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**Catholicism
as a
Cultural
Phenomenon
in the
Time
of
Globalization
A Polish Perspective**



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Preface

– Prof. Zygmunt Bauman

On the densely and richly populated Polish intellectual scene, Stanisław Obirek is one of the most prominent and significant, indeed outstanding actors. He stands out from the rest of actors for the role he designed and scripted for himself and has been consistently, over many years, performing; a role in which few if any others would be capable and/or willing to appear in his stead; a role that follows no ready-made scripts and lines, role that Obirek originated and developed in the course of performing and which it have succeeded by now to make an indispensable part of the Polish intellectual life.

At the age of twenty, Obirek joined the Jesuit Order, hoping to find there the right location in which the most complex and challenging doctrinal issues of Christian Church could be best scrutinized and debated, but also a bridgehead from which to conduct a fruitful and mutually enlightening and uplifting debate with other forms of human relation to God. Obirek hoped to find both of them there, encouraged by the legacy of intellectual giants like the Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin as well as by the long and in many ways glorious tradition of the Jesuits' confrontation with the ideas raised in the times of Reformation or Enlightenment in opposition to Christian orthodoxy; a kind of tradition that, as he trusted, must have prepared and inclined the Jesuit Order, his chosen intellectual fraternity, to face the newer and more attention-demanding challenges of, say, Communism or the emergent postmodernism. Obirek left the Order once he realized that he had been mistaken; once he found out that an open debate—indeed the recognition of other, not strictly conformist varieties of faith, as a legitimate partner for conversation (as distinct from being an object of censuring, condemning and anathemising)—had no room in Jesuit offices just like they found no hospitality in most of the other sectors of the Polish Catholic Church and at all levels of its hierarchy.

In short, Obirek is an intellectual with a mission to perform; and in our times marked by intellectuals with jobs but with no vocation, and intellectual life with colourful fashions, but no purposes and axes to grind, intellectual with a mission is a rare, and for that reason all the more precious phenomenon... It has been the awareness of a mission—the same mission—that inspired him to take holy orders, and prompted him to retire from the Order. And the mission he has chosen has been from the start and remains to this day the vocation to work towards bridging the gap opening between the teaching of the Church and the challenges of contemporary life; a gap which the Church Hierarchy has no obvious intention to close, preferring instead to persist in its widening.

In an interview recently given to Przemysław Szubartowicz, Obirek refused attempts to compare his activity with that of the ‘revisionists’ of the Communist past of Poland, who wished to reform the Party ‘from inside’, believing as they did (or rather hoping against hope, and naively) in the plausibility of such a project. He himself entertains little hope that the Church, steering away from the promise of renewal made at the threshold of the late-modern era at the Second Vatican Council convened by the Pope John XXIII, would be willing to tolerate, let alone to promote, a kind of theological debate Christianity urgently needs in order to find its feet on the rapidly globalizing planet; or that it would be prepared to allow, let alone to inspire, any sort of thought and expression other than the ‘court theology’—an ongoing commentary to the Pope’s latest pronouncements.

Obirek has been deeply and painfully wounded by the spectacle of his friend and spiritual companion Jacques Dupuis being pressed by a powerful Vatican Congregation to renounce his inspired and inspiring meditations as erroneous, and for all practical intents and purposes coerced to surrender his right to think on his own. In his faithful rendition of the spirit of the Second Vatican Council, Dupuis compared its impact, as intended and anticipated in its recorded legacy and particularly in the declaration *Nostra aetate*, as another ‘Copernican revolution’ or ‘Rubicon crossing’. According to Dupuis’ understanding which Obirek shares, the essence of the projected revival of Christianity was the recognition that there is more than one

way to tie the bond between man and God and more than one way to respect, revere and implement His teachings, and that in those shared and complementary labours different religions are (or at least are destined to be) partners or brothers-in-arms, rather than antagonists and competitors. As Dupuis himself put it—the ‘Rubicon crossing’ amounted to “waiving any claim not only to exclusivity but also to normativity of Christianity or Jesus Christ”; or, as another restless spirit of contemporary Christian Theology, Hans Kueng, put it—to the recognition that the world’s ethos entailed in Christianity is a part of a bigger effort of “world religions to make the world more human”.

