tudta bizonyítani a népbíróság. Nem nyert bizonyítást például, hogy a vádlott titkos tárgyalásokon vett részt Sándor Gyula csicsói lakos házában. Azt sem tudták bizonyítani, hogy a vádlott feldíszített autón üdvözölte a megszálló katonákat,

[41] Itt kiderült, hogy František Solčan édesanyja csicsói magyar asszony volt.

[42] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 25. melléklet, Kihallgatási jegyzőkönyv.

[43] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 28. melléklet, Tanú kihallgatási jegyzőkönyve.

ahogy azt sem, hogy a magyar katonákat a szovjet sereg elleni kitartásra biztatta volna. Nem volt bizonyítéka annak sem, hogy a Szovjetunió ellen lázított volna Csicsón a megszállásról vetített film előtt. Az sem nyert bizonyságot, hogy mint a felülvizsgáló bizottság tagja a visszacsatolás után vétett volna az SZNT 33/1945-ös rendelete ellen. Következésképpen ezek a vádpontok alól felmentették Király Józsefet. A népbíróság enyhítő körülménynek tudta be, hogy a vádlott még sosem volt elítélve, a megszállás idején segédkezett a szlovákoknak és a faji üldözötteknek, a nyilas megszállás idején pedig üldöztetésben volt része, és be is börtönözték.[44]

A Király József elleni ítélet

A Komáromi Járási Népbíróság 1946. augusztus 28-i ülésén Dr. František Renner vádló, a szenátus elnöke, valamint Jozef Severný, Jozef Šošoka, Tomáš Palacka és Jozef Porubský szenátusi ülnökök részvételével bűnösnek ítélték Király Józsefet, mivel az első Csehszlovák Köztársaság ideje alatt az Országos Keresztényszocialista Párt komáromi járási vezetőségében tevékenykedett és ebben a minőségében Csehszlovák Köztársaság ellenes cselekedetei voltak.[45] Ezen felül a magyar „megszállás" idején a Felvidéki Párt, később a Magyar Élet Pártjának a parlamenti képviselője volt. Ebben a minőségében a politikai élet szereplője volt, részt vett pártja megmozdulásain, ahol nyíltan a fasiszta kormányt erősítette megnyilvánulásaiban, és ezzel a fasiszta megszállók és a kollaboránsok tevékenységét segítette, propagálta és elismerte. Ezzel a cselekedetével kollaboránsnak minősül az SZNT 33/1945. számú rendelete kollaboránsokról szóló 3.§ a-tól e-ig terjedő bekezdései alapján.[46] Kollaboránsnak nyilvánították, melynek alapján a javasolt ítélet

[44] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., Menom Republiky a slovenského národa!

[45] Uo.

[46] SZNT 33/1945. számú rendeletének 3§-sa: Kollaboránsok
a) Aki bármilyen módon segítette a fasiszta megszállók vagy a hazai árulók tevékenységét, velük együttműködött azzal a szándékkal, hogy elősegítse a német háborús erőfeszítéseket, vagy károsította a Szovjet Szocialista Köztársaságok Szövetsége és szövetségesei elleni háborús erőfeszítéseket, valamint a szlovák nemzet felszabadítási harcát, vagy
b) aki demokratikus és antifasiszta személyek és szervezetek politikai tevékenységük miatt történő üldözését elrendelte, szervezte vagy buzgón végrehajtotta, aki másnak jogellenes sérelmet

Király József számára a fő büntetés 6 hónap fegyházban letöltendő idő, mellékbüntetésként pedig teljes vagyonelkobzás, amely vagyont az állam kapja meg, és a közügyektől 5 évre való eltiltás. A büntetésbe beleszámítódik az előzetes letartóztatásban töltött 1946. április 8. és augusztus 28. között eltelt idő. Az ítélet ellen az SZNT 55/1945. számú rendelete 29.§ 1–2. bekezdése alapján fellebbezésnek helye nem maradt.[47] Ez a paragrafus a megtorló bíráskodás alapelve volt, mivel kimondta, hogy az ügyek intézését nem lehetett késleltetni. Leírta azt is, hogy a vádlottnak meg kellett kapnia a vád szövegét, viszont konkrét időintervallumot nem tartalmazott, így nem maradt idő a védelemnek a fellebbezésre sem.

Rabság és szabadulás

A politikai fogolyként számon tartott Király 1946. július 15-én egészségügyi ellátásra szorult a börtönben, így a városi kórházba szállították, ahol megállapították, hogy Királynak károsodott a szívizomzata, a koszorúerek erőteljesen meszesednek és magas a vérnyomása.[48] Itt, ahol szeptember 6-ig tartották fogva, vette kézhez az ítéletéről szóló határozatot.

okozott faji, nemzeti, vallási vagy politikai hovatartozása, valamint antifasiszta meggyőződése miatt, vagy aki elrendelte vagy buzgón végrehajtotta a szlovák emberek külföldre, internáló táborokba vagy a német háborús vezetés javát szolgáló munkára történő kitelepítését, vagy
c) aki fasiszta szervezetek tagjaként vagy politikai befolyásának felhasználásával más polgárok kárára gazdagodott meg, vagy aki a német vagy magyar megszállókkal, illetve hazai árulókkal való együttműködés révén vagy a háborús viszonyok kihasználásával aránytalanul gazdagodott meg, vagy
d) aki a köz-, politikai, gazdasági vagy kulturális élet jelentős szereplőjeként szolgáltatásait a megszállók vagy a fasiszta rezsim rendelkezésére bocsátotta, hogy ezzel segítse e rezsim felépítését, fenntartását és a szlovák nemzet szenvedéseinek elhúzódását, vagy
e) aki a kollaboránsok (a)–d) pontok szerinti tevékenységét nyilvánosan propagálta vagy jóváhagyta, 30 évig terjedő szabadságvesztéssel büntetendő, súlyosbító körülmények esetén halálbüntetéssel.

47 MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., Végzés a járási népbíróság döntéséről.

48 MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., 37. melléklet, Király József júliusi kórházi áthelyezéséről

Szeptember 13-án a járási főorvos helyettese újra beutalta őt a városi kórházba.[49] A komáromi rabtárs, az ipolypásztói Balla József leveléből tudjuk, hogy Király beteg volt és le volt gyengülve a börtönben. Balla korábban szabadult, és első útja a levélben meg nem nevezett tisztelendő urakhoz vitte, akiknek beszámolt Király állapotáról, hogy azok tudjanak intézkedni a kórházba való átszállítása ügyében.[50] Az esperes-plébános október 8-i szabadulása után visszakerült Csicsóra, s október 14-én már ott éri Hajdú Béla üdvözlő levele. A csicsói fennmaradt levelezéseiből megtudtuk, hogy a kórházban paptársai közül egy bizonyos Pataki Maurus, aki valószínűleg bencés tanár lehetett, rendszeresen látogathatta, alkalmanként 1-2 órát tölthetett nála.[51] A nagyszombati egyházi főhatóságnak 1946. november 15-én írott leveléből megerősítést nyerünk, hogy azon év október 8-án került szabadlábra. Ebben a levelében írta, hogy az őt helyettesítő Beltovszky László plébános visszatért Gútára.[52]

Szabadulása után néhány héttel már újra aktív életet élt. Cseri István nagymegyeri plébánossal is bizalmas levelezésben állt Király, aki önként a Csehországba deportált nagymegyeri hívek meglátogatására utazott, ami miatt, ahogy Királynak írta, 1947. október elején megkapta az „úti igazolványt".[53] Ugyanő arról számolt be az esperes-plébánosnak, hogy 66 magyar katolikus papot terveztek kiutasítani a hatóságok az országból, ráadásul az iskolaigazgató Hencz Pál szerint Lestár Istvánt folyamatosan zaklatták a hatóságok, és azt akarták elérni, hogy önként távozzon az országból. Cseri Istvánnal egyébként a csicsói Szántáspusztán, a Csiliz partján találkoztak rendszeresen, hogy bizalmasan tudjanak beszélni.[54] 1947-ben már a Csehországban deportáltak ügyében találták meg levelükkel paptársai, köztük Szepesy Valter komáromi bencés, aki 1947. július 17-én Prágából írt Királynak levelet, hogy az járjon közben a Cseh-Morvaországba deportált magyarok házasságkötése ügyében.[55] Szepesy leveleiben részletesen írt a csehországi helyzetről, ahol egy másik bencéssel, Fehér Damázzal együtt voltak, és kérte Királyt, hogy espereskénti

[49] MVSR, Štátny archív v Nitre, pracovisko Archív Komárno, OLS Komárno, Register obžalovaných, 680/46., Király József szeptemberi kórházi áthelyezéséről

[50] Csicsói római katolikus plébánia irattára, 1940. dob., Balla József levele.

[51] Csicsói római katolikus plébánia irattára, 1940. dob., Maurus atya levele.

[52] Csicsói római katolikus plébánia irattára, 1940. dob., 287/1946. sz. levél.

[53] Csicsói római katolikus plébánia irattára, 1940. dob., Cseri Istvánnak írott levél.

[54] Csicsói római katolikus plébánia irattára, 1940. dob., Cseri István levele.

[55] Csicsói római katolikus plébánia irattára, 1940. dob., Szepesy Valter levele.

járjon közben annak érdekében, hogy újabb magyar papok mehessenek a deportált magyar hívekhez. Szepesy szerint a legtöbb magyar deportált majorokba került.

Beneš dekrétumai és a katolikus egyház reakciója a magyarok és németek kollektív büntetésére

Az SZNT 1945. évi 33. számú rendelete a fasiszta bűnösök, megszállók, az árulók és kollaboránsok megbüntetéséről és a népbíróság létesítéséről szólt. A dolgozatunkban is idézett paragrafusok pedig a hazaárulás és a kollaboráció vádját tartalmazzák. A Szlovák Nemzeti Tanács megbízott testületének 55/1945. számú végrehajtási rendelete 1945. június 5-én került kihirdetésre, és a Szlovák Nemzeti Tanács 33/1945. számú rendelete a fasiszta bűnözők, megszállók, árulók és kollaboránsok büntetéséről és a népbíróságok létrehozásáról szólt, amely meghatározta a népbíróság előtti büntetőeljárás teljes folyamatát.

Bíró Lúcián, a komáromi bencés rendház főnöke Pannonhalmára írt soraiban ekképpen tájékoztatja a kialakult helyzetről az ottani rendtársakat:

„A katolikusság ma általában nem cikk. A szlovák körök is sokat panaszkodnak a lutheránusok és a partizánok túlkapásairól. Alkalmam volt beszélni több püspök úrral is (Buzalka, Nécsey auxiliarisokkal, Kmetykó érsek és Skrábik püspök urakkal): ők is elítélik a magyarokkal és németekkel való bánásmódot. Szó szerint igaz, amit a hercegprímás úr körlevele mond (1945. október 15-én kelt): »Végzik ezt ama eszközökkel, amelyeket a szerencsétlen zsidókon próbáltak ki (…) nagyrészt ugyanazon emberek, csak más keretek közt és más színekkel, a nemzeti szocializmus szellemétől hajtva.« Ezt mi odaát neofasizmusnak nevezzük."[56]

1945. november 14-én *A Csehszlovák Köztársaság püspökeinek közös pásztorlevele a csehszlovák katolikusok legsürgetőbb kérdéseiről* címmel megjelent körlevél 7. pontja a *Miképpen viselkedjünk a más nemzetiségűekkel szemben* címet viseli, és így fogalmaz:

„Számunkra érvényes a Szentatya levelében megfogalmazott parancs: Ne lépjétek túl az igazságosság határait a jog és a becsületesség terén. Nem az az igazi győzelem, ha az igazságosság győz, ha a szeretet győz? Ne büntessék az ártatlanokat a bűnösökkel együtt; és ha a bűnösöket büntetik, ne tegyék azt a megfelelő mértéken túl, hogy a bűnösök

[56] Pannonhalmi Főapátsági Levéltár (továbbiakban: PFL), Főapáti Hivatal iktatott iratai (továbbiakban: FH), 126/1945., Bíró Lucián levele.

elítélésekor ne legyen erőszak a büntetésben, azaz elítélendő erőszak, és ha mindenütt a gyűlölet magvai szóratnak, a nemzet ne szenvedjen kárt legbelsőbb összetartozásában. Legyen a szeretet, amely a keresztények nemes jelképe és megtéveszthetetlen jele, minden magán- és közéleti cselekedetetekben az igazságosság vezetője. Amikor mi magunk szenvedtünk, az számunkra becsületes volt és dicsőséget jelentett; ha mi magunk követnénk el igazságtalanságot, az Isten előtt bűn és az emberek előtt szégyen lenne, és külföldön sem felejtenék el. A volt koncentrációs táborok kegyetlenségének árnyéka sem szennyezhet be minket, mert a történelem éles szemmel lát, és a későbbi években minden hibát pellengérre állítana, ahogy ma pellengérre állítják a dachaui, auschwitzi és más táborok kegyetlenségét."[57]

1945. november 15-én az olmützi püspöki konferencián memorandumot írtak alá a csehszlovák kormány felé Dr. Leopold Prečan olmützi, Dr. Karol Kmeťko nyitrai és Dr. Mořic Pícha hradec královéi püspök. Ennek III. bekezdésében szóltak arról, hogy a németekkel és a magyarokkal való bánásmód a hivatalok részéről nem összeegyeztethető nemzeteik (t.i.: cseh és szlovák nemzet) keresztény érzületével és jó hírnevével. Felrótták a kormányzatnak, hogy korábban azt ígérték, hogy az állapotok rendezése emberséges lesz és nélkülözi a náci metódusokat. Felkérték a kormányt, hogy védje meg és tartsa tiszteletben a németeknek és magyaroknak az élethez, az egészséghez, a léthez és a becsülethez való természetes jogaikat. A német és magyar papság kapcsán kijelentették, hogy szüksége van rájuk az egyháznak az országban. Kérték a belügyminisztériumot, hogy a papság tagjai kaphassanak állampolgárságot. Kérték, hogy azoknak a papoknak, akiknek el kell hagyniuk az országot, az ügyét az egyházi főhatóság szervezhesse és intézhesse az új szolgálati helyeik egyházi főhatóságával. Külön kérték, hogy a deportálásra ítélt papok magukkal vihessék a vagyonukat is.[58]

A csehszlovák katolikus püspökök 1945. november 18-án kelt memoranduma a Csehszlovák Köztársaság kormányának címezve (Pamětní list katolických biskupu čsl.

[57] Společný pastýřský list episkopátu republiky o současných nejnaléhavejších otázkách československých katolíku – listopad 1945. Elérhető itt: www.kardinal.cz/res/archive/007/000775.pdf?seek=1190051222 (utolsó megtekintés dátuma: 2026.II.18.). [Minden eredetileg nem magyar nyelven íródott idézet fordítását a jelen tanulmány szerzője végezte el.].

[58] Pametní spis katolických biskupu čsl. Vláde Československé republiky. Elérhető itt: www.kardinal.cz/res/archive/020/002171.pdf?seek=1288953792 (utolsó megtekintés dátuma: 2026.II.18.).

Vláde Československé republiky), amit a püspökök és általános helynökök írtak alá, és több pontban reagált a Beneš-dekrétumokra. Elsősorban megköszönték, hogy a dekrétumok egyelőre érintetlenül hagyták az egyházi vagyont. Az oktatásügyi rendelkezések kapcsán egyet nem értésüket fejezték ki az oktatás államosításával kapcsolatban. A katolikus egyházi vezetők figyelmeztettek a vallásszabadság, a szabad vallásgyakorlás elfogadásának szükségességére az új államrenden belül. A memorandum hetedik pontjában figyelmeztették a hatalmon lévőket, hogy tartózkodjanak mindenféle túlzástól a háborús bűnösök megbüntetésében, legyenek türelemmel a más nemzetiségbeliek iránt.[59]

Összegzés

A tanulmány középpontjában Király József csicsói esperes-plébános 1946-os népbírósági pere áll, amely a Beneš-dekrétumok, illetve a Szlovák Nemzeti Tanács 33/1945. számú rendeletének alkalmazási gyakorlatát vizsgálja egy dél-szlovákiai magyar katolikus pap esetében. A forrásbázist elsősorban a komáromi népbíróság iratanyaga, valamint egyházi és helyi levéltári dokumentumok alkotják, amelyek lehetővé teszik a politikai vádak, a tanúvallomások és az ítélet indokolásának összevetését.

Király József életútja jól példázza a két világháború közötti felvidéki magyar katolikus elit sokrétű szerepvállalását. A Bécsben 1921-ben pappá szentelt lelkipásztor 1927-től Csicsó plébánosa, majd 1936-tól esperes lett. Egyházi tisztségei mellett aktív szerepet vállalt a magyar kisebbségi politikában az Országos Keresztényszocialista Párt járási vezetőjeként, majd 1939-től a magyar országgyűlés képviselőjeként. A per során e politikai szerepvállalás vált a kollaborációs vád alapjává. A vádhatóság szerint Király 1938-ban titkos tárgyalásokon vett részt Dél-Szlovákia Magyarországhoz csatolása érdekében, üdvözölte a bevonuló magyar csapatokat, és a háború alatt a „fasiszta kormányzat" politikáját támogatta. A tanúk elenyésző része – különösen František Solčan postamester – a visszacsatolás melletti agitációval és szovjetellenes kijelentésekkel vádolta. Ugyanakkor több helyi tanú (Rudinszky Lukács, Bödők József, Lukovics László) Király szociális érzékenységét, a szlovák lakosság érdekében tett közbenjárásait és a nyilas uralom alatti meghurcoltatását hangsúlyozta. A peranyag különösen jelentős eleme, hogy a népbíróság

[59] PFL, FH, 1354/45.

számos konkrét vádpontot – így a titkos összeesküvésben való részvételt, a szovjetellenes uszítást vagy a katonai propaganda vádját – bizonyítottság hiányában elvetett. Az ítélet mégis bűnösnek mondta ki Király Józsefet kollaborációban, elsősorban politikai tisztségei alapján. A hat hónap fegyházbüntetés, a teljes vagyonelkobzás és az ötéves közügyektől való eltiltás a kollektív felelősség logikáját tükrözi, így a magyar kisebbségi politikai elit szereplőit egységesen a „fasiszta megszállás" strukturális támogatóiként értelmezte. A döntés ellen fellebbezésnek nem volt helye.

A tanulmány rámutat arra, hogy Király József esete túlmutat az egyéni felelősség kérdésén. A per kontextusában vizsgálható a Beneš-dekrétumok jogalkalmazási gyakorlata, a magyar és német kisebbséggel szembeni kollektív retorzió, valamint a katolikus egyház ambivalens helyzete. A csehszlovák püspöki kar memoranduma és pásztorlevelei egyértelműen bírálták a kollektív büntetés túlkapásait, hangsúlyozva az igazságosság és a keresztény szeretet elvét. A komáromi és pannonhalmi levéltári források és a korabeli püspöki körlevelek tanúsága szerint az egyházi vezetők elutasították a „náci módszerek" alkalmazását a magyarokkal és németekkel szemben.

Király József életútja így a háború utáni közép-európai átmenet ellentmondásait sűríti magába. Egy, a magyar politikai reprezentációban szerepet vállaló, ugyanakkor humanitárius tevékenységet is folytató pap a népbírósági igazságszolgáltatás keretében kollaboránssá minősült. A források kritikai elemzése arra utal, hogy a politikai lojalitás kérdése elsőbbséget élvezett az egyéni cselekedetek differenciált mérlegelésével szemben. A per ezért nem csupán egyháztörténeti vagy helytörténeti jelentőségű, hanem a kisebbségpolitika, az átmeneti igazságszolgáltatás és a kollektív felelősség közép-európai történetének fontos esettanulmánya.

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Viateur NDIKUMANA[1]:

The Role of the Church in Promoting the Duty of Memory, Reconciliation, and Social Resilience in Post-genocide Rwanda

Abstract. After 32 years, Rwanda still feels the wounds of the genocide committed against the Tutsi in 1994. The question concerns the role that religions and churches currently play in the processes of peacebuilding and reconciliation. Due to the complicity of church leaders and the involvement of a large number of church members in the genocide, faith was deeply wounded and altars were seen as shattered. Temples and places of worship traditionally seen as places of refuge became sites of massacres. Many Tutsi sought sanctuary in churches, only to be betrayed and killed by those who were supposed to protect them.

Nevertheless, following the genocide, the church institutions have been engaged in the peacebuilding processes and reconciliation, focusing on the duty of memory, which is theologically and biblically justified as a redemptive act and a cornerstone of reconciliation.

The transformation of the places of worship where Tutsi were massacred into memorial sites is one of the courageous actions taken by churches to preserve memory and promote public healing and reconciliation. The decision has been

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undertaken in collaboration with the government and the genocide survivors. The Church has also played a significant role in the justice process, particularly through its support for the Gacaca courts as a suitable form of restorative justice. Considering the current context, the Church is called upon to listen to diverse voices seeking recognition of their suffering and to manage potential conflicts of memory, which may disrupt the process of reconciliation and lasting peace.

Keywords: church, genocide, memory, reconciliation, resilience

Introduction

The Genocide committed against the Tutsi in 1994 profoundly tore the social fabric to such an extent that it was almost impossible to imagine the possibility of living together after a tragedy of such unspeakable cruelty. The components of Rwandan society could therefore not be reconciled so as to rebuild and develop their nation without making sacrifices and without the real political and social will to unite and reconcile the Rwandan people after many years of socio-political conflicts.

The genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda was one such event, resulting in great trauma and lifelong implications for the community since families lost their means of subsistence and a legacy of mistrust, fear, and destruction was left in its wake. The magnitude and savagery of the crimes committed were such that peaceful coexistence could not be achieved between survivors and perpetrators.

As the genocide was an extraordinarily tragic event, the vision of reconciliation and reconstruction was unattainable in the face of such terrible violence. It was crucial for the people of Rwanda to adopt extraordinary measures to achieve effective reconciliation.

Here we understand reconciliation as a process of bringing together people in post-war, post-genocide societies or people who have been subjected to social exclusion. It is also about efforts to bring together communities and societies that have experienced violent conflicts, by creating new conditions of coexistence, social healing, overcoming fear and mistrust at various levels of these communities.[2] This process should lead to the restoration of a peaceful coexistence, a more viable, perhaps even a more constructive

[2] KRONDORFER, B. (n. y.): *Introduction: Social and political reconciliation*. State University of New York Press (SUNY Press). Available at: https://www.uplopen.com/reader/chapters/pdf/ (last accessed on: 02/08/2025).

and productive one than the pre-conflict state of social relations. Reconciliation should not be a process with defined outcomes, nor one that occurs only once and does not recur, but rather a multifaceted and ongoing one. It is about creating space (social, political, psychological, and cultural) where people and cultures can "face the truth painfully", take responsibility, ask for and grant forgiveness, and develop mutual trust. In the wake of such a conflict, the reconciliation process involves not only the creation of the conditions of social cohesion and togetherness but also the establishment of new social structures.

This article attempts to explore the role of the Church in Rwanda in promoting the work of memory and national identity for a lasting reconciliation and social resilience after the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi. This tragedy has not only destroyed many human lives but also led to rethinking and interpreting the country's historical narrative.

Wounded Faith and Shattered Altars: A Brief Review of Rwanda's Religious Landscape in the Context of the Genocide against the Tutsi

By 1994, Rwanda was preponderantly a Christian country. The members of Christian denominations were estimated at about 90% of the overall population, with Catholics making up roughly 60%, Protestants around 19 %, and Seventh-day Adventists approximately 8%.[3] According to Rwanda's Fifth Population and Housing Census, conducted in August 2022, the country remains overwhelmingly Christian, where Roman Catholics make up the largest group with 40%, followed by Protestants and Pentecostals who together account for around 36%. Seventh-day Adventists represent 12% of the population, while Muslims make up about 2%. Roughly, 3% of Rwandans identify as having no religious affiliation. Smaller religious communities – including practitioners of traditional African religions, Bahá'ís, and Jehovah's Witnesses – make up the remaining portion of the population. Muslims have and still form a very small minority of the population.[4]

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[3] MYCINSK, Cyprien (n. y.): *Génocide des Tutsi : Entre apparitions de la Vierge et diabolisation de l'autre, le rôle mal connu de la religion*. Available at: www.lemonde.fr/le-monde-des-religions (last accessed on: 09.09.2025).

[4] USA (2022): *Report on International Religious Freedom: Rwanda*. Available at: https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-report-on-international-religious-freedom/rwanda/ (last accessed on: 10.08.2025).

The role of the Church in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi constitutes a very dark and troubling chapter in history. Some clergy and church members were complicit and even actively participated in the Genocide against the Tutsi. Churches, which were traditionally seen as places of refuge, became sites of massacres. Many Tutsi sought sanctuary in churches but were unfortunately betrayed or killed by those who were supposed to protect them. The case of Father Athanase Seromba in the Catholic Church, who presided over the demolition of his own church with hundreds of people inside, is one of the most notorious ones.

In the Anglican Church, a group of Christians was also taken from the Shyogwe missionary centre and were killed in an unknown place, while others were killed on the spot. Some genocide survivors of Shyogwe testified that the Bishop of the Shyogwe Diocese, by that time the Right Reverend Samuel Musabyimana, did nothing to help them, while it was obvious that he had been fostering a very good relationship with the government. He was later indicted by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda for his actions during the genocide. The tribunal's indictment alleged that he had maintained contact with high-level government officials in order to arm the civilian Hutu population and to encourage them to adopt the Interim Government policy of targeting, and killing, Tutsi civilians. In his book, Timothy Longman wrote how Bishop Samuel Musabyimana facilitated violence.[5] Bishop Musabyimana rebutted the accusations and died in January 2003 before his trial could begin.[6]

In contrast, the Muslim community earned praise for acts of solidarity: many mosques served as sanctuaries, and religious leaders did not engage in violence, leading to increased respect and, in some cases, conversions to Islam in the years following the genocide. According to the Hawzah News Agency – one of the news agencies known and respected in many parts of the Shia Islamic world, especially among seminary institutions and scholars – a handful of Muslims who took a stand during the hundred days of slaughter inspired thousands of Rwandans to become Muslim in what was once called Africa's most Catholic country.[7]

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[5] LONGMAN, Timothy (2010*): Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda*. Cambridge, Cambridge University. 191.

[6] KALIMBA, Jered (2025): *My Journey with the Shyogwe Diocese.* Kigali, RELO. 103.

[7] *From the Ashes of Genocide. Islam Rises in Rwanda*. Available at: https://en.hawzahnews.com (last accessed on: 09.09.2025).

In response to the above criticisms, Catholic bishops formally apologized for the role played by the Church, acknowledging the grievous wrongs committed by its members. The Vatican and Pope Francis also issued expressions of regret for the participation of the clergy in the genocide. On 20 November 2016, the *Conference of Catholic Bishops of Rwanda* issued a public statement across parishes apologizing for the Church's involvement in the 1994 genocide. They said, "We apologize for all the wrongs the Church committed. We apologize on behalf of all Christians for all forms of wrongs we committed. We regret that church members violated their oath of allegiance to God's commandments."[8]

The apology acknowledged that certain Catholics planned, aided, and participated in the genocide, including clergy members (priests and nuns). When Pope Francis met with Rwandan President Paul Kagame on 20 March 2017, he officially asked for forgiveness for the "sins and failings of the Church and its members" during the genocide.[9]

Theological Foundations of the Duty of Memory and Reconciliation

In Old Testament theology, remembrance (*zahkor*) is a central theological imperative.[10] The people should remember what God has done for them, especially the liberation from slavery in Egypt. The memory of servitude in Egypt is therefore not simply a reminiscence of the oppression that Israel suffered there; it is also a commemoration.[11]

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[8] MARINA, Nivera Aurora (n. y.): *Pope Francis Apologizes for the Church's Involvement in the 1994 Rwanda Genocide*. Available at: https://www.ecumenicalnews.com/article/pope-francis-apologizes-for-churchs-involvement-in-1994-rwanda-genocide/60001.htm (last accessed on: 12.09.2025).

[9] HARRIS**,** Elise (n. y.): *Pope Meets Rwandan President, Apologizes for Church Failure during Genocide*. Available at: https://www.ewtnnews.com/vatican/pope-meets-rwandan-president-apologizes-for-church-failure-during-genocide (last accessed on: 12.09.2025).

[10] KRUGER, Ferdi P. (2025): A Homiletical-Liturgical Perspective on Memoricide Alluding to Variegated Remembered Memories. In: *Verbum et Ecclesia*. 46, 1. Available at: https://verbumetecclesia.org.za/index.php/ve/article/view/3429/8666%20(last%20accessed%20on%2009.09.2025) (last accessed on: 14.01.2026).

[11] CHILDS, B. S (1962): Memory and Tradition in Israel. In: *Studies in Biblical Theology*. 37, 2. 40–66.

The Israelite associate the root *zâkar* 'to remember' with memory as an act corresponding to an intervention. Thus, "to remember is to represent, to present again, to make present what belongs to the past and which then becomes current".[12]

The narrative of the Israelites' journey and their exodus from Egypt establishes the rules governing the relationship between God and humanity in the Decalogue.[13] In general, the law always uses these two basic elements when it speaks of the need to protect the marginalized in society: the alien (Deut. 10:19), the slave (Deut. 15:15), the widow and the orphan (Deut. 16: 1–17).[14]

The memory of Egypt does not merely concern the territory itself but also extends to its people. The Egyptian immigrant is treated in a distinct and humanizing manner among foreigners. Scripture states: "You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were a stranger in his land" (Deut. 23:8). What is striking in this commandment is that even the Egyptian – the former oppressor – is to be afforded the same dignity and humane treatment as any other foreigner. He is placed on the same level as the Edomite, who is already referred to as "your brother": "You shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother" (Deut. 23:8 cf. Gen. 25). The historical bond between the Israelites and the Egyptians is thus elevated to a kinship-like relationship.[15] There is no room for anger within this theological framework. The more Israel looks to the future, the more it is encouraged to purify its collective memory. One of the most important features of Jewish memory is that the Jew is never abandoned by God – even in the face of great suffering. God always hears their cry and descends to deliver them (Ex. 3:7–9). Thus, in remembering, it is ultimately God's presence that takes precedence over the painful event. The rabbis profoundly grasped this theological dimension of memory.

The greatest strength of Judaism lies in its capacity to integrate theology into the lived historical experience of its people. God is the sovereign of history. Therefore, it is impossible to speak meaningfully to the human person without acknowledging their history and taking their past into account.

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[12] MARTIN-ACHARD, Robert (1988): Mémoire de Dieu. In: *ETR*. 63, 2. 183–197.

[13] CHILDS 1962, 40–66.

[14] PONS, J. (1988): La référence au séjour en Egypte et à la sortie d'Egypte dans le code de la loi de l'Ancien Testament. In: *ETR*. 63, 2. 169–182.

[15] Ibid.

In the New Testament, the Church itself is a community of memory – a memory that finds concrete expression in the sacrament of the Holy Communion, which we may aptly refer to here as the "Sacrament of Memory": "Do this in remembrance of me." In the Eucharist, the Church becomes the "living memory" of the liberation received in Jesus Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither oppressor nor victim, nor guilty nor innocent. The fact that all these categories coexist within the Church does not denote that their pasts are erased or forgotten; rather, they are integrated and reinterpreted in the light of the memory of life's victory over death. Here, the memory is not limited solely to the resurrection or to the passion; it is composed of both. Therefore, one should not fear telling the story of their past even though it reminds one of painful experiences within collective or individual memory. Because, in Christian perspective, the Holy Communion – the ultimate sacrament of memory – recalls the sufferings of Christ and revives the founding event of the Christian faith: the death and resurrection of Christ. It is upon the cross, the very symbol of enmity to life, that Christians anchor their shared identity.

The Church and the Duty of Memory in Rwanda

After the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, Rwanda faced the urgent task of rebuilding a deeply fractured society. In response, the National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation (NCUR) was formally established in 1999 by Organic Law No. 03/99 of 12 March 1999, as a government agency tasked with promoting reconciliation, national identity, and unity among Rwandans.

The faith-based organizations, including the churches, have significantly contributed to this effort, not only in peacebuilding activities among the population but also in offering both spiritual insight and moral credibility in rebuilding trust among citizens and in modelling Rwanda's reconciliation framework. The Church has taken the duty of memory as an essential instrument for achieving genuine reconciliation among Rwandans. In this regard, each church has integrated the work of memory among their priorities. One of the most painful aspects of Rwanda's tragic history is that during the genocide the criminals trampled on the foundations of Christian faith and human dignity. Killings were committed in places of worship that were then publicly

desecrated. In a country as populous as Rwanda, the conversion of churches into killing fields raises serious religious and moral questions about the value of Church teachings and practices.

Many parishes in Rwanda still bear the scars of this tragic episode in history. Several churches, especially Catholic ones, where people were brutally murdered, have been converted into memorials: Ntarama in Bugesera District, Kibeho in Nyaruguru District, Nyarubuye in Kirehe District, and the church in Nyange in Ngororero District. The Nyange memorial site is particularly significant, as the parish priest, Athanase Seromba, ordered the church to be bulldozed with over 1,500 Tutsi civilians inside.[16]

The transformation of these places of worship into memorial sites was the result of intense negotiations between the state and religious institutions on the one hand and between churches and genocide survivors on the other. In addition, many parishes and Christian organizations have established memorials bearing the names of victims – whether ordinary congregants or church leaders killed during the genocide.

Within the Protestant denominations, the first initiative was taken by the Presbyterian Church in Rwanda, which established the Remera Rukoma memorial in 1995, followed by that of Kirinda in 1997. Today, the majority of Protestant parishes dedicate one Sunday during the national commemoration period (April to July) for memorial activities.

On the Anglican side, the parish of Ruhanga has also been transformed into a genocide memorial. In early April 1994, many Tutsi were tragically murdered in the premises of that parish, including the pastor who refused to abandon his flock into the hands of devouring wolves. Today the parish serves both as a burial site for the victims and a sacred space of remembrance. It honours not only the thousands of Tutsi who were killed there but also the spiritual integrity and courage of their Pastor Sostene Renzaho.

At the request of the Protestant Council of Rwanda, a special liturgy has been established to guide the communities during the commemoration of the genocide. The presence of pastors and priests in these sensitive times allows the commemoration ceremonies to fulfil their important mission of healing, rebuilding, and promoting

[16] BENETTI, Pierre: *Genocide Rwandais le Pape Francois Demande pardon pour l'Eglise*. Available at: https://www.liberation.fr/planete/2017/03/20/genocide-rwandais-le-pape-francois-demande-pardon-pour-l-eglise_1557116/ (last accessed on: 02.08.2025).

community unity, especially through the act of collective remembrance. The Church's contribution extends beyond liturgical celebrations to the realm of education. The Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences (PIASS), founded by Protestant churches, has taken the question of memory seriously. Through its Research Directorate, it published in 2016 a Kinyarwanda-language volume entitled *Remembering and Healing the Wounds of Trauma after the Genocide against the Tutsi: Healing the Heart, the Body, and Historical Memory*. It is now being used as a Christian education resource on memory and trauma healing. Building on this approach, PIASS also organizes a series of trainings for pastors and their spouses, Christian leaders, and committed laypeople, equipping them with the knowledge to understand the role of memory in society and its healing potential in the process of trauma healing. These Church initiatives respond to the call of some African theologians (Engel Bert Mveng, Edem Kodjo, and Laurenti Magesa), encouraging Africans to accept their painful past and engage themselves in the present world accordingly.[17]

Due to the social, human, political, and legal contexts, the memory can be a key platform for the reconstruction of people's lives. In Rwanda, collective memory has, in recent years, inspired many state and community initiatives that contribute to sustainable development.

Church Contribution to Restorative and Inclusive Justice through the Gacaca Courts

In the post-genocide context, the traditional justice system known as Gacaca has proven to be an appropriate and effective mechanism to ensure justice for both perpetrators and victims. Before colonialism, the Gacaca court was a common way to resolve all kinds of disputes within families and communities. The elders and other men of high integrity known as "Inyangamugayo" would sit on grass, often under a tree, and deliver their verdicts.

The primary goal of Gacaca was to restore harmony by providing justice to the victims and reintegrating criminals into the community. The Church's role, both direct

[17] MAGESA, Laurent (2001): *Le catholicisme africain en mutation. Des modèles d'Église pour un siècle nouveau.* Yaoundé, CLE. 20.

and indirect, in the success of the Gacaca courts was evident. On 13 June 2002, the Catholic bishops of Rwanda issued a pastoral letter entitled *Toward a Just Justice*, urging members of the public to attend Gacaca trials and speak the truth as Christians. They called on perpetrators to sincerely apologize to their victims and for victims to be ready to forgive. The Catholic bishops wrote, "We pay tribute to the judges of the Gacaca courts, who have truly preserved the integrity of this system by avoiding anything that could taint it, such as corruption, discrimination, intimidation, or unjust and excessive punishments for victims."[18]

Based on this tradition, the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Commission launched the "Christian Gacaca" programme, which played a significant role in reconciliation between Christian perpetrators and victims in some churches during the 1994 genocide.

Among Protestant churches, though no formal written declarations were issued, sermons across various parishes exhorted Christians to participate in *Gacaca* and to speak the truth. In some Protestant communities, pastors were even permitted to serve as *Inyangamugayo* (judges).

The involvement of Christian organizations such as the Protestant Council of Rwanda and Prison Fellowship Rwanda in prisons also played a critical role. The work in prisons has persuaded prisoners to confess and seek forgiveness from their victims.

The most significant aspect of *Gacaca* was its model of conditional, personalized forgiveness – unlike the blanket amnesties granted under military pressure in some Latin American contexts. The aim was not to erase the crimes but to expose them. Offenders were required to participate in the rewriting of the national history in order to be forgiven. As J. Pons notes that immunity had to be earned through the public confession of crimes and the acceptance of new democratic norms.[19]

Besides, *Gacaca* allowed culprits to participate in the duty of memory and facilitated their families to free from the burden of collective guilt. After the official closure of the Gacaca trials, the sense of distrust and guilt gradually faded, allowing for a return to peaceful cohabitation.

[18] LES EVEQUES CATHOLIQUES DU RWANDA (2002): *Pour une justice qui réconcilie*. Kigali. 4.
[19] PONS, S. (2000): *Apartheid. L'aveu et le pardon*. Paris, Bayard. 17.

Rewriting the Country's History for a Shared Memory and Lasting Reconciliation

In Rwanda, the "Hamitic theory" developed during the colonial era has deeply divided Rwandans. According to this theory, Hutu and Tutsi are two people without a shared collective memory or a common homeland.[20] On the contrary, contemporary research demonstrates that the so-called "races" in Rwanda are more akin to socioeconomic categories than to biological or cultural distinctions. Rwandans share a common language, culture, and traditional religion, and many Hutus and Tutsis trace their origins back to common ancestors. Historically, Rwandans lived in harmony, and patronage (a traditional relationship of mutual support) was a voluntary agreement between cattle owners and clients, not an institution of ethnic slavery.[21] To correct this false historical narrative – considered as the basis of the genocide ideology – was an urgent task to prevent the indoctrination of the future generations with a segregationist ideology. The Government of Rwanda decided to ban the teaching of history for over eleven years. This act was not an isolated case; similar measures were taken in other societies in the wake of wars and other tragedies. For example, after the Second World War and the Holocaust, Germany enacted specific laws to eliminate Nazism.[22] The process of removing Nazi ideology from public life aimed at preventing any revival of Nazism and rebuilding a democratic and reconciled society.[23]

In order to strengthen national cohesion, the Civic Education Institution (*Itorero ry'Igihugu*) has also been revived as a home-grown salutation borrowed from the traditional values. Through compulsory participation – particularly for young people – Itorero promotes civic values, historical awareness, and a unified national identity, emphasizing the principle of *Ndi Umunyarwanda* 'I am Rwandan' as a fundamental way of being that prioritizes national belonging over ethnic affiliation. This approach does

[20] NDIKUMANA, Viateur (2023): Reconciliation and Rwandan Resilience after the Genocide Perpetrated against the Tuts in 1994. In: Sully, Joe E. (ed.): *Rwanda – A Model for Haiti*. Washington, Bridge Vision. 49–68.

[21] BYANAFASHE, D. – Rutayisire, P. (eds.) (2016): *Histoire du Rwanda. Des origines à la fin du XXe siècle.* Kigali, Commission pour l'Unité et la Réconciliation. 77–163.

[22] VINCENT, Marie-Bénédicte (ed.) (2008): *La Dénazification*. Perrin, Collection Tempus. 368.

[23] DACK, Mikkel (2024): Everyday Denazification in Postwar Germany: The Fragebogen and Political Screening during the Allied Occupation. In: *German History*. 42, 1(March). 137–138.

not aim to eradicate identities but to integrate them into a shared sense of national identity and pride, *Rwandanness*.

Thanks to the "Ndi Umunyarwanda'' programme, collective memory is being rebuilt through a "process of transformation"; which involves correcting the official historical narratives taught in schools. This historical rectification must lead to a new social contract based on the interpretation of social truth, without political bias or ideology.

National Heroes as the Cement of Shared Memory and Reconciliation

Since 1995, the Rwandan government has celebrated National Heroes Day on 1 February, honouring citizens who have shown extraordinary courage in times of national crisis, often at the cost of their lives. Politically, there are three categories of national heroes: *Imanzi*, *Imena*, and *Ingenzi*.[24] Along with the political figures, a new category of heroes is also recognized: ordinary citizens who acted with courage during the genocide. This change means that the memorial will not only include those killed by perpetrators but also "those who resisted", people comparable to the "Righteous among the Nations" known after the Holocaust.

These men and women, inspired by their faith or moral conviction, refused to participate in the killings and actively contributed to national unity and reconciliation – some at the cost of their lives. As J. D. Bizimana notes, the genocide committed in Rwanda was so cruel that it has caused us to overlook the extraordinary acts of courage by some Hutu.[25] People are haunted by the memory of the terrifying killings[26] that

[24] In the "Imanzi" category, there are individuals who sacrificed their own lives, such as Major General Fred Gisa Rwigema, who died on the front line one day after the launch of the liberation war, and the Unknown Soldier, who symbolizes all those soldiers who lost their lives fighting for Rwanda. The second category, "Imena", includes heroes celebrated for their extraordinary acts, such as King Mutara III Rudahigwa, Rwagasana Michel, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, the first female Prime Minister in Rwanda, killed during the genocide, and the students of Nyange Secondary School, who were killed in 1997 after refusing to obey the orders of Hutu extremists who demanded that they separate into two lines based on their Tutsi or Hutu ethnic identity. The last category, "Ingenzi", comprises heroes who are still alive (http://www.cheno.gov.rw/index.php?id=243).

[25] BIZIMANA, J. D. (2001): *L'Église et le génocide au Rwanda, Les Pères Blancs et le négationnisme*. Paris – Montréal, L'Harmattan. 140.

[26] Ibid.

claimed the lives of their loved ones and tend to forget the risks taken by Hutu who hid Tutsi. A Similar dynamic is observed in the narratives around the transatlantic slave trade, where figures such as John Newton and William Wilberforce – who struggled against slavery in the name of their faith – are not sufficiently recognized in African contexts. Many people ignore that missionary societies like the Church Missionary Society (CMS), linked to the Church of England, were born from abolitionist movements.[27]

Since 2015, however, there has been a significant paradigm shift in Rwanda. Each year, the First Lady of Rwanda formally recognizes the heroes under the title *Abarinzi b'Igihango* 'Protectors of the Covenant'. On 15 November 2015, the President awarded medals to 17 such individuals. Sadly, 12 were recognized only posthumously, having died while attempting to save others. Among them were five Catholic Church leaders as well. Notably, one protestant church leader is recognized at the national level.

While it is a well-documented and painful reality that some Anglican clergy and church members were either complicit in or directly involved in the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, this does not represent the whole story. Despite the failure and moral bankruptcy that pervaded so many parts of the Church in Rwanda, there were also cases of extraordinary courage and morality. A number of Anglican Christians, both clergy and laity, decided to take a stand against the genocide, even risking, in some cases, losing their own lives for the sake of justice. They stood firm on the side of the victims. The stories of these individuals not only refute the claim of the Church's complete complicity in the genocide against Tutsi but also provide a glimmer of hope in the darkest period in the history of Rwanda. One of the tangible examples of moral and spiritual courage is the story of Pastor Sosthène Renzaho, an Anglican priest from the parish of Ruhanga, Gasabo District (former Kigali Prefecture). In early April 1994, as the genocide intensified, Tutsi fleeing violence in their homes and villages sought refuge in churches across the country, especially Anglican parishes. Many were brutally murdered, attacked, or handed over to rebel groups by religious or local leaders. Nevertheless, the Anglican Church in Ruhanga became a place of worship and testimony.

According to survivors, when Interahamwe and armed soldiers arrived at the Ruhanga church to eliminate the Tutsi refugees who had gathered there, Pastor Renzaho was given the opportunity to flee. He refused. He made the decision, guided by his faith,

[27] ZORN, F. (1993): Le Pentecôtisme en Afrique Sud-Saharienne. In: *Foi et Vie*. LXXXIII, 3–4. 41–50.

to remain with the victims: men, women, and children who had come to seek refuge in the house of God. On 15 April 1994, Pastor Renzaho, along with those he protected and his pregnant wife, were brutally murdered in the churchyard.[28] Sosthene was killed in a horrific manner: he was dismembered, his body left in a state of extreme pain. His death was not just a painful death, it was an act of Christian martyrdom that was very different from the betrayal or silence of others who held similar positions in the church. Pastor Renzaho's testimony harmonizes with the words of the Gospel of John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." On 13 November 2016, Sosthene was officially honoured for his extraordinary humanity, especially for his refusal to discriminate between Hutu and Tutsi within his congregation.[29] Pastor Renzaho's legacy is a call to fight for justice, to raise the prophetic voice to protect the most vulnerable, and remain faithful even in times when you are facing death. Renzaho's story prompts today's church leaders ask themselves, "What kind of shepherd will I be when my flock is in great danger?"

During this period when churches and faith-based organizations are striving for effective reconciliation, overcoming tragic past and building a hopeful future, the small number of heroes represents God's love and presence in times of adversity. The Church has an obligation to preserve and spread their testimonies and make them role models for future generations.

The Church in the Context of the Conflict of Memories

The conflict of memories arises when different groups, nations, or communities recall the same historical events in different ways. According to F. P. Kruger, "the beauty of remembrance lies in the fact that people's memories of the same event can differ".[30] However, when this beauty is motivated by resentment or a political ideology, it

[28] BAHIZI, Heritier (2023): Massacre of Tutsi at Ruhanga Anglican Church, a survivor's story. *The New Times*. 10 April. Available at: https://francegenocidetutsi.org/MassacreAtRuhangaAnglicanChurchTnT10April2023.pdf (last accessed on: 20.02.2026).

[29] UNIT CLUB: Renzaho Sosthène.

[30] KRUGER 2025.

becomes a time bomb. The communities narrate stories from different perspectives, and competing narratives and selective memories then arise. In such cases, the work of memory is not a simple act of remembrance but a powerful political tool for a given ideology. Each community strives to legitimize its version of the narrative, knowing that the memory is essential for building a collective identity, asserting historical legitimacy, pursuing justice, and achieving international acceptance and sympathy.

In a post-conflict context, where one group feels victorious and another defeated, the issue of competing memories inevitably arises. The tensions are often nurtured by the fact that memory is a political affair deeply shaped by environmental, historical, and ideological influences, because there is a strong correlation between collective memory and broader political and social processes, according to Maria Malksoo.[31] In such cases, some traumatic events are denied by their perpetrators, and former victims continue to rely on their oppressed status to gain certain political and social rights or cultural respect.[32] This situation creates a negative form of victimhood, where the most disadvantaged benefit socially or politically from their past suffering. In Africa, post-colonial societies are grappling with the burden of colonialism and internal conflicts. In South Africa, the end of apartheid led to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which is attempting to promote a unified national memory. Nevertheless, ethnic inequalities and disputes, images and place names indicate that the conflict of memories continues.

In Rwanda, the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi is annually commemorated. The official narratives emphasize unity and reconciliation. The debates on the remembrance of other crimes committed before, during, and after the genocide are not yet open. In Burundi, many local and international voices strive to gain international recognition of the 1972–1973 mass killings of Hutu as a genocide committed against that ethnic group. This situation leads to complaints of different memories and a feeling of historical injustices. These tensions are also compounded in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where the memory of the massacres of the Banyamulenge and broader regional conflicts is fragmented and deeply politicized.

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[31] MÄLKSOO, Maria (2015): Memory Must Be Defended: Beyond the Politics of Mnemonical Security. In: *Security Dialogue*. 46, 3. 221–237.

[32] TODOROV, T. Z. (2001): *Les abus de la mémoire*. Paris, Arléa. 54.

The Rwandan laws criminalize genocide ideology, including denial and revisionism, which comprises narratives such as the "double genocide theory". However, in neighbouring countries, especially in Burundi and in some parts of the DRC, competing narratives of Hutu victimhood as equal to the genocide against Tutsi are mushrooming. In DR Congo a new term, "Genocost", has been invented to designate the genocide as a crime orchestrated for economic interests. It is an initiative and memorial campaign in DRC, supported even by the government.[33] It frames decades of conflict and mass atrocities in eastern DRC (and more broadly) as not just driven by ethnic, political, or territorial reasons but deeply rooted in the illegal exploitation of natural resources. On 2 August 2025, the official ceremony took place in Kinshasa, at the Genocost Memorial, in the presence of numerous political, cultural, and diaspora figures, and the President has called on the international community for the official recognition of the Genocost.[34]

The genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi in Rwanda in 1994 has been universally recognized, and 7 April has been established by the UN as the International Day for the reflection on that genocide. Following that recognition, the Great Lakes region is witnessing growing tensions between groups rivalling for official and international recognition of the crimes they have been victims to, claiming to be the most offended. Some groups are denying or minimizing the crimes committed against others, fuelling further suffering. Here the competing memories harden identities, making compromise emotionally and morally difficult. They exacerbate distrust and violence, as each side sees itself as the true victim. This "competition of victimhood"[35] undermines peace efforts, since reconciliation often requires acknowledging the other's suffering. In the context of potential competitions between memories, the pastoral role of the Church is therefore an essential one. It starts by creating space for all voices of suffering to be heard, knowing that the genocide against the Tutsi, recognized by the international community, is an incontestable and undeniable fact in the case of Rwanda. Drawing on Paul Ricœur's emphasis on narrative in psychoanalysis, Tharcisse Gatwa has stressed the

[33] https://www.genocost.org/2023/07/commemoration-of-genocost-2022-marked-with-events-in-drc-and-the-diaspora/.

[34] CHEMAM Melissa (n. y.): *DRC Urges the World to Recognize Genocost Tied to Decades of Resource War*.

[35] KATTAN, E. (2002): *Penser le devoir de mémoire*. Paris, PUF. 70.

centrality of telling one's story of suffering in memory healing.[36] Storytelling is even more vital than speaking about reconciliation or amnesty. True healing comes through deep empathetic listening to the pain of others.[37] In some churches in Rwanda, spaces for storytelling are provided. Testimonies of faith and suffering – known in Kinyarwanda as "Ubuhamya" – are shared. They are often delivered during worship services or in prayer groups and recount the wonders of God in the life of a believer. The testimonies constitute an integral part of the liturgy, especially in Pentecostal and charismatic traditions. *Ubuhamya* 'testimony' is a public confession of God's intervention in the believer's life during a tragic time. It subsequently leads to a spiritual transformation and growth. In Rwanda, it has been observed that the members of churches that liturgically value the testimonies experience fewer cases of trauma and stress. Through storytelling and mutual compassionate listening, the wounded memory is purified. The practice helps to retain not only positive memories but also to recognize God's redemptive presence in times of tragedies.

The Current Status of Reconciliation in Rwanda

The National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) has established a Barometer to measure the annual status of Reconciliation in Rwanda. This instrument specifically aims to gain a better understanding of citizens' views on unity and reconciliation, by examining and proposing appropriate pillars, indicators, and variables to monitor the current state of reconciliation and by identifying enabling factors as well as challenges for reconciliation as stipulated by the National Policy on Unity and Reconciliation.[38] Each year, the study assesses the extent to which the efforts of the government, the civil society, the media as well as those of private companies have succeeded in bringing about unity and reconciliation among Rwandans since 1994. The analysis of the empirical

[36] GATWA, Tharcisse (2001): *Rwanda. Églises : Victimes ou coupables ? Les Églises et idéologies ethniques au Rwanda, 1900 – 1994*. Yaoundé Lomé, CLE/HAHO. 268–269.

[37] LOUW, D. J. (2001): Practical Theology and Ethics with the Public and Social Process of Transformation in South Africa. The Embodiment and Enfleshment of Truth and Reconciliation. In: *All Africa Journal of Theology*. 1, 1. 39–51.

[38] NATIONAL UNITY AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION (2020): *National Policy on Unity and Reconciliation*. Kigali (Rwanda). 7–9.

results is guided by six pillars, namely: understanding the past, the present and envisioning the future; citizenship, identity, and responsibility; political culture and governance; safety and well-being; justice, equity, and rights; and social cohesion.[39] In 2020, the study revealed that the process of reconciliation in Rwanda has made tangible progress. The results show that the level of reconciliation in Rwanda was 94.7%.[40] Recently, during the 19th National Dialogue Council (Umushyikirano 2024), the Minister of National Unity and Civic Engagement (MINUBUMWE) pointed out that Rwanda has made progress in building unity and reconciliation despite existing challenges of genocide denial and negationism manifested in the Great Lakes Region.[41] He made the revelation while presenting a report on Rwanda's Journey of Unity and Resilience, indicating that 97% of Rwandans say they are living in harmony. The Minister underlined that the rate of unity and reconciliation among Rwandans has also been increasing every year – according to a survey conducted in 2010, this rate was 82.3%, in 2015 it reached 92.5%, and in 2020 it was 94.7%.[42]

It is clear that Rwandans are gradually overcoming the tendency to attach themselves to narrow identities. They continue to feel proud of their common national identity and show a greater ability to make informed and responsible choices.

Conclusions

When the genocide against the Tutsi took place in Rwanda, the Church failed to remain vigilant and did not act as the watchman described in Ezekiel 3:18 ff, allowing memory manipulation to become a time bomb that would later explode with devastating consequences. After the tragedy of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the Rwandan society and its leaders chose to take a path of reconciliation. This choice required

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid

[41] SABITI, Daniel (n. y.): *Umushyikirano 2024: Rwanda's Unity and Reconciliation Steadfast despite Regional Threats*. Available at: https://www.ktpress.rw/2024/01/umushyikirano-2024-rwandas-unity-and-reconciliation-steadfast-despite-regional-threats-dr-bizimana/ (last accessed on: 09/09/2025).