In addition, Obirek applies to the Second Vatican Council Karl Rahner’s characterization of another 1500 years older great event in history of the Church, the Council of Chalcedon—as an end (to a protracted, tortuous and in many ways confusing polyphony) yet simultaneously a new beginning. When applied to the Second Vatican Council, that verdict originally pronounced retrospectively in the case of the Chalcedon Council relates to the Church’s first official self-actualization as a world Church. Because of that fateful act, the Second Vatican Council ought to be seen, first and foremost, as an “important and promising beginning”. But beginning of what?

Once the centuries-old barriers—intolerance of heterodoxy, and the presumption of the Christian Church’s inalienable access to truth and its exclusive and indivisible normative prerogatives—are out of the way, realization that all the important existential mysteries that (to quote from *Nostra aetate*) “deeply stir the heart of men” (such as the meaning and aim of life, the questions of what is moral good and what is sin, which is the road to true happiness, etc.) similarly torment and inspire people of all faiths, as well as agnostics and the atheists; and that the effort to unlock them is therefore a concern and the desire they all share—an effort that can only gain therefore from their friendly cooperation. In a conclusion from the thorough survey of the conditions in which different faiths are cast due to their close neighbourhood on the densely populated planet, and of the inspirations that could be gleaned from the vast array of belief systems he encountered, studied and fathomed, Obirek is, as he expressed it, “able to say that without other religions I could be less

of a Christian”. He adds that “thanks to this discovery I was able to discover the more authentic and clearer face of Christianity”.

Indeed, the openness to other truths is *not* heterodoxy. Such openness is the true way of being loyal to, and keeping faith in Christian message. Or, as Abraham Joshua Heschel, whom Obirek quotes with whole-hearted approval, insists—‘no religion is an island’, while “diversity is the will of God”. Hence the purpose of inter-religion cooperation “is neither to flatter not to refute one another, but to help one another”. One is tempted to say: for Obirek and the still small yet distinguished company of like-minded theologians, that purpose is to recover, in the unity and through the cooperation of religious faiths, the road to the unity of humanity. In our place (the planet Earth) and our times of world-wide inter-dependence, this is, for the believers and non-believers alike, beyond reasonable doubt the most noble among imaginable purposes and the most urgent of conceivable urgent tasks with which the emergent humanity is confronted and needs to face up to.

One should be grateful to the publishers for collecting, for the first time under one cover, the manifold Obirek’s writings on the subjects ranging from the general condition of religion in contemporary world, through the problems related to the Church’s place and role in society (analysed while focusing on the Polish experience, yet with conclusions of much wider import), and up to the convoluted, intricate and puzzling case of the Polish-Jewish relation, which Stanisław Obirek is not the first Catholic tackling, but perhaps the first scholar attempting to approach it *as* a Catholic. One should be grateful to the publishers, as what they offer the readers is a genuine treasure-trove of fascinating findings, convincing interpretations and inspiring visions, which will most certainly earn a distinguished and durable place in the ongoing debates in Poland, but also all around our disunited yet struggling to unite planet.

I. General Perspectives

Chapter 1.

The Catholic Church and Globalization

Introduction

One of the most important achievements in the theology of the 20th Century is the conviction that every religion is a path toward salvation for its followers. This conviction is called “religious pluralism.” For centuries, what today is obvious, was considered heresy or the wrong way of thinking—which was, usually, violently suppressed. One of the reasons for this new way of looking at one’s own religious tradition is the process of globalization. The Catholic Church has also taken this path towards pluralism, and a concrete example for this new way of considering her own position in the mosaic of the world’s religions is the declaration *Nostra aetate*, issued during the Second Vatican Council (hereafter referred to as Vatican II) in 1965. My aim in this chapter is to consider the impact of this new situation on theological reflection and interreligious dialogue.

It seems that this religious dialogue is also an effort to overcome what Samuel Huntington once called “the clash of civilizations,” connecting this clash with religion¹, although, in the context of globalization, religion is losing its dangerous face. In fact, a careful analysis shows that what we are observing are mutual influences rather than clash. And religion is playing an significant role in this process, as Peter L. Berger stated in the Introduction to a very inspiring volume on many globalizations written by scholars from different countries: “All these cases make it abundantly clear that the idea of a mindless global homogenization greatly underestimated the capacity of human beings to be creative and innovative in the face of

¹ Cf. “Foreign Affairs”, summer 1993, v. 72, the article *Clash of Civilizations* which was published in 1996 by Simon and Schuster as, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

cultural challenges”². It would also seem that different religious systems are able to change in order to make their traditional teachings suitable to new situations.