[42] Op. cit.

exceptional resilience considering the deepness of the wounds caused by the genocide. Rwandans have drawn upon their culture and tradition to seek home-grown solutions to address the challenges of reconciliation. Today, the Church is called once again to vigilance so as not to repeat the errors of the past. Religious communities, especially the churches, are called to engage fully in the healing of Rwanda's wounded collective memory. This mission is not only justified but also grounded in its spiritual and prophetic mandate. The Church should remain attentive to the sufferings of different groups in order to steer the effective and lasting reconciliation. The duty of shared memory must serve as a constructive force in building a reconciled society and shaping a better future for all.

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Ioana ACHIM[1]:

Total Life: Jesus's Surprising Solution for a Health-Conscious World

Abstract.

In a context that challenges and changes the very definition of personhood, the concept of health itself requires new perspectives. For cancer patients, the desire for health is ubiquitous; therefore, Jesus's offer of eternal life rather than perpetual health bears significance.

The age-long pursuit of health (as typified by the ancient Greek healing cults) and of shalom 'peace' (as set forth by the Hebrew Bible and practised by Jesus's contemporaries) are worthy goals that inspire faith in a higher power and optimism in the face of suffering. However, the persistence of disease, diminishment, and death render such optimism unhelpful. When the loss of health is irretrievable and death approaches, despair and disappointment can set in. Jesus's promise to Martha of resurrection life both in the hereafter and in the present (enacted on Lazarus and promised to all believers) gives substance to our hope for health and peace. Moreover, the total life that Jesus offers – as opposed to the concept of "total pain" experienced by terminal patients – is based on secure attachment and a higher meaning for any painful experience.

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As the reader can glean from John 11, Jesus's interaction with the grieving sisters Mary and Martha opens the window into what God's presence means in times of unbearable loss. For cancer patients, God's accompaniment from the moment of diagnosis onward is available in a similar manner: through mirroring, unconditional love, gentle interaction, encouragement to believe, and hope for restoration.

Keywords: eternal life, resurrection, cancer, oncology, total pain, attachment, meaning, John 11

Introduction

Mrs Hinson was an English woman admitted in hospital in the early 1960s, suffering from terminal illness. When her doctor, Cicely Saunders, asked her about her pain, she responded:

> Well doctor, the pain began in my back, but now it seems that all of me is wrong… My husband and son were marvellous but they were at work and they would have had to stay off and lose their money. I could have cried for the pills and injections although I knew I shouldn't. Everything seemed to be against me and nobody seemed to understand… But it's so wonderful to begin to feel safe again.[2]

Mrs Hinson was only one of the countless patients whose multifaceted pain inspired Dame Cicely Saunders to pioneer the modern hospice movement and palliative care. Mrs Hinson's phrase "all of me is wrong" was thereafter used by Dr Saunders to introduce the concept of total pain.[3] Total pain is – as Mrs Hinson describes it – the mental, physical, social, and spiritual distress associated with suffering or a terminal illness.

Since the 1960s, the phrase "total pain" has been used in palliative care to stress that suffering encompasses all the aspects that define our humanity.[4] This perspective

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2 CLARK, David (2014): "Total Pain": The Work of Cicely Saunders and the Maturing of a Concept. In: *End of Life Studies*. University of Glasgow. Available at: http://endoflifestudies.academicblogs.co.uk/total-pain-the-work-of-cicely-saunders-and-the-maturing-of-a-concept/.

3 Op. cit.

4 "Total Pain" [entry]. *Pallipedia Palliative Care Dictionary*. Available at: https://pallipedia.org/total-pain/.

challenges the biomedical definition of pain, which takes into account only the biological mechanisms and physical experience of pain. "Total pain" recognizes that people are more than biological machines and that pain relates to the lived body.

Total pain is the kind of suffering that a significant percentage of cancer patients dread more than death itself.[5] If total pain is the absolute worst life can offer, what is the absolute best that we can aspire towards? What is the opposite of total pain? Is it health? Peace? Or is it something else? In what follows, I intend to explore the issue of what should be our greatest aspiration, in contrast to total pain, while also examining Jesus's contribution to the issue, as revealed particularly by the eleventh chapter of the gospel of John.

The Case for Desiring Health

We think of pain as a symptom of illness, a malfunction of the body. Therefore, we believe that the opposite of pain is health. The medical world defines health as a biomedical condition in which all biological systems function properly. In medical or nursing school, students learn that the health state of a person is the state of stability or equilibrium called "homeostasis".[6] A healthy body is one whose vital signs, blood components, anatomy, and physiology stay within the normal limits. In this biomedical perspective, health is the absence of disease.[7] This view of health was known to the ancient Greeks and Romans, who saw *hygieia* (health) as the polar opposite of *nosos*

[5] Pain and suffering are shown to be the most significant concern of cancer patients in studies such as LO, Christopher – HALES, Sarah – ZIMMERMANN, Camilla – GAGLIESE, Lucia – RYDALL, Anne – RODIN, Gary (2011): Measuring Death-Related Anxiety in Advanced Cancer: Preliminary Psychometrics of the Death and Dying Distress Scale. In: *Journal of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology*. 33(October). S140–S145. DOI: 10.1097/MPH.0b013e318230e1fd; LI, Y. – DONG, W. – TANG, H. – GUO, X. – WU, S. – LU, G. – LI, X. – CHEN, C. (2024): Correlates of Death Anxiety for Patients with Cancer: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis. In: *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. 33. 1933–1947. https://doi.org/10.1111/jocn.17021; WINSLOW, M. – SEYMOUR, J. – CLARK, D. (2005): Stories of Cancer Pain: A Historical Perspective. In: *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management*. 29. 22–31.; Béla, VÁMOS: Halál, gyászfolyamatok, gyászolók lelkigondozása. In: *Teológiai Fórum*. 2021/1. 90–119

[6] "Homeostasis" [entry]. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Available at: https://www.britannica.com/science/homeostasis.

[7] KING, Helen (2005): What Is Health? In: *Health in Antiquity*. London, Routledge. 2.

(disease).[8] Plutarch, for example, advocated that each person should be familiar with "their healthy self" so that they can recognize disease when that normality is disrupted.[9] In the nineteenth century, physiologist Xavier Bichat wrote, "Life consists in the sum of the functions by which death is resisted."[10] "The mechanisms of life can be unveiled and proved only by knowledge of the mechanism of death," believed another physiologist.[11] Based on the biomedical definition of health, the medical process (from diagnosis to treatment and recovery) is an attempt to avoid death by fixing the machine of the body to function properly.

Thanks to developments in psychology, sociology, nursing, and other fields like palliative care, the definition of health has widened. Sociologists tell us that health is "more than mere survival – it is living usefully despite the various diseases and stresses which challenge all of us".[12] Theologians believe that "health is not a medical or psychological concept, but primarily a relational and theological concept".[13] In 1946, the World Health Organization defined health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".[14] This perspective looks at the person as a whole, in its physical, emotional, and social dimensions. This is the view of health that I call "total health".[15]

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8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Xavier Bichat quoted in BISHOP, Jeffrey P. (2016): On Medical Corpses. In: Behr, John – Cunningham, Conor (eds.): *The Role of Death in Life: A Multidisciplinary Examination of the Relationship between Life and Death*. Cambridge (UK), James Clarke & Co. 168–169.

11 Physiologist Claude Bernard, quoted in BISHOP 2016, 169. Bishop provides a further exploration of how the state of death has influenced the medical perspective on what it means to live and be healthy in: BISHOP, Jeffrey P. (2011): *The Anticipatory Corpse*. Indiana, University of Notre Dame Press.

12 Roberts et al. quoted in KING 2005, 2.

13 SWINTON, John (2020): *The Spiritual Lives of Christians with Mental Health Challenges*. Duke Divinity School – Theology, Medicine, and Culture. October 14. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCBAOycLj30&list=TLPQMDcwNzIwMjUb_JtcGXWrKg&index=9.

14 "Constitution". *WHO*. Available at: https://www.who.int/about/governance/constitution.

15 Various bodies define "total health" differently. The University of Minnesota describes it as "profound connections" across domains like ecology, agriculture, biology, and economics (https://clinicalaffairs.umn.edu/news/total-health-comprehensive-approach-wellbeing).

A more encompassing view of health is not new. In fact, some might see WHO's move as a return to the ancient Greek concept of *wholeness*, meaning balanced living in all areas. Prof. Helen King describes Greek medicine as a "whole life regimen" that includes exercise, a good environment, and trust in the medical care providers.[16] The "proper balance of the body's elements, as opposed to the unnatural state of disease" was embodied by the Greek goddess Hygieia.[17] The fact that no mythology relating to Hygieia has been recovered so far[18] seems to confirm King's assertion that classical Greek medicine separated the physical condition of illness from the spiritual domain of the gods, and pointed to environmental or individual factors as causing disease.[19] Thus, the cause of illness was something outside of the sick person, and this gave the patient "something to fight against".[20]

Greek and Latin philosophers equated health with the state of happiness, which was the highest state of being. They debated to what degree a person could be ill and still be happy.[21] "Without health, no one is happy", says an ancient Greek poet.[22] The Romanian proverb "Să-ți dea Domnu' sănătate, că-i mai bună decât toate" [May the Lord give you health, for it is better than anything.] echoes the conviction that health is the highest good.

Apart from the very lucky few who die after a long and healthy life, for the Greeks, as for us today, the issue remains: what do we do when disease or the inevitable old age

Others define it as physical, mental, social, and environmental wellness (WANG C. – CHEN, S. M. – SHAO, R. T. – YANG, W. Z. (2023): Redefining Human Health: Physical Wellbeing, Mental Wellbeing, Social Wellbeing, and Environmental Wellbeing. In: *Chin. Med. J.* 136. 2395–2396. DOI: 10.1097/CM9.0000000000002817.

16 KING, Helen (2015): What Can We Learn from Ancient Greek Medicine? In: *The Open University* [YouTube channel] 31 July. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xi7ma8SJ5tg.

17 STAFFORD, Emma (2005): Without You No One Is Happy. In: King, Helen (ed.): *Health in Antiquity*. London, Routledge. 122. Hygieia represents "good health", and she accompanies her father, Asklepios, in ancient iconography. Op. cit. 123, 127.

18 Op cit. 134.

19 KING 2005.

20 Ibid. King suggests that similarly, in order for modern medicine "to make sense to the patient", it needs to be holistic, preventative, and tailored to the individual.

21 KING 2005, 3.

22 Ariphron, quoted in STAFFORD 2005, 123.

comes? If health is the highest good, how can we cope when our highest good is inevitably lost? Health is a legitimate human longing that – realistically – does not last for long.

The Case for Desiring Peace

In contrast to the Greek and Roman medical worldviews, the Hebrew notion of health – although similar to *wholeness* – infuses a spiritual dimension to health and disease. For the ancient Hebrews, the definition of health is found in the biblical concept of *shalom*.[23] *Shalom* looks at health "not [as] a medical or psychological concept but primarily [as] a relational and theological concept".[24] According to the Hebrew Bible, shalom is God's kind of health: physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental well-being, bestowed both on the individual body and on the community. *Shalom* has been translated as "peace", describing the state of harmony with oneself, God, family, community, the land, animals, and all of creation.

Looking at health through the eyes of peace forces us to look at ourselves not just as material bodies but also as "lived bodies", who experience relationships, community, spirituality, and love.[25] Being a body – living as a body – is a process of interpreting ourselves and the world, in which we are all engaged.[26] If health is peace in all relationships, then disease is non-peace.[27] In the Hebrew Bible, health and illness are opposites in a spectrum of states ranging between *shalom* and *sheol*.[28] While peace is God's gift to humanity at creation, illness is a disturbance in God's order for life and for the world. Illness depicts the rift between God and the person or community.[29] Illness

[23] SWINTON 2020.

[24] Op. cit.

[25] SWINTON, John (2023): The Importance of Embodiment for Understanding Mental Health. In: *Intersections*. 19 April. Available at: www.cbhd.org/intersections/the-importance-of-embodiment-for-understanding-mental-health.

[26] KING 2005, 6.

[27] SWINTON 2020.

[28] *Sheol* is not only the place of the dead but a place that can be experienced even while a person is alive (see 2Sam 22:6, Ps 18:5, and Ps 30:3).

[29] RHEE, Helen (2022): *Illness, Pain, and Health Care in Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids (MI), Eerdmans. 82.

can be sent or used by God as a "pedagogical tool" to bring about "repentance and redemption" where there was disobedience or sin.[30] The two antipodes reflect the degree of God's involvement and of the centrifugal forces of destruction at work.[31] Healing, therefore, is the process of taking an individual or a community from the state of death – alienation from God, self, family, or the world – to a state of communion with the same. Healing is about relationship quality.

As church father Lactantius observed, when shalom is disrupted the mind always turns to God. The bereaved, the traumatized, and the chronically ill also experience spiritual pain, of which they might not be as aware as of other kinds of pain. People diagnosed with cancer, much like Job, go through a time of self-reflection and self-accusation: what did I do to deserve this? Why me? Where is God? What kind of God is this who could allow me to suffer so much? The spiritual dimension of pain relates to "a sense of hopelessness, focus on suffering rather than pain, feelings of guilt and shame, unresolved anger, inability to trust, lack of inner peace, and a sense of disconnectedness."[32]

Similar to the desire for health, the desire for shalom meets certain limitations. The good life lived in holistic peace is a desire circumscribed by time (until the moment of death) and by material comfort (described by the prophet Micah's metaphor "everyone under his own vine and fig tree"). For the people of Israel, who had never experienced such a time even in the golden age of Solomon, shalom remained the equivalent of utopia. Even today, a realistic perspective on people and the world seems to confirm the practical hopelessness that a desire for complete peace can be fulfilled.

The Case for Desiring Total Life

Chapter 11 of the Gospel of John is a biblical passage that is particularly suited to address the subject of total pain. The pericope from v. 1 to 44 of the chapter records Jesus intervening into the disruption of shalom that is illness. To set the scene, we

[30] Ibid.

[31] Op. cit. 83, quoting H. Mowvley.

[32] SPECK, Peter (2003): Spiritual/Religious Issues in Care of the Dying. In: Ellershaw, John – Wilkinson, Susie (eds.): *Care for the Dying: A Pathway to Excellence*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 103.

remember that the "good life" for which the people of God were longing was best described by the image of everyone sitting under their own vine and fig tree, without anyone making them afraid (Mi 4:4). Politically, the Roman occupation impeded this goal, hence the acute zeal for a political leader, messiah figure, who would drive out the Roman armies. Spiritually, this objective was hindered by the people's estrangement from God. Religious movements sought to overcome this hurdle by turning the people back to God through (John the Baptizer), through purity and isolation (the Essene community), or through a stricter observance of the Law (the Pharisees). Against the grain of his time, Jesus offered a different definition of and way into "the good life".

The story involves Jesus's best friends, siblings Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. When Lazarus falls ill, the sisters send a message to Jesus, who is hiding from the people trying to arrest him. Jesus delays his coming, and by the time he finally arrives, Lazarus is dead. When Jesus meets the grieving sisters, we realize that they are experiencing a loss that encompasses more than bodily illness, and it includes disappointment, spiritual brokenness, grief, and shock. Jesus reacts to their pain and then goes to Lazarus's tomb, prays to the Father, and commands Lazarus to come out – which he does. The episode is the final blow for the religious establishment, whose leaders decide to have Jesus killed.

In raising Lazarus, I believe that Jesus brings the siblings a solution to their total pain that is not health, nor shalom, but total life.

Total Life Is the End Goal

The text begins and ends with prayers for life. In the beginning, the sisters ask for the restoration of Lazarus's health. They want a reversal of his total pain into total health. Jesus does not answer this prayer. In this instance, he has something else in mind. At the end of the pericope, Jesus asks the Father for Lazarus's life. Although he asks for the same thing as the sisters (life), we note the significance of Jesus's words in v. 25, between the two requests: the kind of life he offers is different from the kind of life that the sisters requested. What Jesus offers is not total health but what I have come to call "total life".

The life of the ages, as scholar N. T. Wright translates *zoe aionios*,[33] is a main recurring theme of the gospel of John. In "secular Greek, *aionios* means eternal",[34] but in John "[w]hat makes ["life"] special is not the fact that it's endless, but it has a particular quality: 'the life of the new age'."[35] John transforms the phrase "eternal life" to mean "the new life enjoyed by the faithful ... more than ordinary physical existence: it is the life of faith … radically different from natural life", and it is received as a result of belief in Jesus.[36]

According to N. T. Wright, this "new life which will be consummated in the resurrection itself works backwards into the present".[37] When Lazarus was raised back to life, he did not receive an immortal, glorified body like that of the resurrected Jesus.[38] He came back in the same kind of body, "resuming ordinary activities", now including the threat to his life, and was subject to another biological death.[39] However, what happened to his perishable body was a foretaste of the future imperishable resurrection, a sign that "present, undying 'eternal life' is available, anticipating that resurrection, for all who believe".[40]

Wright also warns that resurrection as "a metaphor for present spiritual life" is not the only layer of meaning in John, but it must be coupled with "the promise of eventual resurrection".[41] In fulfilment of Jesus's words to Martha, and also of his promises in chapters 5 and 6, Lazarus's resuscitation shows that "those who believe are given a real, new identity in the present, a life which now will never die".[42] Thus, the "life of the age to come" is both for the present and for the future.[43] Like all believers, Lazarus had to continue living day by day with the life of the age to come present in his mortal body, in the hope of eternal life in the great resurrection.

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[33] WRIGHT, N. T. (2003): *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Minneapolis (MN), Fortress Press. Ch. 9. 6.

[34] What is eternal life in *John* is the life of the kingdom in the Synoptics. ASHTON, John (2007): *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 404.

[35] Op. cit. 402.

[36] Ibid.

[37] WRIGHT 2006, Ch. 9. 6.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

Different from the concept of *shalom*, the abundant life offered by Jesus (10:10) is independent of material comfort or health status. Total life may include illness and suffering, and it does not avoid death. Rather than it being an escape from mortal life, it is a taste of future immortality.

Total Life Is the Antidote to Death

When Jesus declares that Lazarus is sleeping and he will go wake him up (v. 11), the disciples think in terms of semiology: that undisturbed sleep shows a body recovering from illness.[44] We note that the author uses sleep to describe both restored health and death. The extent to which Judaism understood sleep as a metaphor for a future resurrection or used it as a simple idiom is debated.[45] Ancient biblical and extra-biblical sources document the use of the image of death as sleep.[46]

To render the disciples' understanding of Lazarus's wake-up call, the gospel author uses the word *sozo*, which carries both the meaning "to heal" and "to save".[47] The hope that the disciples have for Lazarus is healing, recovery, a cure (salvation).[48]

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[44] Jesus does not deny that Lazarus will be saved, but he does not pick up that word. He chooses to continue with the sleep metaphor, which to me says that "waking up" is a more accurate term for what is about to happen than "salvation" or "healing". A study of the word *sozo* 'salvation' in the context of life in John hints at the idea that salvation as healing has one purpose only: the eternal life of the ages.

[45] KEENER, Craig S. (2003): *The Gospel of John*. 2 vols. Grand Rapids (MI), Baker Academic. 2: 841. PAROSCHI, Wilson (2017): Death as Sleep: The (Mis)use of a Biblical Metaphor. In: *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*. 28, 1. 37–41. For an exhaustive treatment of the subject of beliefs about death and resurrection in antiquity, see WRIGHT 2003.

[46] KEENER 2003, 2: 840–841; MEYE THOMPSON, Marriane (2015): *John: A Commentary*. Louisville (KY), Westminster John Knox Press. 242. Popular belief associates sleep during illness with signs of recovery; in Greek iconography, also, Sleep (Hypnos) accompanies Health (Hygieia). STAFFORD 2005, 122. In Greek, the word *koimeterion* 'sleeping chamber' is a euphemism for "burial place" and the source of the word "cemetery". In Romanian, some describe the deceased as sleeping the eternal sleep (*își doarme somnul cel de veci*). For the Greeks, the word bears no hint of a possible resurrection in a "hereafter" – there is no "waking up" from this sleep. WRIGHT 2003, Ch. 9. 6.

[47] In the Synoptics, *sozo* is also used both for salvation and for physical healing. ASHTON 2007, 405. Depending on the translation, the text in Jn 11:12 says, "he will get better", "he will do well", "he will recover", "he will come out of it", "he will be all right", and "he will be saved".

[48] ASHTON 2007, 405.

The word *sozo* is used six times in John: once by the narrator, once by the disciples (v. 12 in our text), and four times by Jesus. Once, Jesus uses the verb to speak about the Father sparing him from the coming suffering (12:27). Three times (5:34, 10:9, 12:47), Jesus speaks about others being saved, and each time he connects salvation with life.[49] Thus, in John, salvation or healing has one purpose: *zoe aionios*, the life of the age to come.

John uses the misunderstanding of terms to point to the new quality of life that Jesus is bringing in the here and now, not only in the eschaton.[50] When Jesus uses sleep as a metaphor for death (albeit not a frequent metaphor)[51] and waking up as a metaphor for resurrection (v. 11),[52] he associates sleep with death rather than with disease, as the disciples had done, and as the Greek healing cults did. Implicitly, this means that Jesus connects "waking up from sleep" to resurrection rather than to healing.[53] By waking Lazarus from the dead, Jesus foreshadowed the final resurrection of the dead on "the last day".[54]

By pioneering the resurrection life in a time and space before the eschaton, he inaugurated a new kind of life, ontologically different from any other kind of life: *zoe aionios*. As theologian John Ashton noted, "A life that is not subject to death differs

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[49] Salvation comes through the testimony of his words (in context, 5:40 specifies "that you may have life"); through Jesus, who is the door to pasture (in context, 10:10 states his purpose is to give abundant life to his sheep); and through him and his teaching (in context, the salvation he offers the world is linked to the eternal life that the Father proclaims, 12:50).

[50] ASHTON 2007, 405.

[51] WRIGHT 2003, Ch. 9. 6.

[52] When the disciples say Lazarus is sleeping, they think literally, and expect Jesus is thinking literally, too. v. 13. Jesus must clarify that when he said "sleeps", he was referring to death. He does not clarify what he meant to say by "waking him up" – perhaps he wanted them to figure it out.

[53] One observation we can make is the relevance of this association for those who think of death as a surmountable disease and obsessively research ways of overcoming it through techniques such as cryogenics, mind uploading, and transhumanism. Examples for the general public can be found by MLADIN, Nathan (2024): *AI and the Afterlife: From Digital Mourning to Mind Uploading*. In: *Theos Think Tank Report* (15.02.2024). Available at: https://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/research/2024/02/15/ai-and-the-afterlife-from-digital-mourning-to-mind-uploading; MARR, Bernard (2023): AI Can Now Make You Immortal – But Should It? In: *Forbes* 21 February. Available at: https://www.forbes.com/sites/bernardmarr/2023/02/21/ai-can-now-make-you-immortal—but-should-it/. The point remains that Jesus can "wake up" those who "sleep the sleep of death". The hope needed to address death anxiety is Jesus's definitive victory over death, not scientistic solutions that see death as a conquerable disease.

[54] MEYE THOMPSON 2015, 242–243.

from natural life in essence, not just in duration."[55] The life of the ages is what I call the "total life".

Total Life Is a Secure Attachment

The gospel author makes a strong case for the premise that Jesus loves his suffering friends. At the beginning of the story, John emphasizes that Jesus loved the three siblings, as individuals and as a family (vv. 3, 5, 11).[56] He implies the same when he names them repeatedly, describing their relationship and their closeness.[57] By naming the sisters first in the sequence of the beloved (v. 5), the author implies either that the women were closer to Jesus than their brother or more important to the author.[58]

Love is at the basis of what modern psychology calls "secure attachment". Attachment theory says that humans are "programmed to seek bonds and relationships of affection with others".[59] People's ability to have healthy relationships in adulthood depends largely on the quality of attachment to their carer that they had as an infant.[60] In attachment theory, love is important for its implications for one's resilience and ability to handle suffering and trauma.[61] In the context of death, lack of love and an

[55] ASHTON 2007, 403.

[56] MORRIS, Leon (1971): *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids (MI), Eerdmans. 539.

[57] Mary and Martha are the only named women said to have been loved by Jesus. WITHERINGTON III, Ben (1990): *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 105.

[58] Ibid. Ancient literature listed people in order of their importance. This has ramifications (not explored here) in approaching the subject of women involved in the ministry of the early church, for example.

[59] COCKAYNE, Joshua – HARROWER, Scott – HILL, Preston (2022): Dawn of Sunday: The Trinity and Trauma-Safe Churches. Eugene (OR), Cascade Books. Ch. 3.

[60] Ibid. "Our attachments with others are determined by the right combination of (i) being safely loved and (ii) having safe boundaries." Ibid.

[61] RINGEL, Shoshana (2020): Attachment Theory. In: Ringel, Shoshana – Brandell, Jerrold R. (eds.): *Trauma: Contemporary Directions in Trauma Theory, Research and Practice*. New York (NY), Columbia University Press. 128–130; BOWLBY, John (1980): *Attachment and Loss*. 3 vols. New York: Basic Books. 3: 241–242; THOMPSON, Curt (2023): *The Deepest Place: Suffering and the Formation of Hope*. Grand Rapids (MI), Zondervan. *passim*.

insecure attachment style is at the heart of pathological grieving.[62] A trauma such as illness or death disrupts our sense of safety, which is "essential to human flourishing and our relationships of attachment with others is one of the key factors in this sense of safety".[63] Psychologist Curt Thompson emphasizes that suffering and healing can only be understood in the context of a person's attachment to God.[64]

Throughout John 11, we see ways in which Jesus develops secure attachment between him and his friends, a testimony that "strong bonds create deep trust".[65] We see Jesus mirroring the emotions of the women: he discusses theology with Martha, as she processes her pain verbally (vv. 21–27), and he cries with Mary, as she processes her pain by ruminating and collapsing (vv. 32–35). Jesus recognizes their pain, validates it, and compounds it with his own grief and lament (vv. 33, 35, 38). We intuit thus that the women are safely connected to Jesus, because he truly sees them and is attuned to their needs.[66] The picture here is of a fully man God who joins humans in the very depth of their sorrow: Jesus loves, therefore he suffers (v. 35); he suffers, therefore he loves (v. 36). Jesus is the suffering God, and such a god, in the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, is the only God who can help.[67]

To be safely loved is one of two components needed for the sense of safety – the other one is safe boundaries.[68] The boundaries that Jesus drew in the case of Lazarus's illness can cause consternation: he delayed his coming (v. 6), and he expressed joy at the thought of his absence at the moment of his friend's death (vv. 14, 15). By setting these uncomfortable boundaries, Jesus shows that he alone is in control of his own actions, and he has a higher purpose for the pain.

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62 Insecure attachment is characteristic of children raised by parents who, "for reasons stemming from their own childhoods and/or from difficulties in the marriage, found their children's desire for love and care a burden and responded to them irritably – by ignoring, scolding or moralizing." BOWLBY 1980, 216–217.

63 COCKAYNE – HARROWER – HILL 2022, Ch. 3.

64 THOMPSON 2023, 8–9.

65 COCKAYNE – HARROWER – HILL, Ch. 3.

66 Ibid.

67 Dietrich Bonhoeffer quoted by BAUCKHAM, Richard (1984): "Only the Suffering God Can Help": Divine Passibility in Modern Theology. In: *Themelios*. 9, 3(April). 6–12.

68 COCKAYNE – HARROWER – HILL, Ch. 3.

Total Life Is the Fulfilment of Meaning

Psychology confirms that meaning-making is essential for the trauma recovery process.[69] Some faith systems offer little in terms of meaning for illness or death. In the Hebrew Bible and other religious systems (such as Islam), suffering can indicate God's displeasure or punishment. By virtue of Second Temple interpretations, a valid option for Mary and Martha was to interpret their brother's untimely death as God's chastisement (the text does not say that this is what they did). Jesus himself did not correlate the siblings' suffering with God's displeasure or punishment.

There are several ways in which the gospel author imbues suffering and death with meaning and purpose. First, he insists that the siblings were Jesus's beloved friends (11:5). Then, he stresses the intentionality of Jesus's delay (v. 6). Most importantly, he records Jesus's explicit meaning-making: that the illness is for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified through it (v. 4). For Jesus, the display of the glory of God is worth any pain, including his own. Lest we dismiss the glory of God as an unworthy cause, we would do well to remember that on the eve of his assassination, Martin Luther King Jr. had this to say about the cost of God's glory in his life: "Like anybody, I would like to live a long life… But I'm not concerned with that now. I just want to do God's will… I'm not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."[70] What makes life worth living and gives meaning to life for Mary and Martha, for Martin Luther King Jr, and for all believers in Christ is to see the glory of God.

In the context of John's gospel and of chapter 11 in particular, God's glory is linked to Jesus's identity as Life and Resurrection, not only through raising Lazarus, but also through his own resurrection. In Jesus, the resuscitation of a decomposing body is expanded to resurrection into eternal life and glory.[71] Jesus as the Resurrection brings humanity a tangible way to anticipate the state of perfect health and happiness available

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[69] HERMAN, Judith (1992): *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. New York (NY), Basic Books. *passim*.

[70] Martin Luther King Jr quoted in CONE, James H. (2011): *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll (NY), Orbis Books. 91.

[71] One point of the Lazarus story seems to be that anything typically human (life, emotion) is held by Jesus even more so. Jesus is the archetypal Human, the "original pattern or model of which all things of the same type are representations or copies" (Merriam-Webster, *archetype*).

at only two points in history: in the first past and in the final future. In Resurrection, Jesus restores the human that was lost in the first Garden to eternal life in the ultimate Garden-City.

Conclusions

Seeking health as the highest good is ultimately disappointing. Shalom may be available in the New Creation, but it is unattainable in the here and now. Illness, old age, and death eventually catch up with everyone. In contrast to these goals, the total life that Jesus offers provides present meaning, purpose, hope, companionship, and community. This life is not only eschatological but available through faith in Jesus, even to those in the process of dying: the one who believes will live, even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes will never die (vv. 25, 26).

A natural life full of health, joy, and peace is good and desirable. But a suffering life in which Jesus intervenes is better, as it bears the quality of God's future kingdom, of God's good, total life. Total pain does not cohabit with shalom, because shalom by definition excludes any kind of pain. Total pain can, however, cohabit with total life – the life of the ages that is given to those who believe in Jesus in the struggles of life here and now, even while "all of us is wrong".

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Andrea FERENCZI[1*] – *Veronika MÉSZÁROS*[2]:

Reward- and Punishment-Sensitive Relational Mechanisms: Gender Asymmetries in Dyadic Coping and Relationship Satisfaction

Abstract.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND – Relationship satisfaction is not merely an individual experience but a phenomenon that emerges through partners' interactions, in which the coping behaviours of both individuals play a crucial role.
GOALS – The present study aimed to explore how different dimensions of dyadic coping are associated with relationship satisfaction through intrapersonal (actor) and interpersonal (partner) effects, and whether these associations exhibit gender asymmetry.
METHODS – The sample consisted of 184 heterosexual couples (N = 368; 184 women and 184 men). Women's ages ranged from 18 to 75 years (M = 32.94, SD = 12.78), while men's ages were between 18 and 85 years (M = 35.62, SD = 13.50). Dyadic coping was assessed using relevant subscales of the *Dyadic Coping Inventory*

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(DCI-H), and relationship satisfaction was measured with the Hungarian version of the *Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS-H)*. The hypotheses were tested within the *Actor–Partner Interdependence Model (APIM)* using structural equation modeling.
RESULTS – The results showed that for both men and women, positive forms of dyadic coping were positively associated with individuals' own relationship satisfaction, whereas negative coping was negatively associated with the same. Common dyadic coping and its positive evaluation were significantly related to the satisfaction of both partners. With regard to partner effects, a gender asymmetry emerged: men's positive coping was more strongly associated with their female partners' relationship satisfaction, whereas negative coping was particularly strongly related to men's own satisfaction. These findings may reflect differentiated functioning of reward- and punishment-sensitive relational mechanisms: women's relationship satisfaction appears to be more responsive to reinforcing and validating interactions, whereas men's satisfaction seems to be more strongly affected by critical and rejecting behaviours.
CONCLUSIONS – The study contributes to a deeper understanding of gender-specific patterns in dyadic coping and offers practical implications for the targeted design of dyadically oriented couple therapy interventions.

Keywords: dyadic coping, relationship satisfaction, Actor–Partner Interdependence Model, gender asymmetry, reward sensitivity, punishment sensitivity

1. Introduction

Relationship satisfaction is associated with a range of health indicators, including lower levels of depressive and anxiety symptoms, more adaptive regulation of physiological stress responses, and higher quality of life.[3] At the same time, relationship satisfaction is not merely the outcome of an individual's internal evaluation but a reciprocal process in which partners' behaviour, emotion regulation, and communication mutually shape each other's relational experience.[4] Accordingly, the study of relationship functioning

[3] ROBLES, Theodore F. – SLATCHER, Richard B. – TROMBELLO, Joseph M. – MCGINN, Meghan M. (2014): Marital Quality and Health: A Meta-analytic Review. In: *Psychological Bulletin*. 140, 1. 140–187; WHISMAN, Mark A. – BAUCOM, Donald H. (2012): Intimate Relationships and Psychopathology. In: *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*. 15, 1. 4–13.

[4] KENNY, David A. – KASHY, Deborah A. – COOK, William L. (2006): *Dyadic Data Analysis*. The Guilford Press.

justifiably relies on dyadic analytical frameworks that allow for the distinction between how individuals' own characteristics are associated with their own relationship experience (actor effect) and how they influence their partner's satisfaction (partner effect).[5]

The examination of these processes is relevant not only from the perspective of individual well-being but also within a broader societal context. According to data from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH [HCSO]), 46,550 marriages were registered in 2024 compared to 50,139 in 2023; the number of divorces was 10,291 in 2024 and 9,335 in 2023.[6] These trends are relevant not only demographically but also from psychological and communicative perspectives: maintaining stable and mutually satisfying relationships in the contemporary social environment – characterized by economic uncertainty, work–life tensions, and intensive information load – requires increased adaptability and effective coping on the part of couples.[7]

1.1. Relationship Satisfaction as a Dyadic Phenomenon

Relationship satisfaction represents a global, subjective evaluation of the relationship, shaped by the balance of positive and negative experiences in everyday life, the fulfilment of needs, commitment, and the resources invested in the relationship.[8] In Hendrick's conceptualization, satisfaction is an integrated indicator of feelings, cognitions, and behaviours related to relationship experience, which is associated, among other factors, with the subjective levels of love, commitment, self-disclosure, and intimacy.[9]

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5 COOK, William L. – KENNY, David A. (2005): The Actor–Partner Interdependence Model: A Model of Bidirectional Effects in Developmental Studies. In: *International Journal of Behavioral Development*. 29, 2. 101–109; KENNY – KASHY – COOK 2006.

6 KÖZPONTI STATISZTIKAI HIVATAL (2024). *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv. 2024: 2. Népesség és népmozgalom (Házasságkötések, válások).* Available at: https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/hu/nep0015.html.

7 MÉSZÁROS, Veronika – ABARI, Kálmán – POLONYI, Tünde – LØVSETH, Lise Tevik – ÁDÁM, Szilvia (2020): A munka–család konfliktus interkulturális jellemzői: A rizikó- és protektív faktorok elemzése, különös tekintettel a karrierre. In: Polonyi, Tamás – Abari, Kálmán – Kiss, Tamás (eds.): *Válságok megelőzése és kezelése.* Budapest, Oriold és Társa. 143–162.

8 GOTTMAN, John M. (1995): *Why Marriages Succeed or Fail: And How You Can Make Yours Last.* Simon & Schuster; RUSBULT, Caryl E. – MARTZ, John M. – AGNEW, Christopher R. (1998): The Investment Model Scale: Measuring Commitment Level, Satisfaction Level, Quality of Alternatives, and Investment Size. In: *Personal Relationships.* 5, 4. 357–387.

9 HENDRICK, Susan S. (1988): A Generic Measure of Relationship Satisfaction. In: *Journal of Marriage and the Family.* 50, 1. 93–98.

All the same, relationship satisfaction is not exclusively an individual construct but a phenomenon that emerges through mutual interactions with the partner. The partner's behaviour, communication, and coping strategies constitute active components of relationship quality. Therefore, research on relationship satisfaction increasingly relies on dyadic analytical approaches that conceptualize partners' data not in isolation but as an interdependent system.[10]

One of the foundational models of this approach is the Actor–Partner Interdependence Model (APIM), which allows for the examination of how a given psychological characteristic or behaviour affects an individual's own relationship experience (actor effect) as well as that of their partner (partner effect).[11] This framework is particularly well suited to research questions with implications for couple therapy, as a central issue from a therapeutic perspective is whether a behavioural change improves only the individual's well-being or extends to the partner's experience and the relationship as a whole.

1.2. Stress, Conflict, and Coping in Romantic Relationships

Stress and conflict are inevitable aspects of romantic relationships; yet not all conflict is detrimental, as disagreements managed constructively may be accompanied by increased intimacy and mutual understanding.[12] Having said that, from the perspective of relationship quality, it is crucial how partners communicate under stress and what coping strategies they put into action. Under high levels of stress, communication patterns and attributional styles may shift in a maladaptive direction, increasing the likelihood of dysfunctional interactions and reducing the subjective quality of the relationship.[13]

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10 KENNY – KASHY – COOK 2006.

11 COOK – KENNY 2005.

12 GOTTMAN, John M. (1991): Predicting the Longitudinal Course of Marriages. In: *Journal of Marriage and the Family Therapy*. 17, 1. 3–7; RANDS, Marylyn – LEVINGER, George – MELLINGER, Glenn D. (1981): Patterns of Conflict Resolution and Marital Satisfaction. In: *Journal of Family Issues*. 2, 3. 297–321.

13 BOLGER, Niall – DELONGIS, Anita – KESSLER, Ronald C. – WETHINGTON, Elaine (1989): The Contagion of Stress across Multiple Roles. In: *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. 51, 1. 175–183; NEFF, Lisa A. – KARNEY, Benjamin R. (2009): Stress and Reactivity to Daily Relationship Experiences: How Stress Hinders Adaptive Processes in Marriage. In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 97, 3. 435–450.

Classical models of stress and coping have historically adopted an individual-focused perspective;[14] however, understanding relationship functioning requires that coping be conceptualized as a social and relational process as well. Support experienced from a romantic partner represents a qualitatively distinct form of support: it is often more intense, has implications for identity and intimacy, and functions as a signalling system relevant to the maintenance and security of the relationship.

1.3. Dyadic Stress

Traditional theoretical models of stress and coping have primarily focused on individual psychological processes; however, in recent decades, increasing emphasis has been placed on approaches that examine coping within a social and relational context.[15] This shift of perspectives reflects the recognition that a substantial proportion of stress in adulthood emerges within intimate relationships and directly affects their functioning.

The theoretical framework of the present study is provided by Bodenmann's Systemic–Transactional Model, which conceptualizes stress occurring within romantic relationships as a dyadic phenomenon and coping as a reciprocal process between partners.[16] The central concept of the model is dyadic stress, which arises from events, situations, or changes that directly or indirectly affect both members of the couple. Bodenmann describes dyadic stress along three dimensions: (1) the mode of impact (direct vs. indirect), (2) its origin (intra- vs. extradyadic), and (3) its temporal pattern (stressors affecting partners simultaneously vs. at different points in time).[17] Direct dyadic stress refers to situations in which both partners are confronted with the same stressor or when stress emerges directly from the dynamics of the relationship. In contrast, indirect dyadic stress occurs when one partner's individual stress experience "spills over" into the relationship and exerts an influence on both partners as intradyadic stress.

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[14] FOLKMAN, Susan (2013): Stress: Appraisal and Coping. In: Gellman, Marc D. – Turner, John Rick (eds.): *Encyclopedia of Behavioral Medicine.* New York (NY), Springer. 1913–1915.

[15] MARTOS, Júlia – SALLAY, Viola – SZABÓ, Evelin – TÓTH-VAJNA, Rita – MARTOS, Tamás (2018): Diádikus stressz és megküzdés – elméleti modellek és alkalmazások. In: *Mentálhigiéné és Pszichoszomatika.* 19, 1. 33–54.

[16] BODENMANN, Guy (1997): Dyadic Coping: A Systemic-Transactional View of Stress and Coping among Couples: Theory and Empirical Findings. In: *European Review of Applied Psychology.* 47, 2. 137–140.

[17] BODENMANN 1997.

The emergence of dyadic stress requires shared appraisal and coordinated responses from the partners; this process is referred to in the model as dyadic coping. In Bodenmann's conceptualization, dyadic coping is a multistep, transactional process that can be paralleled with the cognitive appraisal model described by Lazarus and Folkman.[18] The first step involves the identification and interpretation of the stressful situation by one or both partners. This is followed by the communication of stress to the partner through verbal and nonverbal signals, including the explicit expression of support needs. The partner may respond to these signals with various coping responses, which may be supportive, neutral, or maladaptive.

According to the model, the aim of dyadic coping is to restore individual and relational equilibrium, while partners' responses continuously shape one another through ongoing interaction. The specific patterns of coping are influenced by multiple factors, including the origin of the stress, the manner of partners' involvement, the overall quality of the relationship, the partners' motivations and resources, and the temporal characteristics of the situation.[19]

1.4. Empirical Associations: Dyadic Coping and Relationship Satisfaction

The international literature is fairly consistent in showing that positive forms of dyadic coping are associated with higher relationship satisfaction, whereas negative patterns predict lower satisfaction.[20] Meta-analytic findings indicate that dyadic coping is a strong

[18] LAZARUS, Richard S. – FOLKMAN, Susan (1984): *Stress, Appraisal, and Coping.* New York, Springer.

[19] BODENMANN, Guy – RANDALL, Ashley. K – FALCONIER, Mariana K. (2016): Coping in Couples: The Systemic-Transactional Model (STM). In: Falconier, Mariana K. – Randall, Ashley K. – Bodenmann, Guy (eds.): *Couples Coping with Stress: A Cross-cultural Perspective.* New York – London, Routledge. 5–22.

[20] PAPP, Lauren M. – WITT, Nicole L. (2010): Romantic Partners' Individual Coping Strategies and Dyadic Coping: Implications for Relationship Functioning. In: *Journal of Family Psychology: JFP: Journal of the Division of Family Psychology of the American Psychological Association (Division 43)*. 24, 5. 551–559; REGAN, Tim W. – LAMBERT, Sylvie D. – KELLY, Brian – MCELDUFF, Patrick – GIRGIS, Afaf – KAYSER, Karen – TURNER, Jane (2014): Cross-sectional Relationships between Dyadic Coping and Anxiety, Depression, and Relationship Satisfaction for Patients with Prostate Cancer and Their Spouses. In: *Patient Education and Counseling*. 96, 1. 120–127; FALCONIER, Mariana K. – JACKSON, Jeffrey B. – HILPERT, Peter – BODENMANN, Guy (2015): Dyadic Coping and Relationship Satisfaction: A Meta-analysis. In: *Clinical Psychology Review*. 42. 28–46.

predictor of relationship satisfaction as well, and this association appears to be independent of several demographic variables (e.g. age, educational level, relationship duration).[21] Particularly strong associations have been found for the perceived quality of the partner's coping and for dimensions of common dyadic coping.[22] Two mechanisms appear to underlie these findings: on the one hand, dyadic coping mitigates the negative impact of stress on the relationship; on the other hand, it strengthens the "we-experience", that is, mutual trust and intimacy, which stabilizes the positive representation of the relationship under conditions of stress.[23] Accordingly, supportive behaviour may exert beneficial effects on the relationship even when it does not directly reduce the partner's negative affect, as it contributes to a more positive subjective evaluation of relationship quality.[24]

From the perspective of the present study, it is a particularly noteworthy finding that dyadic coping is a stronger predictor of relationship satisfaction than individual coping strategies.[25] This association provides strong support for the focus of the current research, as dyadic processes – such as stress communication, partner support, and joint problem solving – are more directly linked to the everyday dynamics of relationship interactions than individual dispositional characteristics.

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21 FALCONIER – JACKSON – HILPERT – BODENMANN 2015.

22 BODENMANN, Guy – PIHET, Sandrine – KAYSER, Karen (2006): The Relationship between Dyadic Coping and Marital Quality: A 2-Year Longitudinal Study. In: *Journal of Family Psychology*. 20, 3. 485–493; FALCONIER – JACKSON – HILPERT – BODENMANN 2015; LANDIS, Marion – PETER-WIGHT, Melanie – MARTIN, Mike – BODENMANN, Guy (2013): Dyadic Coping and Marital Satisfaction of Older Spouses in Long-Term Marriage. In: *GeroPsych: The Journal of Gerontopsychology and Geriatric Psychiatry*. 26, 1. 39–48.

23 BODENMANN, Guy (2005): Dyadic Coping and Its Significance for Marital Functioning. In: Revenson, Tracey A. – Kayser, Karen – Bodenmann, Guy (eds.): *Couples Coping with Stress: Emerging Perspectives on Dyadic Coping*. Washington, DC, American Psychological Association. 33–49.

24 COYNE et al. 1990 – qtd in RANDALL, Ashley K. – BODENMANN, Guy (2009): The Role of Stress on Close Relationships and Marital Satisfaction. In: *Clinical Psychology Review*. 29, 2. 105–115.

25 HERZBERG, Philipp Yorck (2013): Coping in Relationships: The Interplay between Individual and Dyadic Coping and Their Effects on Relationship Satisfaction. In: *Anxiety, Stress, and Coping*. 26, 2. 136–153.

1.5. Positive and Negative Dyadic Coping: Reward- and Punishment-Sensitive Relational Mechanisms

The qualitative dimensions of dyadic coping – particularly the distinction between positive and negative forms – shed light on different psychological mechanisms underlying relationship satisfaction. Positive dyadic coping (e.g. empathic support, constructive feedback, joint problem solving) not only serves to reduce stress but also functions as a reinforcing signal of the relationship's value and security. In contrast, negative dyadic coping (e.g. criticism, rejection, or withdrawal) may convey threat to the relationship and signal increased relational strain.

Communication-theoretical and social psychological approaches consistently emphasize that positive feedback, affirming evaluations, and constructive communicative behaviours from the partner contribute to higher levels of relationship satisfaction in both genders. At the same time, several empirical studies postulate that these positive effects may be more pronounced among women.[26] Conversely, negative forms of communication and coping – particularly hostile, critical, or devaluing expressions – are more strongly associated with decreases in men's relationship satisfaction. Studies by Campbell, Renshaw, and Klein have shown that non-hostile, constructive criticism – functionally corresponding to elements of positive dyadic coping – is more positively associated with relationship quality for both genders; however, women's relationship satisfaction appears to be more sensitive to the positive, evaluative aspects of partner communication.[27] In contrast, hostile, punitive criticism has shown a stronger negative association particularly with men's relationship satisfaction. This asymmetry suggests that the positive and negative aspects of communication may carry different psychological meanings for women and men: whereas supportive and affirming behaviours may function as significant relational resources for women, critical, rejecting, or punitive interactions may represent more salient risk factors for men's relationship satisfaction.

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[26] OVERALL, Nicola C. – FLETCHER, Garth J. O. – SIMPSON, Jeffry A. (2006): Regulation Processes in Intimate Relationships: The Role of Ideal Standards. In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.* 91, 4. 662–685; CROSS, Susan E. – MADSON, Laura (1997): Models of the Self: Self-construals and Gender. In: *Psychological Bulletin.* 122, 1. 5–37.

[27] CAMPBELL, Sarah B. – RENSHAW, Keith D. – KLEIN, Sarah R. (2017): Sex Differences in Associations of Hostile and Non-hostile Criticism with Relationship Quality. In: *The Journal of Psychology.* 151, 4. 416–430.

These findings support the examination of positive and negative dimensions of dyadic coping in a differentiated, dyadic, and gender-specific framework. Accordingly, dyadic coping can be conceptualized not merely as a stress-reducing mechanism but also as an interactional system that conveys reward- and punishment-sensitive relational processes.

1.6. Gender, Communication Norms, and Emotion Regulation: A Socio-Cultural Framework

The associations between dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction cannot be fully understood without considering gender and culturally transmitted norms of communication. According to social role theory and biopsychosocial approaches, the behaviour, emotional expression, and relational strategies of women and men are partly structured by expectations associated with gender roles.[28] Norms linked to masculinity (e.g. control, emotional restraint, instrumental problem solving) and expectations associated with femininity (e.g. monitoring the relationship, emotional labour, managing support) may give rise to distinct interactional patterns.[29]

In social contexts where communication and emotion expression rules tied to gender roles shape relationship interactions more powerfully, men's stress communication and coping behaviour may be particularly influential for the relational climate and the female partner's subjective satisfaction.[30] In contrast, women's coping strategies are often more oriented towards emotion regulation and the maintenance of relationship stability, which may be reflected in differential actor and partner effects.[31]

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[28] EAGLY, Alice H. – WOOD, Wendy (2012): Social Role Theory. In: Van Lange, Paula A. M. – Kruglanski, Arie W. – Higgins, E. Tory (eds.): *The Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*. Sage. 458–476.

[29] MAHALIK, James R. – BURNS, Shaun M. – SYZDEK, Matthew (2007): Masculinity and Perceived Normative Health Behaviors as Predictors of Men's Health Behaviors. In: *Social Science & Medicine (1982)*. 64, 11. 2201–2209.

[30] BODENMANN 2005; RANDALL, Ashley K. – BODENMANN, Guy (2017): Stress and Its Associations with Relationship Satisfaction. In: *Current Opinion in Psychology*. 13. 96–106.

[31] GROSS, James J. (2015): Emotion Regulation: Current Status and Future Prospects. In: *Psychological Inquiry*. 26, 1. 1–26.

Empirical findings on dyadic coping consistently point to gender asymmetries in the patterning of actor and partner effects. In their APIM analysis, Papp and Witt demonstrated that dyadic coping strategies are associated with both one's own and the partner's relationship functioning for both genders; however, the direction and magnitude of partner effects differ by gender.[32] In the Hungarian adaptation of the Dyadic Coping Inventory, Martos and colleagues likewise identified gender differences in the coping dimensions most strongly associated with relationship satisfaction: whereas among men, one's own coping efforts showed a closer association with relationship satisfaction, in the case of women, the combined influence of multiple interrelated factors – particularly partner-provided support and common dyadic coping – proved to be more decisive.[33]

Building on the theoretical and empirical frameworks outlined above, the present study conceptualizes relationship satisfaction as a dyadic phenomenon and looks into how different dimensions of dyadic coping – particularly stress communication, supportive, delegated, negative, and common dyadic coping – contribute to relational well-being. The applied dyadic analytical strategy (Actor–Partner Interdependence Model, APIM) allows for the distinction between those aspects of coping processes that are primarily associated with individuals' own relationship experience (actor effects) and those that affect the partner's relationship satisfaction (partner effects), as well as for the examination of the extent to which these associations exhibit gender-specific patterns.

1.7. Aims and Hypotheses

The aim of the present study was to explore how different dimensions of dyadic coping contribute to relationship satisfaction among women and men, with particular emphasis on actor and partner effects. By applying a dyadic analytical framework, the study sought to conceptualize relationship functioning as an interdependent system, while also taking into account asymmetries arising from gender roles and communication norms. Based on the literature reviewed in the introduction, the following hypotheses were formulated:

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[32] PAPP – WITT 2010.

[33] MARTOS, Tamás – SALLAY, Viola – NISTOR, Mihaela – JÓZSA, Péter (2012): Párkapcsolati megküzdés és jóllét – a Páros Megküzdés Kérdőív magyar változata. In: *Psychiatria Hungarica*. 27, 6. 446–458.

H1 – General actor effects

It was hypothesized that, for both genders, positive forms of dyadic coping (stress communication, supportive and delegated dyadic coping) would be positively associated with one's own relationship satisfaction, whereas negative dyadic coping would be negatively associated with the same.

H2 – The prominent role of common dyadic coping

Common dyadic coping and its positive evaluation were expected to show stronger associations with relationship satisfaction when compared to individual coping forms for both women and men.

H3 – Gender asymmetry in partner effects

Gender differences were expected in partner effects: women's relationship satisfaction was hypothesized to be more sensitive to the partner's coping behaviour than men's satisfaction. Accordingly, men's coping strategies – particularly positive and negative forms – were expected to show stronger associations with their female partners' satisfaction than vice versa.

H4 – Differential gender relevance of positive and negative coping

Positive dyadic coping was expected to be more strongly associated with women's satisfaction, whereas negative dyadic coping was expected to show stronger associations with men's satisfaction, both at the actor and partner levels.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Psychology, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary under the project titled *Factors Supporting Couple and Marital Relationships* (ethical approval number: BTK/167/2023). Data collection took place between December 2022 and December 2023.

The present study was realized as part of a broader research project that examined several psychological variables in addition to dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction (e.g. religiosity, life satisfaction, perceived social support, hope, and gratitude). The current paper focuses exclusively on the associations between dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction.

The sample consisted of 184 heterosexual couples (N = 368 individuals), whose responses were matched in the dataset using an identical code. The gender distribution was balanced (184 women and 184 men). Women's ages ranged from 18 to 75 years (M = 32.94, SD = 12.78), while men's ages ranged from 18 to 85 years (M = 35.62, SD = 13.50). On average, men were 2.68 years older than their partners. In the majority of the couples (approximately 62%), the male partner was older.

Most participants had secondary or higher education. Among men, the most common educational level was a university degree (36.4%), whereas among women the most frequent category was general secondary education (35.9%), followed by university education (30.4%).

Regarding relationship status, 55.4% of the couples were in a non-marital partnership, while 44.6% were married. The estimated mean duration of the relationship was 6.8 years; half of the couples had been together for less than three years, whereas approximately one-fifth had been in a relationship for more than fifteen years.

Approximately one-third of the participants had children. Concerning the place of residence, nearly 40% lived in the capital city, about 38% in other cities, while smaller proportions lived in county seats or smaller settlements.

Self-reported religiosity showed a heterogeneous distribution: among men, the most common response was "not religious" (41.8%), whereas among women the category "religious in my own way" (40.2%) was most frequent (see *Table 1* for more detailed information).

Table 1. *Demographic characteristics by gender*

Variable	Men (n = 184)		Women (n = 184)	
	n	%	n	%
Educational level				
Primary education	4	2.2	7	3.8
Vocational secondary school	28	15.2	17	9.2
General secondary school	56	30.4	66	35.9
College	23	12.5	37	20.1
University	67	36.4	56	30.4
Postgraduate degree	6	3.3	1	0.5
Relationship status				
In a relationship	103	56.0	101	54.9
Married	81	44.0	83	45.1

Variable	Men (n = 184)		Women (n = 184)	
	n	%	n	%
Children				
No	123	66.8	122	66.3
Yes	61	33.2	62	33.7
Place of residence				
Capital city	71	38.6	72	39.1
County seat	15	8.2	15	8.2
City	72	39.1	68	37.0
Small settlement	26	14.1	29	15.8

2.2. Measures

Relationship Assessment Scale – Hungarian Version (RAS-H)

Relationship satisfaction was assessed using the Hungarian version[34] of the Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS-H).[35] The instrument consists of eight items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = not at all characteristic, 5 = very characteristic). The scale measures global relationship satisfaction, covering aspects such as the subjective evaluation of relationship quality, fulfilment of expectations, emotional closeness, and intimacy.

Example items include: "Overall, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" (2); "Compared to most other relationships, how good is your relationship?" (3).

In the Hungarian validation study, the scale yielded a single-factor structure for both genders, with excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .84 for men, .90 for women), as well as high test–retest reliability (r = .90).[36] In the present sample, the internal reliability of the RAS-H was also adequate (Cronbach's α = .843). Descriptive statistics for the scale are presented in *Table 2*.

[34] MARTOS, Tamás – SALLAY, Viola – SZABÓ, Tünde – LAKATOS, Csilla – TÓTH-VAJNA, Rita (2014): A Kapcsolati Elégedettség Skála magyar változatának (RAS-H) pszichometriai jellemzői. In: *Mentálhigiéné és Pszichoszomatika.* 15, 3. 245–258.

[35] HENDRICK 1988.

[36] MARTOS – SALLAY – SZABÓ – LAKATOS – TÓTH-VAJNA 2014.

Dyadic Coping Inventory – Hungarian Version (DCI-H)

Dyadic coping with stress was assessed using the Hungarian version[37] of the Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI-H).[38]

The instrument is based on Bodenmann's Systemic-Transactional Model, which conceptualizes stress and coping as a dyadic process and emphasizes the interactions between partners.

The DCI-H consists of 37 items rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = very rarely, 5 = very often). The items refer to various stressful situations and coping strategies at the individual, partner, and joint levels alike. The questionnaire includes nine subscales as well as five composite scales.

In the present study, the following subscales were analysed:

Dyadic coping by oneself

Positive dyadic coping

• Stress communication by oneself
(e.g. "I openly tell my partner when I am tense and need emotional support.")

• Supportive dyadic coping by oneself
(e.g. "I let my partner know that I understand and care about his/her problem.")

• Delegated dyadic coping by oneself
(e.g. "I take over some of my partner's usual responsibilities in order to relieve him/her.")

Negative dyadic coping

• Negative dyadic coping by oneself
(e.g. "I criticize my partner for not coping well enough with stress.")

[37] MARTOS, Tamás – SALLAY, Viola – NISTOR, Mihaela – JÓZSA, Péter (2012): Párkapcsolati megküzdés és jóllét – a Páros Megküzdés Kérdőív magyar változata. In: *Psychiatria Hungarica*. 27, 6. 446–458.

[38] BODENMANN, Guy (2008): *Dyadisches Coping Inventar: Test manual* [Dyadic Coping Inventory: Test Manual]. Bern (Switzerland), Huber.

Common dyadic coping

• Common dyadic coping
(e.g. "We try to solve the problem together and search for concrete solutions.")

• Evaluation of common dyadic coping
(e.g. "I am satisfied with my partner's support and with the way we handle stress together.")

During the Hungarian adaptation, the internal consistency of the subscales ranged from acceptable to excellent (Cronbach's α = .67–.93).[39] In the present sample, Cronbach's α values for the DCI-H subscales ranged between .748 and .947, indicating satisfactory reliability. Descriptive statistics for the questionnaire are presented in *Table 2*.

2.3. Procedure

Participants were recruited through online platforms (social media announcements) as well as through personal contacts. The sampling procedure was voluntary and non-representative. Adults aged 18 years or older who were currently in a romantic relationship were eligible to participate. Participants completed the questionnaire package online, via Google Forms, and completion took approximately 40–45 minutes. The study relied on a dyadic data structure: both members of each couple completed the questionnaires independently of each other. Responses were matched using an identical code, which enabled the identification of dyads while preserving participants' anonymity. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Before starting the survey, all participants received information about the purpose of the study, data handling procedures, and the possibility of withdrawing from participation at any time. Descriptive statistical analyses of the demographic variables (means, standard deviations, and frequency distributions) were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 31.

[39] MARTOS – SALLAY – NISTOR – JÓZSA 2012.

2.4. Statistical Analysis Strategy

Due to the dyadic structure of the data, the analyses accounted for the statistical interdependence of partners' responses. The hypotheses were tested within the Actor–Partner Interdependence Model (APIM) framework, which allows for the simultaneous examination of actor effects (effects of one's own variables on one's own outcomes) and partner effects (effects of one partner's variables on the other partner's outcomes). The APIM models were estimated using structural equation modeling (SEM) in Mplus 9.0. Parameter estimation was conducted using the robust maximum likelihood (MLR) method, as some variables deviated from normal distribution. To examine the differential effects of the various dimensions of dyadic coping, the subscales were tested in separate structural models. Accordingly, a total of six SEM models were estimated (*Figure 1*), each assessing the actor and partner effects of a given coping dimension on relationship satisfaction. The models were saturated (df = 0); therefore, global fit indices (χ^2, CFI, TLI) were less informative. Model evaluation primarily relied on the magnitude and statistical significance of the standardized path coefficients. Statistical significance was determined at $p \leq .05$ and $p \leq .01$.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of the Measures

The distributional characteristics of the study variables were examined using descriptive statistics and tests of normality (*Table 2*). The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated significant deviations from normality for several scales ($p < .001$), a phenomenon commonly observed in large samples. However, based on the means and standard deviations, the distributions did not show extreme skewness. Therefore, a robust estimation procedure (MLR) was used in subsequent analyses.

Internal reliability, assessed by Cronbach's alpha, proved to be satisfactory overall ($\alpha = .70–.90$). The dyadic coping subscales demonstrated acceptable to good reliability, while the evaluation of common dyadic coping showed particularly high internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$). Even the lowest alpha coefficients exceeded the .70 threshold, which, considering the relatively small number of items in some subscales, can be regarded as methodologically adequate.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics and reliability indices of dyadic coping subscales and relationship satisfaction by gender*

	Men			Women			Cronbach's α
	Mean	**Std. dev.**	**Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (D, p)**	**Mean**	**Std. dev.**	**Kolmogorov–Smirnov test (D, p)**	
Stress communication by oneself	3.25	0.879	0.107 (< .001)	3.74	0.83	0.127 (< .001)	0.766
Supportive dyadic coping by oneself	4.05	0.73	0.116 (< .001)	4.20	0.67	0.13 (< .001)	0.823
Delegated dyadic coping by oneself	3.82	0.82	0.179 (< .001)	3.74	1.09	0.172 (< .001)	0.859
Negative dyadic coping by oneself	1.74	0.81	0.19 (< .001)	1.53	0.63	0.211 (< .001)	0.756
Common dyadic coping	3.65	0.76	0.091 (0.001)	3.70	0.84	0.116 (< .001)	0.748
Evaluation of common coping	3.89	0.99	0.212 (< .001)	4.04	1.00	0.212 (< .001)	0.947
Relationship satisfaction	4.33	0.58	0.152 (< .001)	4.37	0.58	0.185 (< .001)	0.843

3.2. Hypothesis Testing

The structural equation models (SEM) followed the procedure described by Vajda and Rózsa, using simple, low-parameter dyadic APIM models.[40] The models were technically saturated ($\chi^2 = 0.000$, df = 0, $p \leq .0$), therefore global fit indices (CFI = 1.00; TLI = 1.00) were not informative for assessing model fit. Accordingly, the interpretation of the results relied primarily on the standardized regression coefficients (β) and their levels of statistical significance. Separate models were constructed for each dyadic coping dimension, as illustrated in *Figure 1*. The results are presented in the order of the hypotheses.

[40] VAJDA, Dóra – RÓZSA, Sándor (2018): Diádikus adatelemzés: Actor–Partner Interdependence Model. In: *Alkalmazott Pszichológia*. 18, 3. 99–123.

H1 – General actor effects

Our first hypothesis proposed that, for both genders, positive forms of dyadic coping (stress communication, supportive coping, and delegated coping) would show positive associations with one's own relationship satisfaction, whereas negative dyadic coping would show a negative association.

Among women, all examined forms of positive dyadic coping showed significant positive actor effects on their own relationship satisfaction. The strongest associations emerged for supportive coping, common dyadic coping, and the positive evaluation of common coping (moderate effect sizes), whereas stress communication and delegated coping showed weaker but still significant associations. In contrast, negative dyadic coping indicated a moderate negative association with women's relationship satisfaction.

A similar pattern emerged among men. Positive coping strategies – with the exception of delegated coping – were significantly and positively associated with their own relationship satisfaction. Negative dyadic coping, however, showed a pronounced moderate negative actor effect.

Overall, the first hypothesis was supported, with the exception that delegated coping did not show a significant actor effect among men.

H2 – The prominent role of common dyadic coping

The second hypothesis proposed that common dyadic coping and its positive evaluation would show stronger associations with relationship satisfaction than individual coping strategies.

The results clearly supported this assumption. For both women and men, common dyadic coping and its positive evaluation showed the strongest actor effects on their own relationship satisfaction. The effect sizes consistently exceeded those of individual coping strategies.

In addition, partner effects also emerged for both genders, although to a smaller extent: the perception of common coping was significantly associated with the partner's relationship satisfaction. Thus, the second hypothesis was fully supported.

H3 – Gender asymmetry in partner effects

The third hypothesis proposed that women's relationship satisfaction would be more sensitive to the partner's coping behaviour than men's satisfaction; that is, men's

coping strategies would show stronger associations with their female partners' satisfaction than vice versa.

Among women, the partner's positive coping showed significant – though generally weak – partner effects on women's relationship satisfaction across several dimensions. In addition, the male partner's negative coping was negatively associated with women's satisfaction.

Among men, partner effects showed a more heterogeneous pattern. The female partner's positive coping emerged as a significant predictor only in certain dimensions and generally with smaller effect sizes than those observed for women. However, female negative coping showed a pronounced negative association with men's relationship satisfaction.

Thus, gender asymmetry was detectable but not universal: women appeared more sensitive to their partner's positive coping, whereas men were particularly affected by their partner's negative coping. Accordingly, this hypothesis received partial support.

H4 – Differential gender relevance of positive and negative coping

The fourth hypothesis proposed that positive dyadic coping would be more strongly associated with women's relationship satisfaction, whereas negative dyadic coping would be more strongly associated with that of men.

Among women, their own positive dyadic coping showed a strong actor effect (in some models, the standardized regression coefficient exceeded $\beta = .50$), indicating the prominent importance of positive coping for women's relationship satisfaction. In addition, the male partner's positive coping was also significantly associated with women's satisfaction.

In contrast, among men, negative dyadic coping showed the strongest actor effects: in several models, one's own negative coping was associated with relationship satisfaction, with standardized regression coefficients exceeding $\beta = -.50$. Furthermore, the female partner's negative coping also exerted a significant negative partner effect on men's relationship satisfaction. This pattern was clearly evident in the results.

Overall, the results indicated that different forms of dyadic coping influence relationship satisfaction at both the actor and partner levels and that these patterns exhibit gender differences consistent with reward- and punishment-sensitive relational mechanisms.

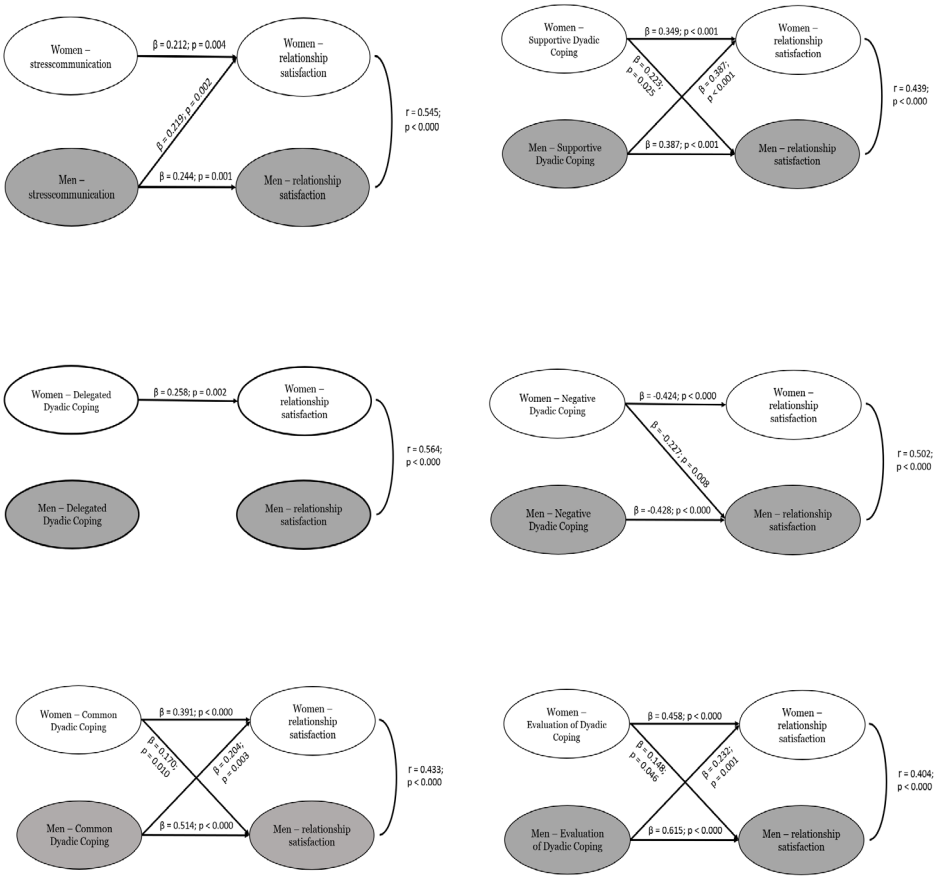

Figure 1. *Standardized path coefficients of the APIM models examining the associations between dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction*

4. Discussion

The present study looked into how different dimensions of dyadic coping are associated with relationship satisfaction through intrapersonal (actor) and interpersonal (partner) effects and whether these effects exhibit gender asymmetry. First, we tested the general assumption that positive dyadic coping would be positively associated with one's own relationship satisfaction, whereas negative dyadic coping would show a negative

association with the same. Our results indicated that supportive coping was positively associated with individuals' own relationship satisfaction for both women and men, while negative coping was consistently negatively related to satisfaction. The actor effect of negative coping proved to be particularly strong, which is consistent with previous findings suggesting that dysfunctional interactions contribute more strongly to relationship distress than positive behaviours do to increases in satisfaction.[41] This suggests that one's own coping behaviour not only serves to support the partner but also functions as a direct organizing factor of the individual's own relational experience.

Our second hypothesis placed coping within a dyadic framework, assuming that common dyadic coping and its positive evaluation would show stronger associations with relationship satisfaction than individual coping strategies for both genders. The results clearly supported this assumption. Both common dyadic coping and its evaluation showed moderate actor effects for women and men, and partner effects were also observed. This finding is consistent with the systemic-transactional model, according to which the shared "we-experience" and coordinated stress management represent key factors in relationship stability.[42] The findings suggest that what matters is not only whether partners support each other but also whether coping is experienced as a shared, mutually coordinated process. In this sense, common coping is not merely a behavioural form but an indicator of the sense of relational unity.

Our third hypothesis focused on the more detailed examination of partner effects. We assumed that women's relationship satisfaction would be more sensitive to their partner's coping behaviour. The results partially supported this assumption. Men's positive coping – particularly supportive and constructive forms – showed significant associations with their female partners' satisfaction. At the same time, in the case of negative coping, partner effects also extended to men's satisfaction. This indicates that partner effects do not occur exclusively in women's satisfaction; however, the pattern was indeed asymmetric. Men's positive coping contributed more strongly to women's satisfaction, whereas negative interactions had a stronger impact on men's satisfaction.

Based on these findings, our fourth hypothesis drew on the study by Campbell, Renshaw, and Klein, which suggests that women respond more sensitively to the positive,

[41] PAPP – WITT 2010; REGAN et al. 2014; FALCONIER et al. 2015.

[42] BODENMANN 2005.

evaluative aspects of partner communication, and thus may also be more responsive to their partner's constructive and supportive coping behaviours.[43] In contrast, men tend to link their relationship satisfaction more strongly to punitive criticism and may therefore react more sensitively to critical or punitive coping behaviours in the relationship compared to their female partners. Our results showed that, for women, their own positive dyadic coping demonstrated a particularly strong actor effect, and the male partner's positive coping also contributed significantly to women's satisfaction. In contrast, men's relationship satisfaction proved to be particularly sensitive to negative coping behaviours, both at the actor and partner levels. This pattern can be interpreted as reflecting reward- and punishment-sensitive relational mechanisms.

The findings also have relevant practical implications for relationship counselling and couple therapy. The study has empirically demonstrated that reinforcing and validating communication plays a particularly important role in women's relationship satisfaction, whereas men's satisfaction is more strongly reduced by critical, rejecting, or hostile interactions. These differences are not necessarily attributable to biological factors but rather to the differential organization of communication patterns, interpersonal evaluation processes, and self-representations.[44] The rewarding and relationship-strengthening functions of positive interactions,[45] as well as the disproportionately destructive impact of hostile or critical communication,[46] have been supported by numerous empirical studies. Within this framework, "female reward sensitivity" and "male punishment sensitivity" can be interpreted not as metaphors but as operationalizable relational mechanisms. Consequently, when designing interventions, it may be particularly beneficial to (1) strengthen men's repertoire of positive coping and communication strategies, as this may directly contribute to women's relationship satisfaction; (2) increase awareness of and modify negative coping patterns among women that may adversely affect the

[43] CAMPBELL – RENSHAW – KLEIN 2017.

[44] CROSS – MADSON 1997; KIECOLT-GLASER, Janice K. – NEWTON, Tamara L. (2001): Marriage and Health: His and Hers. In: *Psychological Bulletin*. 127, 4. 472–503.

[45] ALGOE, Sara B. – GABLE, Shelly L. – MAISEL, Natalya C. (2010): It's the Little Things: Everyday Gratitude as a Booster Shot for Romantic Relationships. In: *Personal Relationships*. 17, 2. 217–233; OVERALL – FLETCHER – SIMPSON 2006.

[46] GOTTMAN, John M. – LEVENSON, Robert W. (1992): Marital Processes Predictive of Later Dissolution: Behavior, Physiology, and Health. In: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 63, 2. 221–233; CAMPBELL – RENSHAW – KLEIN 2017.

male partner's relational experience; and (3) enhance common dyadic coping and its positive evaluation through interventions that involve both partners.

Overall, the present findings support the view that dyadic coping is not merely a resource for stress management but one of the central organizing processes of relationship functioning, whose effects are differentiated by gender and therefore call for targeted, dyadic approaches in practice.

Although the dyadic data structure represents a strength of the study, several limitations should also be noted. First, the cross-sectional design does not allow causal conclusions to be drawn. Albeit the APIM framework distinguishes between actor and partner effects, it cannot conclusively determine whether coping patterns influence relationship satisfaction or whether the direction of influence is reversed. Longitudinal and diary-based studies would be better suited to capturing the dynamics of these reciprocal processes.[47] A further limitation is that the data rely on self-report measures, which may introduce bias. Future research may benefit from incorporating observational methods or partner ratings, particularly with a view to capturing negative coping behaviours more accurately.

Finally, although the present study examined coping effects separately by gender, gender role attitudes, relational norms, and cultural factors were not directly measured. Future research may therefore fruitfully investigate how these variables moderate the associations between dyadic coping and relationship satisfaction.

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[47] NEFF – KARNEY 2009.

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Szabolcs KOVÁCS[1]:

Trauma, Memory, and Spiritual Care: Pastoral Psychological Perspectives on Collective Healing

Abstract.

This study examines the intricate relationship between trauma, memory, and spiritual care through a pastoral-psychological and theological lens, focusing on how collective and individual wounds can be integrated into a redemptive framework of meaning and healing. It argues that trauma is not merely an individual psychological disruption but a communal and theological experience that deeply affects faith, identity, and relational structures. The collapse of meaning, the silence of God, and the sense of abandonment represent the most profound dimensions of spiritual crisis. Yet, interpreted through the theology of the cross (Moltmann), this crisis can become the transformative site of faith's rebirth, where suffering is re-inscribed into the salvific narrative of resurrection and renewal.

Drawing on psychological, narrative, and theological models, the paper situates trauma within the broader context of transgenerational memory (Hirsch, Assmann, Yehuda) and explores how unresolved collective suffering – such as war, persecution, and political violence – continues to shape communal identity and relationships. The psychodynamic and cultural transmission of trauma highlights that memory is not static but performative: it lives through ritual, storytelling, and symbolic action.

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Following Jan Assmann's theory, memory becomes a space of healing when the past is re-narrated and re-interpreted within the community's present horizon of meaning.

The study also engages with the role of the church as a mediating community of healing. The ecclesial body carries unique resources – liturgical practices, theological reflection, prayer, and narrative reconstruction – that enable the transformation of trauma into a shared journey of reconciliation. Within this framework, the act of testimony is more than communication: it is a spiritual act of re-inscription, allowing the wounded self to re-enter God's story and the communal narrative. The meeting of the "small story" and the "great story" generates identity transformation: the victim becomes the healed, the excluded becomes the embraced, and despair gives way to hope.

Furthermore, the paper highlights the ritual dimension of healing as a complement to rational peacebuilding. Rituals of penitence, confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation – whether in the form of the Eucharist, memorial services, or national days of repentance – offer structured, symbolic, and embodied forms of expression for the "unspeakable". They restore social bonds, provide safe space for truth telling, and mediate divine forgiveness as the archetype of human reconciliation. Case examples such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the German Buß- und Bettag, and Dutch ecclesial remembrance liturgies illustrate how liturgical and communal memory can foster truth, accountability, and healing after historical trauma.

Finally, the study emphasizes that healing from collective trauma is a multidimensional process involving psychological integration, theological reinterpretation, and communal transformation. True reconciliation – both personal and societal – emerges where truth and forgiveness intersect, and where the memory of suffering becomes an agent of renewal rather than repetition. For Central and Eastern European faith communities, this perspective offers a constructive framework for addressing historical wounds, promoting social responsibility, and cultivating a theology of restorative remembrance that binds together faith, justice, and communal healing.

Keywords: trauma theology, pastoral psychology, transgenerational trauma, cultural memory, meaning-making, narrative identity, testimony, reconciliation and forgiveness, liturgy and ritual, restorative justice, theology of the cross, ecclesial healing, collective guilt and responsibility, spiritual care, memory and hope

Introduction

The topic formulated in the title directly aligns with the conceptual framework of the international and inter-confessional conference *Healing of Memories*. Within this context, religion and pastoral psychology appear as healing and reconciling forces whose contribution is indispensable, especially in the communal processing of trauma following war, ethnic, or religious conflicts.

This study examines how collective and individual trauma, memory processing, and the practice of pastoral care are interconnected. Conflicts – religious, ethnic, or political – leave deep marks on both individuals and communities, whose effects extend beyond the generation immediately affected, shaping the life stories and well-being of those that follow. Pastoral psychology approaches these realities from an interdisciplinary perspective, drawing on theology, psychology, and spiritual care to explore pathways of healing. Reconciliation is not merely a political or social process; it also carries profound spiritual and psychological dimensions.

The paper discusses the theological and psychological boundary questions of trauma and the impact of lived suffering on the image of God. This process is intensified by the psychodynamics of transgenerational memory (for example, memories of the Holocaust, genocide, and persecution), which require theological interpretation and clarification. The role of pastoral care is indispensable here. Processes of mourning, guilt, forgiveness, and reconciliation touch both the psychological and the spiritual layers of human experience on individual and communal levels. Acts of remembering and storytelling, the practice of testimony, exert a healing influence on the dynamic of personal and collective development.

The re-living of narratives requires an appropriate context (the community) and an adequate form (ritual). Religious ceremonies and rituals – such as those of repentance and reconciliation – possess a distinctive healing power. What communal conditions are necessary to optimize trauma processing? What ritual practices may be adapted from the reconciliation traditions of various peoples? This study seeks alternative, pragmatic approaches to community-based trauma healing within the Christian communities of Central and Eastern Europe.

1. The Theology of Trauma: How Suffering Affects Faith and the Image of God

The psychology of trauma – as observed by psychotherapist Judith Herman[2] – shows that under the impact of threat and terror, the individual's previous worldview disintegrates. The fundamental assumptions of life – predictability, safety, self-determination, social belonging, and physical well-being – collapse. The frame that once enabled orientation and movement in the world falls apart, the reflective surface in which the self could recognize itself disappears, and the social mirror that once shaped identity ceases to exist. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning.[3] The individual's sense of safety is shattered, destabilizing the integrity of the personality. Alienation from the self and the breakdown of interpersonal relationships often follow. Constant vigilance and suspicion – the fear that terror may return at any time – become encoded at the cellular level, producing attachment and emotional regulation disorders.

Survivors of the Auschwitz death camps often reported feelings of shame towards those who did not survive. Adriana Cavarero,[4] following Primo Levi, interprets this as the extreme dehumanization in which a person no longer perceives themselves as a human being in an ontological sense. The dissolution of personality and the disappearance of human vulnerability create an *invulnerable human*, one who has nothing left to lose. Similarly, Jörg Baberowski notes that the experience of pain in the death camps abolished both past and future; only the consuming presence of suffering remained.[5] The sense of utter abandonment and isolation that accompanies pain undermines the fundamental trust rooted in existence itself. This rupture of existential trust represents the deepest disturbance of personality structure – what psychology designates as *trauma*.

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[2] HERMAN, Judit (2003): *Trauma és gyógyulás. Az erőszak hatása a családon belüli bántalmazástól a politikai terrorig*. Budapest, Háttér Kiadó – Kávé Kiadó – NANE Egyesület. 34–43.

[3] ORVOS-TÓTH Noémi (2022): *Örökölt sors*. Budapest, Jelenkor Kiadó. 103.

[4] CAVARERO, Adriana (2009): On War. In: *Horrorism: Naming Contemporary Violence*. New York, Columbia University Press. 4. See as: PRIMO, Levi (1988): *The Drowned and the Saved*. New York, Summit. 83–84.

[5] BABEROWSKI, Jörg (2019): *Az erőszak terei*. Budapest, Európa Könyvkiadó. 170.

In summary, trauma can be understood as a situation in which the aggressor, exploiting the vulnerability of the victim, exercises power over their suffering, life, or death. The victim's asymmetric position – defencelessness, helplessness – leads towards ontological annihilation. The perpetrator deconstructs and depersonalizes the victim, stripping away dignity, freedom, and agency.[6] These processes of fragmentation and disintegration of identity can reach such depth and intensity that their reversal may no longer be possible – a phenomenon captured by the notion of *traumatization*.

1.1. The Crisis of Faith and the Trauma of Unbelief

For the believer, trauma is not only physical or psychological suffering but also a theological crisis. It provokes the anguished question: *Where was God when this happened?* Post-Holocaust Jewish and Christian reflections have shown that suffering is often inscribed in collective memory as the experience of *God's silence*.[7] According to Jürgen Moltmann's theology, divine silence is not abandonment but participation – God's sharing in human suffering. On the cross, Jesus experiences abandonment: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Moltmann interprets this not as a human cry to an indifferent God but as the radical tension within the love between Father and Son.[8] In that moment, God experiences God-forsakenness within Godself; divine being bears within it the pain of human desolation. This experience may, however, become so shattering that it leads either to the rejection of faith or to a profound reinterpretation of God's power and goodness.

1.2. The Transformation of the Image of God

Abuse and violence wound not only the body and psyche but also faith itself; they distort one's image of self, others, and God.[9] Every act of abuse is inherently spiritual,

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[6] See the brief summary of Kovács and Kovács: KOVÁCS, Szabolcs – KOVÁCS, Réka Rozália (2024): Az erőszak interperszonális vetületei. A terror, az ontológiai megsemmisülés, a sebezhetőség, az öldöklés gyönyöre. Teológiai-antropológiai vizsgálódás az erőszak dinamikájának tárgykörében. In: Lészai, Lehel (ed.): *A tudás ösvényén*. Vol. 5. Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitara Clujeana. 17–35.

[7] MOLTMANN, Jürgen (1993): *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press. 58–60.

[8] Op. cit. 146–152, 242–245.

[9] LANGBERG, Diane (2015): *Suffering and the Heart of God. How Trauma Destroys and Christ Restores.* Greensboro, New Growth Press. 81 ff.

for it corrupts the fundamental capacity for trust – the foundation of any authentic relationship with God. Victims frequently experience God's silence as abandonment or rejection. Consequently, their image of God often mirrors the abuser's power: God appears distant, indifferent, or even violent. Many survivors internalize guilt, believing themselves responsible for what occurred.[10] This distorted inner narrative is spiritually paralysing, closing off the path towards genuine reconnection with God.

Trauma may radically alter a person's image of God. A woman raped by her husband suffers not only physically, emotionally, psychologically, and cognitively, but also spiritually. Such experiences challenge the very foundations of trust – in self, in God, and in the meaning of life. Healthcare professionals are not always equipped to address these spiritual dimensions,[11] as their professional boundaries often discourage discussion of religion, and their worldview may differ from that of their patients.

Empirical pastoral-psychological research shows that childhood trauma and insecure attachment patterns are correlated with a less positive image of God.[12] Individuals with traumatic histories are more likely to describe God in negative terms and less likely to use affirming ones. A similar pattern is found among those experiencing relational anxiety or avoidance.

Pastoral psychology observes that traumatized individuals often live with a double experience: God as both *absent* and *sustaining*. One woman who suffered childhood sexual abuse recounted that although she prayed for divine intervention, the abuse did not cease. She interpreted God's silence as betrayal. Yet later, through therapy and spiritual accompaniment, she discovered that God's "silent presence" had, in some way, been with her: "Only now do I see that God was there even when I could not feel it. If He had not been, I might not be alive today."[13]

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[10] Ibid.

[11] GLANVILLE, James A. – DREYER, Yolanda (2013): Spousal Rape: A Challenge for Pastoral Counsellors. In: *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*. 69, 1. 1–12. Available at: AOSIS OpenJournals. DOI: 10.4102/hts.v69i1.1935.

[12] KOSARKOVA, Alice – MALINAKOVA, Klara – DIJK, Jitse P. van – TAVEL, Peter (2020): Childhood Trauma and Experience in Close Relationships Are Associated with the God Image: Does Religiosity Make a Difference? In: *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. 17, 23. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17238841.

[13] LANGBERG 2015, 345 ff.

According to Frederick Vieth, in the deepest phase of crisis, a person does not question God's *power* but God's *goodness*.[14] The experience of the *silent God* casts the believer into existential uncertainty: the very faith that once provided stability becomes the source of doubt. Suffering, as a test of faith, purifies belief – stripping it of its naïve, reward-based forms and reducing it to sheer trust. Vieth calls suffering a spiritual fire in which formal religiosity is separated from the authentic trust-structure of faith.[15] In divine silence, the believer is compelled to reinterpret the very object of faith. The loss of meaning and the ensuing spiritual emptiness represent one of the most severe consequences of crisis. Suffering thus becomes not only physical and psychological but existential: theological explanations fail, giving way to the *theology of the cry of dereliction*.[16] Here, theological reflection itself becomes an expression of sheer survival.

Following Moltmann, Vieth argues that the one who suffers without apparent reason first feels abandoned by God.[17] Prayer meets silence; the relationship seems broken. The cry "Why have you forsaken me?" marks the extreme boundary of faith – yet, paradoxically, this very cry is also the sign that the relationship endures.

1.3. The Crisis of Faith: The Silent God

Summarizing the previous reflections, it can be stated that in traumatized believers, God often appears as a *punitive judge* who inflicts suffering, while for others, the image of the suffering Christ becomes central – the One who participates in human pain. For the traumatized person, trauma constitutes such a profound rupture that it breaks through existing frameworks of meaning, including those of religious faith. This rupture within the belief system radically questions the person's previous image of God, sense of security, and trust in the meaningfulness of the world. The former religious narrative can no longer contain or interpret what has happened. For some, this leads to the complete loss of faith – "God cannot exist, for if He did, He would not have allowed this." –, while for others, it results in prolonged anger, protest, or a deep spiritual crisis.

[14] VIETH, Richard F. (1988): *Holy Power, Human Pain.* USA, Meyer Stone Books. 40–41.
[15] Op. cit. 46–48.
[16] Op. cit. 70–74.
[17] Op. cit. 107–109.

Yet, transformation remains possible: for some, the same collapse of the belief system leads to the emergence of a new, deeper form of faith, in which God is no longer seen as the omnipotent protector who prevents suffering but as the God who is present within suffering, the co-suffering God (*Deus patiens*). Theological reflection here often uses the expression "unbelief within faith" – for the person broken by trauma, doubt and lament are not necessarily the opposites of faith but rather its rebirth through crisis. The experience of God's abandonment – "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" – and God's suffering is not central only to Jesus's story but to the life of every suffering human being. Precisely this shared experience becomes the theological foundation of solidarity and compassion.[18]

In the experience of the suffering person, God's presence is mirrored – often in the very forms of silence and abandonment. Vieth emphasizes that suffering is not the absence of faith but the very space in which God is mysteriously yet truly present. Divine compassion is not weakness but the power of love that confronts evil and pain while continuing to generate life in their midst. Compassion is God's holy power that heals – not by circumventing suffering but through it. The one who feels abandoned by God encounters God precisely at the point of God's apparent absence.[19] The cross thus becomes the meeting point of divine silence and divine love: God's silence is the silence of compassion.

Hence, trauma does not necessarily lead to the loss of faith; it may also lead to spiritual growth. In the process of working through suffering, one may find new meaning and enter into a deeper relationship with God. Within Christian tradition, this dynamic is exemplified by the theology of the cross, which proclaims that God does not remain external to human suffering but, in Christ, participates in it. The cry from the cross becomes the key to the spiritual interpretation of suffering: God does not observe human pain from a distance but enters into its very centre. The experience of crisis and divine abandonment is therefore not the absence of faith but its deepest form – where trust in God is no longer a feeling but a sacred act of clinging to the God who is silently present.

[18] VIETH 1988, 86 ff.

[19] Ibid.

2. Trauma, Memory, and the Communal Dimension

From the perspective of pastoral care, the theology of trauma reminds us that healing is not merely a psychological process. The bearing and narration of wounds occur within communal and spiritual space. Pastoral theology underscores that trauma is not only a psychic injury, as psychology tends to define it, but also a disturbance that deeply affects personal identity and one's spiritual relationships.

One of the fundamental tasks of pastoral care is to enable the sufferer to tell their story – not through repression but within a safe and accepting environment. Yet the context and mode of narration matter: within community and spiritual framework, wounds can be interpreted not as isolated traumas but as part of a larger story. According to Moltmann, the theology of the cross precisely performs this reframing: suffering is not a solitary experience but becomes inscribed into the broader narrative of Christ's suffering.

Jan Assmann's theory of cultural memory provides an illuminating parallel: healing involves not forgetting but reframing memory.[20] For Assmann, memory does not simply preserve the past but continuously reinterprets it within the horizon of the present. Individual and collective remembering always take place in social and cultural contexts: memories are reinterpreted and transmitted through language, symbols, rituals, and narratives. Assmann distinguishes between *communicative memory*[21] – bound to lived, everyday experience spanning roughly three generations – and *cultural memory*,[22] which preserves and reconfigures the past through symbolic forms such as texts, rituals, and art. Healing, whether personal or collective, does not arise from the repression or erasure of memory but from placing past events within a new field of meaning. Memory is thus dynamic: not a closed archive but a living process in which the past acquires new significance, contributing to the renewal of both identity and communal reconciliation.

Traumatic events begin to heal when the individual can narrate them not merely as sources of shame and pain but as part of a broader, intelligible story. In pastoral practice, this means that the believer learns again to connect their life story to God's

[20] ASSMANN, Jan (2006): *Religion and Cultural Memory. Ten Studies.* Stanford, Stanford University Press. 8–23.

[21] Op. cit. 1–8.

[22] Op. cit. 18–23.

story – that is, to rediscover the conviction that despite divine silence, God remains present, and that suffering, too, has a place within salvation history. Trauma often isolates the individual – "No one can understand what I have gone through." Communal listening (within congregations, support groups, or bibliodrama settings) breaks this isolation and allows the wound to become a shared story. The community thus becomes the guardian of memory, bearing suffering together and helping to discover meaning within it.[23]

Trauma processing, therefore, does not end with psychological healing. Reconciliation becomes complete only when the person can once again see themselves as part of God's redemptive narrative – not merely as a survivor but as one whose suffering is inscribed into the story of the cross and resurrection; not only as a victim but as a person whose life bears meaning for the community. In other words, the theology of trauma in pastoral care shows that the narration of suffering is not merely a psychological but also a spiritual act, through which the wounded person re-inscribes themselves into the story of God and the community. This is the *healing of memory* – not forgetting but reinterpreted remembrance, from which hope and reconciliation can emerge.

2.1. The Psychodynamics and Theological Interpretation of Transgenerational Memory

Transgenerational memory refers to the phenomenon by which traumatic historical events – such as the Holocaust, genocides, or political persecutions – affect not only those who directly experienced them but also subsequent generations. This inheritance is transmitted not only through genetic[24] but also through psychodynamic and cultural

[23] Op. cit. 24–27.

[24] Yehuda's study demonstrates that severe parental trauma can leave a lasting epigenetic "imprint", which may be biologically transmitted to offspring, influencing their stress responses and psychological vulnerability. This form of "biological memory" complements the concepts of psychological and cultural memory: trauma is not only narratively transmissible but also measurably inheritable. YEHUDA, Rachel – DASKALAKISA, Nikolaos – BIERERA, Linda M. – KLENGELC, Torsten – HOLSBOERD, Florian – BINDER, Elisabeth B. (2016): Holocaust Exposure Induced Intergenerational Effects on FKBP5 Methylation. In: *Society of Biological Psychiatry*. 80, 5. Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2015.08.005.

processes: through family narratives, silences, rituals, and communal remembrance.[25]

Marianne Hirsch's concept of *postmemory*[26] illuminates this process. Members of the second generation carry their parents' trauma so powerfully that they experience it almost as their own, even though it is a *mediated memory*. It is neither communicative (directly transmitted through first-hand narrative) nor purely cultural (institutionalized and symbolic), but it occupies the space between the two. Postmemory represents an emotionally charged, mediated, and reflective relationship to the past – a *living connection* that bridges personal and collective memory, trauma, and identity.

Why is this effect so strong? Hirsch explains postmemory through the notion of the *living connection*:[27] the children of survivors, though they did not endure the trauma themselves, remain deeply shaped by it through partial parental narratives, images, and artistic media. This is a secondary, inherited memory – not experiential but transmitted, yet emotionally real and often life-shaping. The paradox of "remembering what one has never lived" defines this intergenerational linkage. Through cultural media – stories, images, rituals –, the next generation re-engages with the silenced experiences of the past.[28]

The nature of trauma ensures that it can never be fully narrated; there always remains an unspoken residue. Children absorb trauma through the emotional climate of the family, through their parents' behaviour, anxiety, and silence. Thus emerges a form of psychological and spiritual inheritance, not chosen but absorbed through relational transmission. For pastoral care, the phenomenon of postmemory means that healing must often address not only the individual's own experiences but also the traumas inherited across generations. Transgenerational trauma persists as an invisible psychological legacy:

- in *family communication patterns*, where trauma is often transmitted through silence ("we do not talk about this"), paradoxically intensifying anxiety in descendants;
- in *identity and loyalty conflicts*, as the children of survivors feel a moral obligation to "guard" the memory of trauma, as if forgetting would constitute betrayal;

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[25] WOLYNN, Mark (2023): *Örökölt családminták. Félelmek, érzések és viselkedésminták, melyeket a tudatunkon kívül átvettünk.* Budapest, Édesvíz Kiadó. 64 ff. TÓTH, Borbála (2006): *Családfánk. Sorsunk rejtett mintázata.* Budapest, Kairosz Kiadó. 60–67.

[26] HIRSCH, Marianne (2012): *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture after the Holocaust (Gender and Culture Series)*. Columbia University Press. 30–35.

[27] Op. cit. 32–33.

[28] Op. cit. 33–34.

- in *unconscious transmission*, where unprocessed grief, fear, and guilt reappear in descendants' behaviour, decisions, and relationships;[29]
- through *unresolved parental affects*, manifested in silence, overexposure, identification, or repetition.[30]

2.2. A Theological Framework for Interpreting Transgenerational Inheritance

Theology approaches transgenerational memory from several angles.

2.2.1. The Collective Dimension of Sin and Retribution

Scripture speaks of the consequences of sin reaching beyond a single generation: "I punish the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation" (Exod 20:5b). In systematic-theological terms, human sin is not merely an individual act; it is bound up with the "spirit of the age"[31] confronting humanity as a whole. Sin constitutes active resistance to God's address and takes shape not only in individuals but also within social, political, and cultural systems. Following Barth, sin is not simply the absence of God's goodness; it is a formative and dangerous power – a force that shapes institutions and communal structures, distancing humanity collectively from God.[32] This does not imply strict determinism; rather, it names the long-term consequences of communal sins. Sin is a personal but also a collective and historical reality that feeds back into the life and identity of the community.[33] Accordingly, liberation from the

[29] NADER, Kathleen Olympia (1998): Violence – Effects of Parent's Previous Trauma on Currently Traumatized Children. In: Danieli, Yael (ed.): *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma. Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and Their Children*. New York, Springer Science+Business Media. 573–574.

[30] ANCHAROFF, Michelle R. – MUNROE, James F. – FISHER, Lisa (1998): The Legacy of Combat Trauma: Clinical Implications of Intergenerational Transmission. In: Danieli, Yael (ed.): *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma. Group Project for Holocaust Survivors and Their Children.* New York, Springer Science+Business Media. 257 ff.

[31] THOMAS, Günther (2019): Sin and Evil. In: Jones, Paul Dafydd – Nimmo, Paul T. (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Karl Barth*. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 358.

[32] Op. cit. 361.

[33] VOLF, Miroslav (2006): *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World*. Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 118–123.

bonds of sin extends not only to individuals but also to communities, enabling them to release the sins of the past rightly and to find their place anew within the order of reconciliation.[34]

2.2.2. Memory and the History of Salvation

Within Christian theology of memory, communities heal when they integrate past traumas *liturgically and narratively*. Biblical Israel understands itself through the story of suffering (Egypt, exile, persecution) and discovers a renewed identity in God's saving acts. As Pfoh's analyses suggest, biblical narratives – myths and stories – function in part as cultural memory, offering communities an interpretive framework for past traumas.[35] Thus, the liturgical–narrative integration of trauma is not a modern invention but a concept already pertinent to the biblical tradition (and its reception).

In Christian communities, healing is not achieved by forgetting but by relearning the past.[36] The theological aim of remembrance is not the conservation of pain but its transformation within liturgical and narrative forms, whereby wounds become story and sin and suffering become the lived experience of divine reconciliation.[37] Liturgy is the sacred narrative in which, through the community's imagination, God's story and the human story converge; faith is not merely proclaimed but embodied, continually shaping communal identity.[38] Volf argues that communities heal when they learn to "release rightly" the past – not by suppression, but by reinterpreting it in God's presence. This reform of memory transpires in the communal spaces of liturgy and narration, where forgiveness does not entail amnesia but the co-presence of truth and grace.[39]

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[34] Op. cit 121.

[35] PFOH, Emanuel (2023): Some Observations on Cultural Memory, the Hebrew Bible and the History of "Ancient Israel". In: *Old Testament Essays*. 36, 3. Available at: https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2023/v36n3a3.

[36] VOLF 2006, 207–210.

[37] The return of wounds signifies the surfacing of repressed pains from the past. These wounds cannot be closed or forgotten, for both memory and the body repeatedly bring them to manifestation within communal life. RAMBO, Shelly (2017): *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife of Trauma*. Waco (TX), Baylor University Press. 150–153, 245–249.

[38] WHITLOCK, Michelle L. (2024): Liturgical Narrative and the Imagination. In: *MDPI Journals, Religion*. 15, 8. 993. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15080993.

[39] VOLF 2006, 209.

2.2.3. The Theology of the Cross

In theological engagement with the Holocaust and other genocides, the image of the suffering Christ becomes paramount. God does not stand outside transgenerational trauma but participates in suffering, thereby opening the possibility of reconciliation and healing.[40] A theology of trauma rejects purely explanatory theologies of suffering and recognizes that the bodily, identity-related, and communal dimensions of trauma become constitutive theological questions.[41] The cross and resurrection take on heightened significance: the mystery of the cross is the place where God risks Godself in human suffering and becomes present therein. Trauma theology thus privileges re-creation (post-traumatic remaking) over classical theodicies: God does not remain distant but assumes uncertainty and pain.

In sum: the psychodynamics of transgenerational memory show how unprocessed past traumas weave invisibly through subsequent generations, while theological interpretation indicates that healing is possible only when memory is processed within spiritual and communal frameworks.

3. Memory and Narrative: Storytelling and Testimony – Restoring Continuity

Human identity is fundamentally narrative in nature: we understand ourselves, and render ourselves intelligible to others, through stories. Traumatic experience, however, often ruptures narrative: suffering remains *unsayable* or tears apart a coherent life story.[42] Storytelling is therefore not merely a communicative act but a psychological and spiritual reconstruction, helping to restore continuity within the story of a life.

At the psychological level, testimony enables trauma to cease being an isolated, unspoken experience. Survivors need witnesses willing to acknowledge that a traumatic event has occurred and to bear witness on behalf of the victim.[43] Through narration,

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[40] See above Moltmann's theological exposition on the theology of the cross.

[41] O'DONNELL, Karen (2023): Trauma Theology. In: Wolfe, Brendan N. et al. (eds.): *St Andrews Encyclopaedia of Theology*. Available at: https://www.saet.ac.uk/Christianity/TraumaTheology.

[42] HERMAN 2003, 81 ff.

[43] Op. cit. 89.

trauma receives an external frame; the community becomes a witness, breaking the power of silence and isolation. At the spiritual level, testimony within religious communities unfolds in the horizon of God's presence: the believer's story is not only about personal fate but also about how God was present in the life event; therefore, it is also a story of faith. Testimony thus often carries both missional and healing forces.[44]

3.1. The Relationship between the "Small Story" and the "Great Story"

Narrative therapy posits that each human life is a story shaped by experiences, relationships, cultural discourses, and social expectations. People often become trapped in problem-saturated stories (e.g. "I am a failure", "I am unlovable"). This constricted perspective frequently intensifies in crises. The therapeutic task is to reconnect the small story to the larger story:[45] *My life feels like failure now – but how does this episode belong to my whole life story? How can it become part of a larger narrative?* This reframing demands a shift in perspective for the protagonist.

The healing power of stories is evident in Scripture. The Bible itself functions as a narrative therapeutic repertoire, recounting the stories of people wrestling with loss, shame, failure, and sin – who nevertheless encounter redemption and healing. Examples include Joseph (from abandoned brother to saviour), Ruth (from widow to matriarch), Zacchaeus (from outcast tax collector to host), Peter (from denier to shepherd), and Paul (from persecutor to apostle). The specificity of the biblical narrative – especially the economy of salvation (creation–fall–redemption–restoration) – offers an alternative frame for interpreting human life stories. Within this frame, every life begins as a valuable story created in the image of God; fracture, sin, and suffering are part of the story but not its end; redemption, new beginning, hope, and healing are possible; suffering is not purposeless but may serve a larger telos. Such reframing enables individuals to author a more hopeful and dignified story about themselves. This thesis connects with the earlier motif of "faith within unbelief" amid traumatic experience.

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[44] RICOEUR, Paul (1984): *Time and Narrative.* Chicago – London, The University of Chicago Press. 99 ff.

[45] Op. cit. 85–101, 150–152. See as: BRUNER, Jerome Seymour (1990): *Acts of Meaning (Four Lectures on Mind and Culture – Jerusalem–Harvard Lectures).* Cambridge, Harvard University Press. 56–58, 81–83. Such as: PENNEBAKER, James W. (1997): *Opening Up: The Healing Power of Expressing Emotions.* New York, Guilford Press. 86–92.

At the intersection of stories lies identity transformation. When individuals begin to see their own stories in the light of the biblical narrative, the following changes may occur: a new identity is born[46] ("lost" becomes "found", "outsider" becomes "welcomed", "victim" becomes "healed"); events acquire new meaning (e.g. suffering becomes a meaningful turning point); hope and future orientation are strengthened ("If there is a place for me in God's story, then I am not cast off."). The story does not end with trauma or failure – there is continuation, forgiveness, a "new chapter". Thus, the intersection between personal narrative and biblical narrative is the place of new identity. The story of suffering (or sin) becomes part of the resurrection story – it does not end with trauma, because there is continuation.

3.2. Story Sharing and Communal Healing

Biblical stories are often told in communal contexts (worship, small groups, family), and narrative therapy likewise affirms the shared telling and hearing of life stories. This strengthens: empathy and connection ("Others have gone through this – I am not alone."); testimony, which confirms the reality of positive change ("God did this for them – perhaps God will do it for me."); shared faith, in which individual stories are woven into salvation history.

Religious communities are particularly well suited for the healing integration of memory because their identity is grounded in remembrance. The communal life of biblical Israel likewise rested on the ritual remembrance of deliverance and suffering ("Remember that you were a slave in Egypt…" Deut 5:15). The liturgy of the Christian Church is also a space of memory and narrative: the Eucharist's central injunction – "Do this in remembrance of me" – signifies that a traumatic event of the past (the crucifixion) endures as a transformed, salvific story.

Stories told within religious communities – whether of personal experience or of collective trauma – have a healing function:

- *new meaning-making*: the community helps embed personal suffering within God's story, allowing it to acquire significance;
- *communal solidarity*: the narrated story draws others in, enabling collective mourning and processing;

[46] ROOT, Andrew (2013): *The Relational Pastor*. Downers Grove, Inter Varsity Press. 115–120.

- *Testimony as a source of hope*: surviving and sharing trauma can become evidence of perseverance and divine presence for others.

In summary, storytelling and testimony in religious communities are not merely exercises in memory but active healing processes in which individual and collective trauma may acquire new meaning in the light of God's story. In contemporary narrative therapy, the relationship between the individual life story and biblical (or other spiritual) master narratives is increasingly central within Christian psychotherapy and pastoral psychology. This relationship can catalyse change and healing by offering an alternative narrative for understanding and rewriting a life. In therapeutic conversations, such stories can inspire clients to see their own stories in a new light.

4. How Can an Ecclesial Community Assist in Processing Collective Trauma?

Collective trauma[47] is not merely an aggregation of individual symptoms: a community's memory, narratives, rituals, and institutions also carry, shape, and transmit either the trauma itself or its healing. The church occupies a distinctive place in this process because it simultaneously possesses spiritual resources (liturgy, theology, prayer), organizational structures (sanctuary, networks of care), and cultural authority (commemorations, education). The aim of communal pastoral care is therefore twofold: to support individual healing and at the same time reshape the community's narrative and norms so that confronting the past leads to social reparation, reconciliation, and preventive learning.[48]

Within Christian tradition, *memoria* is a liturgical and communal act: remembrance is not mere retrospection but identity-forming presence (Eucharist: "Do this in remembrance of me."). This entails a triadic relational horizon – person–community–God – with both spiritual and spatial embodiment. Scripture and theology acknowledge not only

[47] ERIKSON, Kai (1991): Notes on Trauma and Community. In: Gliserman, J. Martin – Kaplan, Louise J. – Moss, Donald – Birckmayer, Katherine (eds.): *American Imago. Studies in Psychoanalysis and Culture*. 48, 4. 455–472.

[48] VOLF, Miroslav (1996): *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*. Nashville, Abingdon Press. 133 ff.

personal sin but also corporate sin: communities, peoples, and institutions may be guilty (e.g. unjust social systems, oppression, racism, war crimes, economic exploitation).

The community – whether church or nation – must assume a dual vocation in parallel:

- First, it must recognize its own historical sins and cannot hide behind the claim that *these were the deeds of the ancestors*. Responsibility pertains not only to past personal transgressions but also to ongoing structures that still harm today (institutional injustice, the marginalization of the poor, environmental destruction). The collective dimension of sin requires owning historical and structural responsibility and shaping practices of reparation ("I punish the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation" Exod 20:5).
- Second, it must provide spiritual and liturgical space for processing individual and communal trauma – i.e. a theological and practical framework for reconciliation. Reconciliation does not mean overlooking sin, injustice, or suffering. Mere indulgence would leave the wound untouched and relationships unhealed. In Christian theology, reconciliation is rooted in God's action: "In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself" (2Cor 5:18–19). This is not "cheap grace",[49] but the meeting of truth and forgiveness at the cross. Hence reconciliation always bears a spiritual dimension: a new relationship is born among God, persons, and communities.

4.1. Political and Social Implications

As Miroslav Volf and Desmond Tutu have argued, reconciliation carries social and political consequences. The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (under Tutu's leadership) demonstrated that reconciliation requires: (1) truth-telling (uncovering past crimes), (2) processes of forgiveness and conciliation, and (3) building new structures to prevent the recurrence of injustice.[50] Genuine reconciliation not only

[49] BONHOEFFER, Dietrich (2007): *Követés*. Budapest, Luther Kiadó. 59 ff.

[50] The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 1995 in South Africa, following the fall of the apartheid regime, under the government of Nelson Mandela and the leadership of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Its goal was to uncover human rights violations, provide an opportunity for victims to be heard, and promote social reconciliation through the acknowledgment of truth. At the heart of the Commission's work stood not retribution but a

brings closure to the past but restores relationships (person–person, community–community, person–God) and reconfigures the future – fostering new communal forms, a more just society, and healed human relations.[51] Reconciliation is thus a dynamic process, not a single gesture. The theology of reconciliation understands conciliation as a God-given, transformative power: not mere leniency but a theological and social act in which truth, forgiveness, and new beginnings together generate healing and change.[52]

4.2. Religious Rites as Instruments of Healing

Trauma is often accompanied by unsayability, a shattered narrative, and a loss of control.[53] By contrast, ritual offers structure, communal framing, and a symbolic language that enable the re-interpretation and working-through of suffering.[54] Religious ceremonies are distinctive in that they introduce a transcendent horizon: healing is construed not only psychologically but also spiritually and theologically.[55] Ritual practice – both personal and communal – provides form and sequence for acts oriented towards confession, forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace.[56] Rites help dissolve enemy images, re-found

theological and ethical paradigm of remembrance, forgiveness, and learning. The TRC became a paradigmatic example of collective trauma processing and restorative justice: through the acknowledgment of the past and the act of testimony, a new social narrative emerged that formed the political and spiritual foundation of reconciliation. GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA (1998): *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. Final Report*. Vol. 1. Cape Town. Available at: https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/trc0.pdf.

51 TUTU, Desmond Mpilo (2000): *No Future without Forgiveness*. New York, Doubleday. 195–221.

52 VOLF 1996, 147 ff.

53 KOLK, Bessel van der (2014): *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York, Penguin Group. 50–58.

54 SCHREITER, Robert (2012): Public Forgiveness at the Boundary of the Secular and the Religious. How Do We Read the Terrain? In: Stokkom, Bas van – Doorn, Neelke – Tongeren, Paul van (eds.): *Public Forgiveness in Post-conflict Contexts*. Cambridge – Antwerp – Portland, Intersentia Publishing. 252–253.

55 SCHREITER, Robert J. (1992): *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Boston Theological Institute Series). Maryknoll (New York), Orbis Books. 15–18. See as: SÖLLE, Dorothee (1973): *Leiden*. Stuttgart, Kreuz-Verlag. 25–26; MOLTMANN 1993, 228 ff.

56 VERAART, Wouter (2012): Forgetting, Remembering, Forgiving, and the Mundane Legal Order. In: Stokkom, Bas van – Doorn, Neelke – Tongeren, Paul van (eds.): *Public Forgiveness in Post-conflict Contexts*. Cambridge – Antwerp – Portland, Intersentia Publishing. 65–66.

communal bonds, release internal pressure, and restore self-regard.[57] In Catholic practice, confession, while in Protestant traditions, services of penitence provide structures for individual and communal reconciliation. After collective traumas (persecution, ethnic conflict), reconciliation rites can enact apology, forgiveness, and the making of a new covenant.[58] The formalized character of ritual creates safety: reconciliation is embodied not only in words but in symbolic acts (handshakes, candle-lighting, breaking bread).[59] Rites make it possible for the unsayable to be expressed in another register – gesture, silence, song, movement. The paradigm is always the divine forgiveness that inspires and empowers human reconciliation.[60]

Pastoral practice can integrate ritual means into liturgical frameworks (memorial services, reconciliation liturgies, services of prayer) while attending to local cultural traditions. Rituals are most effective when they fit communal identity – e.g. by incorporating folk customs or local liturgical heritage.

> **Excursus.** In South Africa's TRC, hearings unfolded with prayer and song, testimony, apology, and reconciliation – placing the process within a quasi-liturgical frame.[61] In Germany, the Buß- und Bettag practice linked penitential worship with the acknowledgment of historical responsibility and diaconal (reparative) action, allowing the collective rite of penitence to become a spiritual pathway for processing historical trauma. In the Netherlands, ecclesial remembrance liturgies functioned not only as services of mourning but as rites of collective penitence and responsibility – woven from prayer, silence, hymnody, candle-lighting, the reading of names, and communal confession –, enabling communities to face their past and seek forgiveness for historical wrongs.

Religious ceremonies and rites are thus key instruments for processing collective trauma. Their symbolic language enables the working-through of what cannot yet be spoken; communal participation strengthens the sense of being held; and the transcendent

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57 TUTU 2000, 82–90.

58 STOKKOM, Bas van – DOORN, Neelke – TONGEREN, Paul van (2012): Public Forgiveness: Theoretical and Practical Perspectives. In: Stokkom, Bas van – Doorn, Neelke – Tongeren, Paul van (eds.): *Public Forgiveness in Post-conflict Contexts*. Cambridge – Antwerp – Portland, Intersentia Publishing. 2–8.

59 SCHIRCH, Lisa (2005): *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding*. Bloomfield, Kumarian Press. 60–61.

60 SCHREITER 1992, 53–54.

61 TUTU 2000, 61–62.

dimension offers hope and new meaning amidst suffering. Rites of penitence and reconciliation therefore have psychological, spiritual, and social functions, contributing to both personal and communal healing. Yet ritual does not replace rational, discursive methods of peacebuilding; it complements them. By engaging the body, senses, and emotions, ritual "outwits the dragons of hatred and violence", re-animating the human dimensions necessary for the work of peace.[62]

Summary

This study argues that trauma is not merely an individual psychological injury but an experience of theological significance that reshapes identity and community. Suffering, the experience of the "silence of God", and abandonment destabilize the believer's basic trust and narrative coherence; yet – viewed through the theology of the cross – crisis can also become the locus of faith's rebirth. Healing turns on embedding the individual life story within the broader soteriological narrative, where wounds acquire meaning: suffering becomes part of the story of resurrection rather than its terminus. Memory is the arena of healing: not forgetting but – following Assmann – reframed remembrance that orders the past within the horizon of the present. The psychodynamics of trauma show how an unprocessed past binds subsequent generations through invisible strands; theological interpretation adds that healing begins when a community assumes its past in liturgical and narrative forms. Narrative and testimony restore continuity: telling one's story is not merely communicative but a spiritual act by which the self is reinscribed into the stories of God and the community. At the intersection of the "small story" and the "great story", identity is transformed: the outsider becomes welcomed, the victim becomes healed, and hope and future orientation are strengthened.

In this process, the ecclesial community is not only a companion but a formative agent. Its spiritual resources (Word, liturgy, prayer), institutional networks, and cultural authority enable it to provide safe space for individual and collective processing while shaping communal narratives towards reparation, reconciliation, and preventive learning. Reconciliation is not "cheap grace" but the meeting of truth and forgiveness – with social and political entailments (truth-telling, accountability, new structures).

[62] SCHIRCH 2005, 61.

Ritual complements rational peacebuilding by giving structure, symbolic language, and communal framing to the unsayable. Rites of penitence and reconciliation, by engaging body, senses, and emotions, rehabilitate human relationships and – through a transcendent horizon – confer hope and new meaning on suffering. Their effectiveness depends on fitting local identity and memory. A theology of collective sin and responsibility underscores that sin is not only personal but structural. Owning the past and practising reparation (learning, remembrance, diaconal action, institutional reform) are conditions of reconciliation. Models such as the TRC demonstrate that ecclesial language – prayer, song, testimony – can offer a quasi-liturgical frame for social healing.

The processing of collective trauma does not end with the mitigation of psychological symptoms. It reaches fulfilment when persons and communities find a home again in God's story: the past gains meaning not through erasure but through redemptive remembrance; truth and grace together restore relationships; and ritual and narrative inscribe healing into the community's identity. This is both the task and the promise of a pastoral-psychological perspective for the churches of Central and Eastern Europe.

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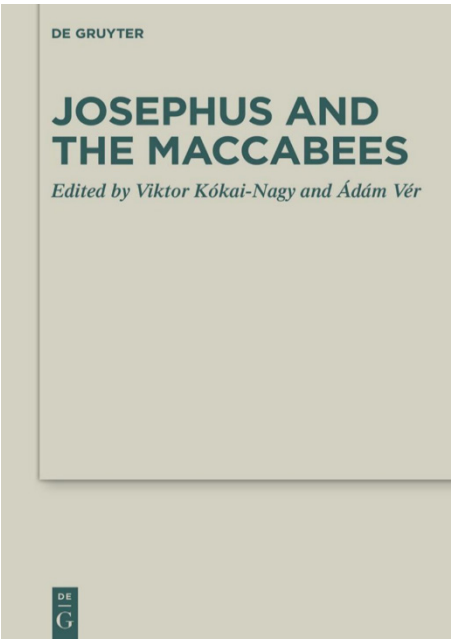
Ákos József DEBRECZENI[1]:

Kókai-Nagy, Viktor – Vér, Ádám (eds.), *Josephus and the Maccabees*, Berlin–Boston, Walter de Gruyter, 2025, pp. 238, ISBN 978-3-11-914918-1, ISSN 1865-1666



We cannot form a complete picture of the biblical stories without knowledge of Josephus and the Maccabees. Although the books of the Maccabees have been omitted from the Protestant biblical canon, anyone who is curious about what happened between the Old Testament and the New Testament must read Josephus's writings and study the stories of the Maccabees. The editors are Dr Viktor Kókai-Nagy, Assistant Professor of the DRTU Department of Biblical Theology and the History of Religion and USJ Department of Biblical Studies and Dr Ádám Vér, Assistant Professor at ELTE Institute of Ancient and Classical Studies.

The collection of studies holds the presentations given at the Josephus and the Maccabees conference held in Komárno Slovakia in 2024, apart from Steve Mason's introductory study written

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upon special request. The volume thus boasts ten studies, some of which are in German as well as English. The authors of the volume are well-known researchers, notably Steve Mason, who is an authority on Josephus. The focus of the conference was to look at Josephus and the Maccabees from a new perspective, an intention that is well reflected in the studies and titles included in the volume. The authors have done an excellent job of showing how Josephus, the Book of Maccabees, as well as historical developments mutually influence one another. The topics are unusual and, in some places, provocative. Thanks to the theme of the conference, the authors, and the editors, all studies included are easy to understand, logically structured, nicely delineated, and sometimes complementary. The result is a collection of studies in which the individual works are monolithic, making the topic easy to understand.

At the beginning of the collection, we find two papers by Steve Mason. The first one of them (*The Hasmoneans in Modern Scholarship*) is a historical overview that was not presented at the conference, but the editors thought it would serve as a good introductory essay. This study summarizes how the Maccabees became heroes of the Zionist movement. Mason highlights that this process was an integral part of the nationalist movements between 1850 and 1950, a period that saw the birth of Zionism and the idea of a new Jewish state. As a result, the Maccabees came to be regarded as national heroes and freedom fighters who defended their homeland and established statehood. Mason's second study (*Josephus on the Hasmoneans and Their Ancient Legacy*) is more closely related to the theme of the conference, in which Mason rethinks Josephus's self-understanding in relation to his origins and the Roman power. Josephus did not view Roman power as oppressive; on the contrary, he saw his people's prosperity under their rule. He was looking to separate the Maccabean past from the Jewish–Roman war. Josephus considered the Maccabees to be national heroes who fought justly and lawfully, but he did not consider further uprisings to be legitimate. He accepted Roman rule, which he believed to be divine. According to Mason, Josephus saw the glorious Hasmonean freedom fighter past together with Roman rule.

Tal Ilan (*The Popularity of the Hasmoneans after the Fall of Their State: Some Onomastic Observations and a New Inscription*) uses archaeological evidence to prove that the Hasmonean heroes remained popular in later centuries. He uses onomastic analysis to prove that the names of the Maccabean rebels (John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar, Jonathan) were used with preference. These names accounted for 32 percent of the names appearing in the inscriptions he examined. According to Ilan, parents consciously chose these names even centuries after the fall of the Hasmonean dynasty. Ilan also mentions an inscription from Jerusalem in which the name of Hyrcanus appears as a point of reference. Ilan's study illustrates that inscriptions, mosaics, and artefacts accurately reflect the mindset of everyday people. The memory of the Hasmonean dynasty did not cease to exist among the common people but had an impact that lasted for centuries.

Martin Meiser (*Die Charakteristik des Antiochus IV. Epiphanes im Zweiten Makkabäerbuch und bei Josephus*) examines the figure of Antiochus IV Epiphanes as represented in Josephus and in the account in 2 Maccabees. His study focuses on the negative attributes ascribed to Antiochus in both sources. Meiser first presents the description of Antiochus in 2 Maccabees, which portrays Antiochus as an unambiguously negative character. The negative epithets condemn the ruler primarily in a religious sense. Above all, he is an unholy, impure, and blasphemous ruler. His main characteristics are arrogance and fighting against God. In contrast, Josephus portrays him in a more restrained manner. Meiser points out that Josephus sought to make parallels between his own contemporaries and Antiochus. The rebels and tyrants of Josephus's time brought similar destruction to the people as the Seleucid ruler. In addition, Josephus considers him greedy and unrestrained. In Josephus, Antiochus is a fallen ruler driven by his unrestrained nature, while the Second Book of Maccabees demonizes the ruler from a religious point of view.

Viktor Kókai-Nagy (*Mattathias bei Josephus und 1Makk*) makes a comparison, examining Mattathias in the reflection of Josephus and 1 Maccabees. In his study, he points out that 1 Maccabees compares Mattathias to biblical figures, while Josephus describes his noble origins. The author draws attention to the fact that Josephus consciously transforms the character of Mattathias. He finds equivalents for Hebrew expressions borrowed from Greek philosophy. Mattathias is no longer a zealous religious warrior who behaves in a "barbaric" manner but a thoughtful, virtuous, philosophical ruler. Viktor Kókai-Nagy points out parallels that reshaped Mattathias's character so that the Hellenistic–Roman world would recognize his deeds.

In his study *Hanukkah Propaganda: Purification and Dedication of the Temple in Maccabees and Josephus*, József Zsengellér compares the occasion of the Hanukkah festival – namely the purification and rededication of the temple – in the books of the Maccabees and the writings of Josephus. According to József Zsengellér, the First Book of Maccabees legitimizes the Hasmonean dynasty, while the Second Book of Maccabees promotes the new holiday among Egyptian Jews. However, Josephus succinctly summarizes the events in his work *The Jewish War*, while in one of his other works, *The History of the Jews*, he gives a theological slant to the events and links them to Daniel's prophecy. Zsengellér points out that Josephus reframes the events – for example, he does not write about the miracle of the cruse of oil. Judas Maccabeus appears as a hero, a hero of freedom. Hanukkah is an unexpected event that brought sudden freedom to the Jews. According to the author, Josephus is hinting that this might happen again in the future.

David Cielontko (*The Death of Eleazar Avaran in 1 Maccabees and Josephus' Jewish War*) compares the martyrdom of Mattathias's son, Eleazar Avaran, with the descriptions in 1 Maccabees and Josephus's work. First, he presents the description in 1 Maccabees, according to which Eleazar was self-sacrificing, saved his people, and thus earned himself "eternal fame". Cielontko points out that the author of 1 Maccabees wanted to legitimize the dynasty, while Josephus describes the events in a more sceptical and ironic manner. According to Josephus, Eleazar handled his own

downfall, which was caused by his overzealousness and pursuit of fame, which Josephus calls a futile sacrifice. Josephus presents this death as a bad omen, in contrast to the assessment in 1 Maccabees. According to Cielontko, Josephus used this harsh portrayal to criticize his own contemporaries, arguing that the rebellion and later death were not martyrdom but senseless suicide.

István Karasszon (*Märtyrertheologie: 2Makk und Josephus*) compared the martyr theology appearing in 2 Maccabees and the writings of Josephus. The book of 2 Maccabees views martyrs as moral victors. Respect for the Torah and belief in resurrection appear as central elements. Josephus refrained from such an assessment and did not divide history into good and bad. His goal was to inspire respect for the deaths of these people in the Roman world. That is why he compared them to the Spartans, who died an honourable death. According to Karasszon, Josephus interpreted the Maccabean martyr theology into Greco–Roman language, or as he put it, "Josephus fuhr auf dem Weg der Geschichtsschreibung in einem römischen Wagen – aber mit jüdischem Benzin."[2]

Karl-Wilhelm Niebuhr (*Begründungen der Tora bei Jakobus, Josephus und im 4. Makkabäerbuch*) examines three sources in an attempt to show how the authors tried to interpret the message of the Torah into Greek–Roman language. The Epistle of James, Josephus, and 4 Maccabees addressed the diaspora. According to Niebuhr, the Epistle of James sees the Torah as a unity of faith and action, pointing to God as the sole judge. This provides the basis for everyday ethical life. For Josephus, the Torah is the ideal constitution, the greatest educational instrument among Jewish laws. The Torah can create moral consensus in the community. 4 Maccabees frames the Torah as a philosophical and educational system – with the help of the law, man can rule himself. The martyrs are role models who received a perfect education and thus remained faithful to what they had learned. Niebhur points out that all three documents consider the Torah to be the standard for everyday life and formulate concepts that make the Torah valuable to the Greco–Roman world as well.

František Ábel (*Josephus' Concept of Proairesis tou biou (C. Ap 2.210) in the Context of the First Century CE Social Identity Issues: Perception of Maccabean Movement Tradition*) examines a specific Josephus expression (*Proairesis tou biou*), which defines Jewish existence as a conscious decision or way of life. Josephus's goal is to make the Jewish way of life attractive to non-Jews. He points out that the laudatory descriptions of the Maccabees serve the legitimacy of the Jewish people. The author considers it important to emphasize that in ancient times, ethnic and religious boundaries were more flexible than they are today. According to Josephus, preserving Jewish identity does not mean isolation but rather an ethical community. Josephus offers Jewish philosophy, the Torah, as an accessible alternative to the Greco–Roman world.

I recommend this collection of studies to theologians, historians, and anyone interested in Josephus and the Maccabean era. From these studies, we can learn how important it is to support harmony between self-identity and dialogue within our own communities.

[2] P. 200.

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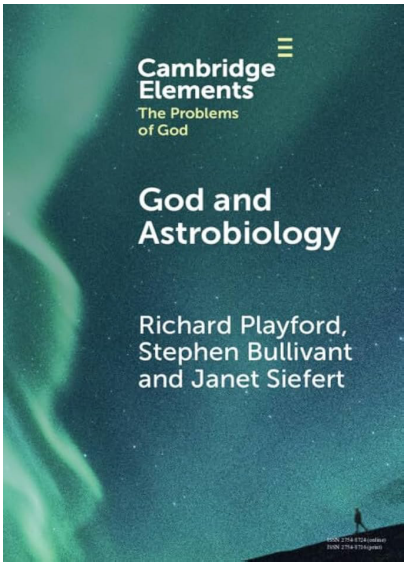
CSŰRÖS András[1]:

Playford, Richard – Bullivant, Stephen – Siefert, Janet: *God and Astrobiologhy*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2024



A sci-fik permanens szárnyalásával teremtődött meg az exoteológia, ami fiktív kérdésekre adott fiktív válaszokkal gondolkoztat el minket. Ahogyan a sci-fi irodalom is elsősorban saját életünkkel kapcsolatban ad inspiráció, tart görbe tükröt elénk, úgy az exoteológia is arra ösztökél, hogy újragondoljunk bizonyos dolgokat. „Inkább azért vizsgáljuk ezeket a kérdéseket, hogy tisztázzuk teológiai és filozófiai gondolkodásunkat, amelyek végső soron mind arra irányulnak, hogy megértsük *önmagunkat* és helyünket az univerzumban, függetlenül attól, hogy egyedül vagyunk-e vagy sem."[2] Erre a furcsa utazásra hív minket a többszerzős, rövid értekezés.[3]

A tanulmány nemrég jelent meg a Cambridge-i Egyetem gondozásában, méghozzá az Isten körüli problematikák sorozatban. A 65 oldalas, online is elérhető

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[2] Eredetiben: "Rather, we explore these questions in order to clarify our theological and philosophical thinking which, in turn, are both ultimately attempts to understand ourselves and our place in the universe, whether or not we are alone" (55. o.).

[3] Ingyenesen hozzáférhető itt: https://www.cambridge.org/core/elements/god-and-astrobiology/12C27550D6A23AAB37F4459A557CDF79 (utolsó megtekintés dátuma: 2026.03.02).

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füzet azzal vet számot, hogy egy asztrobiológiai felfedezés esetén milyen változások érintenék a vallásokat, vallásos embereket. E tanulmány röviden, de mégis végigtekinti az Isten és az asztrobiológia problémáit. A tanulmány hat részből áll.

Az első fejezetben (*'Irreconcileable Inconsistencies'? Introducing the Problems*) az összeegyeztethetetlenséget veszi számba. Igyekszik elhelyezni az asztrológia és a vallások kapcsolatát. Felvetéseivel nem marad meg az ilyes jellegű kérdések hibáiban, azaz abban, hogy csak a kereszténységgel számol, esetleg egy monoteisztikus képpel. Vannak kérdései az iszlám felé is, akárcsak a dharmikus vallások és a neopogány mozgalmak felé. (Némileg szórakoztató módon teszi fel a kérdést, hogy más bolygókon merre kell imádkoznia egy muszlimnak…)

A második fejezetben az asztrobiológiát mutatja be, és tisztázza a téma fő fogalmát. Az asztrobiológia egyik első feladata, hogy definiálnia kell az életet – s már itt összekapcsolódik a teológiával. Felvetése szerint a legkönnyebben áthidalható gond akkor keletkezne, ha ugyanúgy DNS-RNS-alapú életre lelnénk, főleg, ha ez nem intelligens élet lenne. A kérdések sora akkor merülne fel jobban, ha más információalapú életre bukkannánk.

A harmadik fejezetben tér rá a keresztyénségre (*Christianity: Incarnation, Redemption, and Soteriology*). Kitér a teremtés, inkarnáció, megváltás és a szotériológia problematikájára egy intelligens földönkívüli élet esetében. A tanulmány tisztázza, hogy a Teremtőbe vetett hitünket nem kezdi ki a földönkívüliekkel való találkozás. Ezt követően a kijelentéstörténetet vizsgálja, ami kapcsán szintén megállapítja, hogy nem fog sérülni a keresztyén tanítás. Talán ismerjük is a kérdést a hétköznapi szolgálatainkból, hogy a Biblia miért nem beszél más intelligens lényekről – ha azok léteznek? Azért, mert a kijelentés nem az egész világról beszél – ahogy az indiánokról és még megannyi másról is hallgat – hanem Isten és az ember, illetve az ember–ember kapcsolatról szól. Sokkal komolyabb kihívás fogja érni az eredendő bűn tanát: a földönkívüliek mentesek az eredendő bűntől? Rászorulnak-e a megváltásra, és az rájuk is érvényes-e? – veti fel a kérdést a szerzőhármas, melyet korábban C. S. Lewis is körüljárt egy regényében. A tanulmány külön érdekessége, hogy nem pusztán 20-21. századi sci-fi írásokat használt fel, hanem Augustinustól kezdve, középkori szerzőkön át roppant gazdag irodalommal dolgozik. Logikailag végigvezeti az olvasót egy bizonyos téma minden aspektusán. Az üdvösség kapcsán végigjárja, lehetséges-e, hogy egy idegen faj bűntelen, vagy ha nem az, akkor miért hagyta őket Isten magára? Ha nem hagyta, akkor hogyan nem hagyta? Hogyan érvényes rájuk is az *incarnatio Christi*? Elég-e, ha a Fiú csak emberként ölt testet, vagy lehetséges-e más formában való egymásutáni *incarnatio*ja és megváltó tette is? Mik ennek a szentírási cáfolatai? Elsőre elrugaszkodottnak tűnhetnek a gondolatkísérletek, de nem szuggerál egyetlen megoldást sem, inkább jelzi a problémát és megpróbálja végigvenni a megoldási lehetőségeket.

A szerző megfogalmazásával a kérdések narratív feszültséget okoznak a keresztyénségben. Mivel azonban az egész Szentírás és egyháztörténet tele van narratív feszültségekkel, emiatt a hipotetikus találkozások különböző változatait megismerve, ezek valószínűleg túlélhető konfliktussal járnának a keresztény teológia számára.

A negyedik fejezetben (*Terrestrial Religions and Extraterrestrial Life*) nemkeresztény világvallásokat vizsgál meg, hogy rájuk milyen hatással lenne a földönkívüli élet felfedezése akár mikrobiális, akár intelligens lényekről legyen szó. Először a judaizmusban hozza el, majd az iszlámban, végül pedig a hinduizmussal és a buddhizmussal foglalkozik. A problémák sora leginkább a monoteista vallásokat érinti, a dharmikus vallásokban ugyanis – ahol ráadásul az embert és állatot elválasztó szakadék nem is olyan hatalmas – korántsem okozna ez akkora fejfájást.

Az ötödik fejezet címe *The Problem of God in a Lonely Universe* 'Isten problémája egy magányos univerzumban'. Ebben azt a kérdést járja körül, hogy mi történne a teológiában, ha kiderülne, hogy nincs máshol élet – legfőképpen intelligens élet – az univerzumban. A hatodik fejezet (*Atheism and (Ancient) Astrobiology*) egy meglepő kérdésével túllép a tudományosan megszokott kereteken. Az *Ateizmus és (ősi) asztrobiológia* c. fejezet azt tárgyalja, mik azok, amikre a teológiában választ adhatna egy találkozás. Itt újkeletű mozgalmakat, híres gondolatkísérleteket tesz fel a megfelelő szellemi polcra.

Ez a Cambridge University Press oldaláról letölthető tanulmány érdekes olvasmány lehet, amennyiben az exoteológiában, vagy éppen teológusként az asztrobiológiában szeretnénk elindulni egy olyan úton, amelynek célja – hogy egy híres sci-fi sorozat szavaival zárjam: „furcsa új világok felfedezése, új életformák és új civilizációk keresése. Bátran elmenni oda, ahová még ember nem merészkedett."

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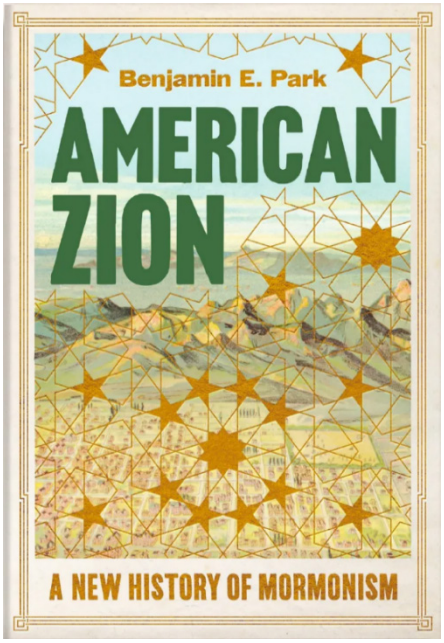
CSŰRÖS András[1]:

Park, Benjamin E.: *American Zion. A New History of Mormonism.* Liveright Publishing Corporation, New York, New York City, USA, 2024[2]



Figyelmemet az American Society of Church History Associaton keltette fel, amely nemrégiben a hónap könyvének választotta Benjamin E. Park legújabb munkáját. Korábban az amerikai függetlenségi háborút követő nacionalizmusról, majd a mormon történelem egyik epizódjáról, a Nauvoo Királyságról írt könyvet. A magyar olvasók számára nem annyira elsődleges kutatási terület a mormonok története. A 742 végjegyzettel, levéltári kutatásokkal gazdag irodalom az *Újvilág* 19–20. századi történelmének egy sajátságos részét mutatja be.

A történet Joseph Smith állítólagos látomásától vezet el Mitt Romney aktív utahi mormon 2012-es amerikai elnökjelölti kampányáig.

A Cambridge-ben doktorált Benjamin E. Park maga is tagja az Utolsó Napi Szentek Jézus Krisztus Egyházának, és nem is rejti véka alá szimpátiáját,

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[2] A recenzió a Tempus Közalapítvány Állami Eötvös Ösztöndíja támogatásával született.

https://www.amazon.com/American-Zion-New-History-Mormonism/dp/1631498657

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hiszen nemcsak egyházának, hanem egyben saját őseinek történetéről van szó. Az elején historiográfiai áttekintést nyújt, amiben rögtön kiderül, hogy vannak bizonyos zavaró tényezők a hiteles történetírás kapcsán, melyeknek gyökerei a mormon teológiában keresendők. A mormonok ugyanis a folyamatos kinyilatkoztatásban hisznek, elnökük próféta és Isten kijelentésének tolmácsa. A mormon egyház történelme számukra a szentek története. Így a hibák tárgyalását vagy a kritikus hangok megszólalását jobban elkerülik, mint a protestáns vagy akár katolikus egyháztörténészek.

Egy ilyen munkánál érdemes alaposabban megvizsgálni a legkritikusabb kérdéseket. Hogyan interpretálja Joseph Smith történetének többféle változatban fennmaradt látomásait, életrajzának ellentmondásait és többnejűségét? Hogyan tudja bemutatni a Mountain Meadows-i gyilkosságokat, ahol fehér zászlós civileket mészároltak le? Hogyan interpretálja azt, hogy a legnagyobb mormon egyház a feketéket csak az 1970-es évektől engedi pappá szentelni?

Bár mindegyikről olvashatunk a könyvben, de véleményem szerint Benjamin E. Park nem tud kiszakadni a mormon történelmi doktrínából. Ahol 21. századi szempontból bőven állást lehetne foglalni, ott is megmarad a leíró jellegnél. Például nem említi Joseph Smith látomásaival kapcsolatban, hogy a látomások idővel a történetmesélésben megváltoztak. Részletesen bemutatja, hogy miként jutott el az egyház oda, hogy 1978-tól megengedi, hogy feketéket is felszenteljenek – ezzel kapcsolatban 2024-ben már nem elégséges csupán tényként rögzíteni a jelenséget; tudományos igényű tárgyalása kritikai állásfoglalást is megkíván. Mindeközben alaposan dokumentálva kitér a mai Amerika aktuálisabb konfliktusterületeire, mint az LMBTQ-kérdésére (amiben a mormonok rendkívül konzervatív álláspontot foglalnak el), a MAGA-problematikára (a mormonok 72%-a szavazott Trumpra 2016-ban) és a női egyenjogúsításra is – hiszen papok és legfontosabb tisztséget viselők csak férfiak lehetnek.

Az *American Zion* nem egy bevezető könyv ahhoz, hogy megértsük a mormonizmust. Annak lehet érdekfeszítő, aki ismeri a történelmüket, esetleg követi a Mormon Research Ministry egészen üdítő és alapos munkáját. Benjamin E. Park alapos munkát végzett, ami ugyan nem kerüli meg a nehezebb témákat, de azokat leíróan tárgyalja, és nem enged teret az élesebb kritikáknak – pedig lenne helye a mormonok teológiája, kijelentéstörténete, egész történelme kapcsán.

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Útmutató szerzőinknek

A *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Theologia Reformata Transylvanica* c. folyóirat szerkesztősége publikálásra elfogad a teológia vagy a vallásoktatáshoz és egyházi segítő foglalkozáshoz kapcsolódó tudományágak tárgykörében írott tudományos dolgozatokat, tanulmányokat. **Csak első közlésre** szánt kéziratokat fogadunk el (amelyek korábban más nyelven sem jelentek meg).

A szerkesztőségnek jelenleg nem áll módjában szerzői díjat fizetni a beküldött cikkekért, a szerzők tiszteletpéldányt kapnak abból a számból, amelyben írásuk megjelent.

A *Studia* évente kétszer jelenik meg (júniusban és decemberben), a kéziratok befogadása folyamatos, de a március 1. előtt leadott cikkek az első, a szeptember 1. előtt leadottak pedig a második számban jelennek meg. A cikkeket elektronikus formában (RTF formátumú állományban) kérjük elküldeni a következő email címre: **studiatrt@gmail.com.**

Formai és tartalmi követelmények 2026-tól:

a. A tanulmányok maximális terjedelme 45000 karakter (szóközökkel együtt). A terjedelem átlépése kizárólag a főszerkesztő előzetes, írásos jóváhagyásával lehetséges. Előzetes engedély hiányában, a szerkesztőség a kéziratot nem fogadja el**.** A szöveghez legalább kétezer betűs (karakteres) *angol nyelvű kivonatot kell csatolni*, mely tartalmazza a cikk angol címét és öt kulcsszót. A kivonat mellé írjon egy egysoros leírást önmagáról (akadémiai cím, munkahely, foglalkozás) és egy email címet és Orcid számot.

b. A szöveg tagolása áttekinthető legyen. A címeket úgy kell feltüntetni, hogy abból logikusan következtetni lehessen azok rangjára (javasoljuk, hogy a címeket arab számokkal lássák el: 1., 1.1., 1.2.1. stb., de a számozás nem fog megjelenni a lapban).

c. Kerüljék az alapszöveg túlzott formázását (lehetőleg csak a szükséges kiemelések legyenek, dőlt betűvel). A címeket nem kell formázni, rangjukra a számozásból következtetni lehet.

d. A magyar főszövegben mindig magyar nyelvű idézetek szerepeljenek, az idézet eredeti változatát lábjegyzetben közöljék. Használják a magyar idézőjeleket: „ ”.

Az öt sornál hosszabb idézeteket kérjük külön bekezdésben, jobb-és baloldali behúzással kiemelve közölni. Az idézeteken belüli idézetek jelölése » « jelekkel történik.

e. A cikk végén az irodalomjegyzék csak azokat a műveket tartalmazza, amelyekre a szerző az írásában valóban hivatkozott. A bibliográfiában a művek a szerzők vezetéknevének magyar ábécé szerinti betűrendjében követik egymást. Ugyanannak a szerzőnek a nevét valamennyi írása előtt ki kell írni, az egyes művek a publikálásuk éve sorrendjében követik egymást, és az ugyanabban az évben megjelent műveket az ábécé betűivel jelzik (pl. 2008a, 2008b stb.). Az egyes műveket a következőképpen kell jegyezni:

A szerzők vezetékneve áll az első helyen KISKAPITÁLIS betűkkel[1], majd a keresztneve, amelyet nem magyar szerzők esetén vessző választ el egymástól. Több szerző közös publikációja esetén a szerzők nevét nagykötőjellel kapcsoljuk[2] egymáshoz, amit szóköz előz meg és szóköz követ (pl.: TÖRÖK István – KOCSIS Elemér – SZŰCS Ferenc). Ezt követi a mű első közlésének éve zárójelben.

A név és zárójel után kettőspont áll, majd a mű címe és esetleges alcíme dőlt betűszedéssel, amit pont követ. Jön a kiadás helye, ettől vesszővel elválasztva a kiadó neve. A hivatkozást ponttal zárjuk. Általános mintaként szolgál a következő példa, ahol az írásjelek és egyes szavak szerkesztése pontosan tükrözi a leírtakat: CSALÁDNÉV Keresztnév (évszám): *Cím, Alcím,* Kiadás Helye, Kiadó Neve.

– Önálló kötet esetén CSALÁDNÉV Keresztnév (évszám): *Cím, Alcím*. Kiadás Helye, Kiadó Neve. Oldalszámok. pl.: BARTH, Karl (1924): *Wort Gottes und die Theologie*. München, Kaiser Verlag.

– Önálló kötet esetén, ha reprint kiadvány, akkor a fenti módon tüntetjük fel az eredeti kiadás adatait, és zárójelben a reprint: formula bevezetésével az új kiadás adatait kiemelés nélkül pl.: HALASY-NAGY József (1944): *A Filozófia*, Budapest, Pantheon (reprint: Budapest, Akadémiai Kiadó, 1991.)

– Önálló kötet esetén, ha nem első kiadás, a használt kiadás számát a megjelenés éve előtt kisebb, megemelt arab számmal kell jelezni. Az első kiadás évszámát nem kell feltüntetni pl.: NAGY Barna ([2]1999): *A teológiai módszer problémája az úgynevezett dialektika teológiában.* Budapest, Kálvin Kiadó.

[1] Formátum – Betűtípus – KISKAPITÁLIS, tehát NEM csupa nagybetű!

[2] Alkalmazás módja: Ctrl + a Mínusz jel a billentyűkészlet számai között, illetve Beszúrás – Szimbólumok – Különleges karakterek – Gondolatjel.

– Önálló kötet esetén, ha az fordítás, a szerző után a megjelenés évét, és lehetőleg azt is feltüntetjük az előzőek szerint, hogy hányadik kiadás, a cím után zárójelben az eredeti címet, maj a fordító nevét és az új kiadás adatait tüntetjük fel, pl.: SOGGIN, J. Alberto ([4]1987): *Bevezetés az Ószövetségbe* (Eredeti címe: Introduzione all'Antico Testamento). Fordította: Hoffmann Béla – Víg István, Budapest, Kálvin János Kiadó, 1999.

– Folyóiratban megjelent tanulmányból való idézés esetén nem az idézett közlemény, hanem a folyóirat címét írjuk dőlt betűkkel, amelyet az „In" szóval vezetünk fel, és közöljük a folyóirat fontosabb adatait (évfolyam, kötet), valamint az idézett közlemény teljes terjedelmének pontos oldalszámát. Pl.: MOLNÁR János (2008): A Tízparancsolat, In: *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Theologia Reformata Transylvanica*. 54. 1–2.

– Tanulmánykötetben szereplő írás esetén, vagy közös kötetben megjelent fejezet esetén a folyóiratban megjelent közleményhez hasonlóan jegyezzük, ezúttal a szerkesztő/k feltüntetésével. A szerzők vezetéknevét kiskapitálissal írjuk, a szerkesztőkét viszont nem. pl.: PÜSÖK Sarolta (2019): Interplay of Tradition and Innovation in the Transylvanian Reformed Church after 1989, In: Lukács Olga – Nagy Alpár – Péter István (szerk.): *From Movement to Inherritance – Hidden Assets from the Treasury of Hungarian Reformation*, (Refo500 Academic Studies, Volume 59, Edited by Herman J. Selderhuis). Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 185–192.

– Lexikonban szereplő szócikk esetén: PÉTER Katalin (1999): *Francisc David (szócikk),* In: Owen Chadwick (szerk.): *Oxford Encyclopedia of Reformation*. New York – London, Oxford University Press, I., 148.

– Levéltári forrásokra való hivatkozás esetén az idézett dokumentum azonosításához szükséges adatokat az illető lelőhely (levéltár és irattár) saját hivatkozási módja szerint kell feltüntetni. Egy levéltári hivatkozásnak mindenképp tartalmaznia kell a hivatkozott irat szerzőjét, címét vagy legalább rövid leírását (pl. XY jelentése), a levéltár nevét, a levéltári fond számát, azon belül a tétel és a doboz vagy köteg számát, illetve a kötegen belüli oldalszámot. Pl.: NAGY Ferenc: *Helyzetkép a Dél-Erdélyben maradt Református Anyaszentegyház életéről a II. bécsi döntéstől 1943. május 5-ig.* Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (MNL OL), K 610 (Sajtó levéltár), 91. cs. (Dél-Erdélyi Adattár), VI/11. 11.

– Elektronikus forrásokra való hivatkozás esetén a kiadványra vonatkozó előzőekben megadott összes elérhető adatot követően fel kell tüntetni a honlap adatait és az utolsó letöltés időpontját: BENKŐ Levente: Magyar nemzetiségpolitika Észak-Erdélyben, 1940–1944, http://www.xxszazadintezet.hu/rendezvenyek/korrajz_2002_konyv-bemutato/benko_levente_eloadasa.html (utolsó megtekintés dátuma: 2009. július 31.).

Az esetleges hiányzó, az adott publikációban fel nem tüntetett bibliográfiai adatot a megfelelő helyen [szögletes] zárójelben kell jelölni teljes kiírással vagy rövidítve, pl. [hely nélkül/ h.n.], [kiadó nélkül/ k.n.], [évszám nélkül/ é.n.].

f. A lábjegyzetek a következő minták szerint készüljenek:
10 pont betűméret, normál sortávolság, sorkizárt. Minden lábjegyzetet egy mondatvégi írásjel zár le.
A *lábjegyzet-szám* és az utána következő szöveg közé egy nem törhető szóköz kerül.[3]
Az első hivatkozás alkalmával közöljük az irodalomjegyzékben szereplő teljes adatot, végül az idézet, hivatkozás pontos oldalszáma következik. Ha az idézet szövege a forrásmunkának nem egyetlen oldalán olvasható, akkor az idézet kezdő és záró oldalszámát is meg kell adni, mindig teljesen kiírva, a két oldalszám között szóközök nélkül nagykötőjel áll. (pl. 237–238.)
A második és következő hivatkozás alkalmával elég vesszővel elválasztva jegyezni a szerző vezetéknevét kiskapitálissal, zárójelben az első közlés évét, majd az oldalszámot.
Egymást követő lábjegyzetekben ugyanannak a szerzőnek ugyanazon munkája esetében megengedett az i.m. (idézett mű) rövidítés és oldalszám, amennyiben az oldalszám is azonos, egyszerűen uo. (ugyanott) jegyezhető.

g. A bibliai idézetek helyét nem lábjegyzetben, hanem a főszövegben, egyszerű zárójelben kell jelölni. A bibliai könyveket a protestáns új fordítású Biblia függelékében (első kiadás: 1975, legfrissebb kiadás: 2014) felsoroltak szerint rövidítjük.
A számozott bibliai könyvek esetében az arab könyvszám és a rövidítés között nincs szóköz, a bibliai könyv nevének rövidítése után nem áll pont (2Móz). A fejezet- és versszámok arab számok, a kettő között szóköz nélkül vessző áll, a versszám mögött nincsen pont (Ézs 1,9). Több, nem ugyanabból a fejezetből

[3] Alkalmazás módja: Shift + Ctrl + szóköz, vagy: Beszúrás – Szimbólumok – Különleges Karakterek – Nonbreaking Space

származó igehelyet pontosvessző és mögötte szóköz választ el (Lk 3,12; 12,11). Egy fejezeten belül több vers számát szóköz nélküli pont választja el, a fejezetszámot ekkor csak egyszer írjuk ki (Lk 2,2.4.11; ApCsel 2,3.8). Hosszabb szakaszok kezdő és záró versszáma között nagykötőjel áll, sem a nagykötőjel előtt, sem mögötte nem áll szóköz (Róma 8,1–12; Jel 2,2–14).

h. A közölni kívánt cikkek legkevesebb 10, legtöbb 20 oldalasak lehetnek (1 oldalt A4-es papírmérettel, mindenütt 2,5 cm margóval, 12 pontos betűmérettel és másfeles sorközzel kell számítani).

i. Amennyiben a szöveg héber és görög betűs szöveget is tartalmaz, csatolják a betűtípusokat is. Ha a szövegben képek, ábrák szerepelnek, azokat külön, nagy felbontású (javasolt érték 600 dpi, de legalább 150 dpi) JPEG képként csatolják.

j. Ha a szövegben táblázatot vagy ábrát szeretnének közölni, ezeket szerkeszthető formában, külön is szíveskedjenek csatolni. A táblázatokhoz és / vagy ábrákhoz leírást kell csatolni a következő minták szerint:

1. táblázat: *A táblázat adataira vonatkozó rövid elnevezés.*

1. ábra: *Az ábra megnevezése.*

k. A folyóiratban recenziók is publikálhatók, ezek terjedelme nem haladhatja meg az öt oldalt. Köszönettel fogadjuk az új, nem ismert, a teológia, vallásoktatás vagy lelkigondozás terén áttörő eredményeket ismertető munkák bemutatását. A recenzió elején közölni kell a méltatott könyv összes adatait (szerzők, szerkesztők, cím, kiadó, helység, évszám, oldalszám), és mellékelni kell a könyv borítóképét.

A szerkesztőségbe való beérkezésük után a cikkeket az egyetemünk kiadványaira vonatkozó belső szabályozás értelmében előbb megvizsgáljuk plágiumteszten, és a megfelelő kéziratokat elküldjük a szaklektoroknak. (Ezek listáját lásd a borító második oldalán.) A lektorálás névtelenül történik (blind review), egy cikket két szaklektor lektorál. Előfordulhat, hogy a lektorok bizonyos jobbításokhoz kössék egy-egy cikk megjelenését, javaslataikat a szerkesztőség megküldi a szerzőknek, a javított változatnak 14 napon belül kell visszaérkeznie. Amennyiben a szerző túllépi a megengedett határidőt, a cikk már csak a következő számban jelenhet meg.

A lektorálás után a cikkeket betördeljük és korrektúrázzuk, a nyomtatás előtt a szerzők PDF formátumban kefelenyomatot kapnak írásaikról, majd 48 órán belül emailen közölniük kell, hogy az a megadott formában megjelenhet. A szerző jóváhagyása nélkül a cikk nem jelenhet meg a folyóiratban.

A folyóirat megjelenése után a szerzők postán kapják meg, vagy személyesen vehetik át tiszteletpéldányaikat. A lap online változatban is megjelenik, ez már nyomtatás előtt elérhető a https://studia.reviste.ubbcluj.ro/index.php/subbtheologiareformata/issue/archive címen.

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Instructions for Authors

The editorial board of the *Theologia Reformata Transylvanica* series of the *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai* journal accepts for publishing scientific papers pertaining to the fields of theology, religious education or pastoral care. We only accept manuscripts for first publication (not previously published in any other language).

The financial status of the journal does not allow for payments to the authors for their contributions, but every contributor receives a free copy of the issue in which his/her article was published. *Studia* is issued twice a year, namely in June and in December. There is no fixed deadline for the submission of the articles, but please be advised that every contribution sent to the board before March 1 will be published in the first issue, and articles sent until September 1 will appear in the second one.

Articles should be sent electronically, via email (in Rich Text Format) to the following address: **studiatrt@gmail.com.** Please do a proofreading of the text sent in for review, and adhere to the following format and content parameters:

a. The language of the article should be English (United Kingdom). Most common issues of using this language are: -ise v. -ize: Use the ending -ize, -ization, -izing (not -ise, -isation, -ising) as in the so-called Oxford (English Dictionary) spelling. (Note that the use of -ize instead of -ise does not include the spelling of words in British English that end in -yse such as analyse or paralyse, which come from Greek.)

b. The maximum length of studies is 45,000 characters (including spaces). Exceeding this length is only possible with the prior written approval of the editor-in-chief. Without prior approval, the editorial board will not accept the manuscript. Submitted text should have an at least two thousand characters English abstract, the English title of the publication and at least five keywords. The editorial board welcomes a Hungarian translation of the title and the keywords, yet this is discretionary. The authors should provide a one-line presentation that includes their profession, occupation, workplace and contact email and Orcid Nr.

c. The division of the text should be logical and consequent. Headings should be marked by the author in a way that the editors may differentiate them easily (numbering with Arabic numerals like 1., 1.1 etc. is an option, but will not appear in the journal).

d. The initials of the main words (except prepositions, articles, and coordinating conjunctions) in (sub)titles used/mentioned in the article as well as in the reference list should be capitalized.

e. Authors should avoid exceeded formatting of the text (only the important highlights should be formatted with italics). Titles should not be formatted, since their heading level can be deduced from the numbering or other type of marking.

f. The submitted text should only contain citations that have been translated into English. Provide the original reference in the source language in the footnotes. Citations exceeding 5 lines in length should be written in a separate paragraph and indented from left and right. Use typographers' quotes: “ ” for every citation.

g. References to books and articles have to be placed in the footnotes. Please add a bibliography at the end of the article, which includes only the references you have actually cited in your paper. These should be arranged in alphabetical order according to the main authors' last name. Should you cite several works of the same author, the sorting is done by the year of publication. The year of publication should be mentioned right after the name of the author. If your article references works from the same author published in the same year, please arrange them in alphabetical order with a small letter after the year (for instance: 2008a, 2008b, 2008c etc.)

References should be provided by applying the following guidelines:

Start with the last name of the first author, which should be written in SMALL CAPS[1]. Add a comma after the last name, then add the first author's first name followed by the year of publication in parentheses, and a colon.
If an article has multiple authors, the full names of the authors (LAST NAME written in small caps followed by a comma and the First Name in regular

[1] Please note that writing everything in UPPERCASE is not equivalent to using SMALL CAPS.

formatting having each word capitalised) are separated by an en dash preceded and followed by a blank, i.e.: ANDREWS, Dale – HEITINK, Gerben – JENNINGS, Theodore Wesley (2006): .

The name(s) of the author(s) is followed by the year of publication in parentheses and a colon, then all subsequent elements should be written as it can be seen in the examples below:

Referencing books

- Referencing an individual volume, that has one author:
  BARTH, Karl (1924): *Wort Gottes und die Theologie*. München, Kaiser Verlag. 75–79
- Referencing a reprint edition of a volume requires citing the original edition as presented above, followed by the data of the reprint in parentheses:
  LAST NAME, First Name (publishing year A): *Title.* Place of publishing A, publisher A (reprint: place of Publishing B, publisher B, 2010). page range.
- Referencing a later edition of a volume requires noting the number of the edition in superscript formatting right before the year of publishing. There is no need for mentioning the publishing year of the first edition. I.e.:
  LAST NAME, First Name ($^{\text{number if edition}}$year of publication): *Title.* Place of publishing, publisher. Page numbers.
- Referencing a translation of an individual volume requires indicating the following citation data of the original work in parentheses: original title and the number of the edition (if applicable)
  LAST NAME, First Name ($^{\text{number if edition}}$year of publication): *Title* (Original Title: Title in the Original Language).Transl. by: name of translator. Place of publishing, publisher, year of publication of the translation. Page range.

Referencing a journal or conference proceedings

- Upon citing a journal article, the title of the article is not italicised. This is followed by the "In" preposition, then a colon, and the name of the journal formatted in italics, which in turn is followed by the most important citation data pertaining to the journal (volume, issue) as well as the exact page range of the article cited:
  LAST NAME, First Name (year of publishing): Title of Article. In: *Journal Name*. Volume number, issue number. Page range.

- Upon citing conference proceedings, the pattern is similar to that of citing scientific journals, but in this case the editors of the volume have to be noted. The last name of the author is written in small caps, whereas the last name of the editors has regular formatting.
  LAST NAME A , First Name A (year of publication): Title of Proceeding. In: Last Name B, First Name B –Last Name C, First Name C (eds.): *Name of Conference Proceedings.* Place of publishing, publisher. Page range.
- Upon citing an entry from an encyclopaedia, dictionary, lexicon, or concordance:
  LASTNAME A, Firstname A (year of publication): *The Topic* (entry). In: Last Name B, First Name B (ed.): *Name of Encyclopaedia.* Place of Publishing, Publisher, Volume. Page range.

Referencing a primary source from an archive

LAST NAME, First Name: *Specific Item Title.* Name of Archive (ABBREVIATION), Box, Folder, Collection, Folio or page number. Please note that authors shall use the specific referencing system of the particular archive in order to identify the source of their work. The personnel of the specific archives is always the most competent to mark the exact way of referring to the archives.

Referencing an online source

LAST NAME, First Name: Title of the article published online. http:// correct link to the source (last accessed: date in DD.Month.YEAR format).

In case of missing citation data, these pieces of information should be substituted by square brackets in their respective places and they should include the category of the missing data. I.e.: [Publisher Missing], [Place of Publishing Missing], [Year Missing]

h. Footnotes

Use 10 pt font size, normal line spacing, justified formatting. Each footnote ends with a full stop.

The number of the footnote and the subsequent text providing the reference are separated by a nonbreaking space, which is a special character that can be inserted via the Insert–Symbol–Special Characters–Nonbreaking Space command, or the Shift + Ctrl + Space bar keyboard shortcut sequence.

When citing a source for the first time in the footnotes, you have to add the complete citation data of that specific reference followed by the exact page number of the cited excerpt. If you reference several parts of a work that has multiple pages, note the first and the last page of the work's range joined by an en dash (i.e.: 237–238.).

When citing a source for the second time, it is enough to note the last name of the author in small caps followed by the year of publication, a comma and the page number, ending in a full stop. (i.e. LAST NAME year of publication, 55.) If your article refers to several works by the same author from the same year, the last name of the author in small caps and the year of publication is followed by a small latter (i.e. 2008a), by a comma, the page number, and ended with a full stop. (i.e.: LAST NAME 2008a, 55.)

In the case of consecutive footnotes referencing the same work of the same author, you may use the Op. cit.[2] standing in for repetition of the full title of the work, followed by the page number, ending with a full stop. (i.e.: Op. cit. 22.)
In the case of consecutive footnotes referencing the same work of the same author, and the very same place in that specific work, you may use Ibid.[3] This footnote also ends with a full stop. (i.e.: Ibid.)

i. When citing a passage of scripture, include the abbreviated name of the book, the chapter number, and the verse number in round parentheses in the body of the text, and not in the footnotes. Books that have numbers preceding their name are noted with Arabic numbers, and the numbers are followed directly by the abbreviation of the name of the book without any interceding blank spaces. The abbreviation of the name of the books is not followed by a full stop within the parentheses such as in this example: (2Sam). Arabic chapter and verse numbers are separated by colons without blank spaces, and no full stop at the end of the citation within the parentheses: (Isa 1:9). The correct form of citing several verses from different chapters is by using a semicolon followed by a blank space for separating the chapters: (Luke 3:12; 12:11). Several verses cited from one chapter are delimited by full stops; in this case the chapter number is noted only once: (i.e.: Lk 2:2.4.11;

[2] It is an abbreviation of the Latin phrase *opus citatum*, meaning the work cited.
[3] It is an abbreviation of the Latin adverb *ibidem*, meaning in the same place.

Acts 2:3.8). Texts spanning over several verses are noted by using the starting and the ending verse number connected by an en dash, which is not preceded nor followed by a blank space: (i.e.: Rom 8:1–12; Rev 2:2–14).

j. Submitted papers should have the length at least 10, at most 20 pages (pages should be formatted with A4 paper size, 2,5 cm wide margins on every side, font Times New Roman with size of 12 pt and line spacing of 1,5).

k. If your text contains Hebrew or Greek characters, please attach the fonts to your email.

l. If the text contains images, please attach them separately in high resolution (preferably 600 dpi, but at least 150 dpi) JPEG format.

m. Tables and figures should be attached also separately and provided with a description following these patterns:

Table 1. *The environmental and relational characteristics and institutional network*

Figure 6. *Diagram of local characteristics regarding outsourcing companies*

The journal also accepts book reviews for publication, which should not be longer than 5 pages. Book reviews regarding new publications, which present recent results in the field of theology, religious education or pastoral care. The book review should start with the details of the presented publication (author(s), editor(s), title, publisher, place, year, number of pages) and the scanned image of the cover should be attached.

After we receive the submitted papers, we send them to the reviewers (see their list on the inside cover page). The board uses blind reviewing, one article is reviewed by 2 reviewers. It is possible that reviewers would request the author to improve the article, their suggestions will be sent to the author, and the revised version of the article should arrive back to the editors in 14 days. If the author misses this deadline and does not send the revised version back, the article will not be published in the upcoming issue, yet it may be published in a future one.

After reviewing the texts in accordance with our university's internal policy on publications, we will first carry out a plagiarism test and identify the appropriate manuscripts, and only thereafter will they be edited and proofread, following which the final version of the text is sent in PDF format to the authors. This copy should be approved in 48 hours by the author. Without this approval, the article will not be published.

After the publication of the issue, contributors will receive a copy by regular mail or personally. The journal is also published in online version, which is available before printing at the link:
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