Teaching tradition in a new language

Probably only a few students of theology today are able to realize how radically Catholic theology has changed as a result of Vatican II. Reading the Council’s documents as a part of the history of theology makes it clear that, while they are deeply rooted in the traditional teachings of the Church, they are also a radical departure from pre-Vatican II language and attitude. The official teaching, the so-called Magisterium, tries to underline the continuity, while some theologians stress the new elements in the traditional teaching. For example one of the most important Catholic theologians, Jacques Dupuis, described Catholic theology after *Nostra aetate* as a “paradigm shift of the Copernican revolution, one hears talk of ‘crossing the Rubicon.’ ‘Crossing the Rubicon’ obviously signifies irrevocably recognizing the equal meaning and value of the various religions and waiving any claim not only to exclusivity but also to normativity of Christianity or Jesus Christ”³. If we look at the council’s documents carefully, we see that what is really new is the language. This aspect of Church policy is at the center of the observed cultural shift.

John O’Malley in his latest book, *Four Cultures of the West*, (in which he makes an intriguing distinction between four forms of culture: prophetic, academic, rhetorical and artistic) made an interesting observation about Vatican II:

This context makes the culture-three style of discourse (rhetorical) that characterizes the documents of Vatican Council II all the more remarkable. That style did not, of course, spring out of nowhere. In Germany and Belgium but especially in France, theologians had for several decades been

² Cf. *Many Globalizations. Cultural Diversity in the Contemporary World*, ed. P. L. Berger, S.P. Huntington, Oxford 2002, p. 11.

³ J. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions. From Confrontation to Dialogue*, New York: Orbis Books, Meryknoll, 2001, p. 79.

trying to find alternatives to the rigidity of the dominant style, and a number of them turned to the Fathers in what they called a *resourcement*, a ‘return to the sources’. As it turns out, the documents of the council often read like a commentary or homily by one of the Fathers—or by Erasmus. A greater contrast with the style of discourse of the Council of Trent would be difficult to find. Vatican II, like Luther, was a ‘language event’.⁴

It is precisely this new style that presents a problem for those interpreting the outcome of Vatican II. In order to understand the difference between the “old” and the “new,” it will be important to recall some of the theologians whose ideas contributed to the Copernican revolution in the Church theology, such as Karl Rahner, Edward Schillebeeckx and Hans Kueng. Rahner successfully translated the traditional, scholastic concepts used in theology into phenomenological language. Schillebeeckx was able to present Jesus Christ as a person in a new anthropological system. Kueng, with his idea of a world ethos, demonstrated that Christianity is a part of a bigger effort on the part of the world’s religions to make the world more humane.

One of the problems of assimilating the revolutionary teaching of the Catholic Church is a lack of awareness of how deeply this new language has also affected doctrine, which has to be changed. As O’Malley says:

To this day the council has become an object of confusion and controversy, to a large extent because interpreters miss that they are dealing here with literary genres altogether different from those of all preceding councils. This obliviousness is all the more amazing because the first thing that strikes one when reading the documents is that they are written in a style no previous council ever adopted.⁵

As we know, “the medium is the message” (Marshall McLuhan). The new language contains new teachings, and this is particularly

⁴ J. O’Malley, *Four Cultures of the West*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 2004, p. 175.

⁵ O’Malley, *op. cit.*, p 176.

evident in the document which for the first time in the history of Catholic theology deals with the relationship of Christianity to other religions: the *Nostra aetate* declaration. Perhaps it would be more precise to say that, for the first time, Catholic theology speaks in a positive way about other religions. This new theological language is also a sign of the new belief in the possibility of formulating religious conviction in words.

One of the most important Catholic thinkers to articulate this new way of thinking was the American Jesuit, Walter Ong. According to Ong not the words but the person as such and not only that of Jesus is in the center of the Christian message: “The person not only of Jesus, for a believer, but the person of every human being, for believers and not believers, lies in a way beyond statement. The ‘I’ that any one of us speaks lies beyond statement in the sense that although every statement originates, ultimately, from an ‘I’, no mere statement can ever make clear what constitutes this ‘I’ as against any other ‘I’ spoken by any other human being”⁶. The theological consequences of this way of thinking are really enormous for the Catholic theology, and probably we are only at the beginning of the road. It is particularly important for the process of globalization in which, as we said, the Church takes part. In other words, the Church has to resign its claim to uniqueness.

Probably it is the only way to avoid the dangerous aspect of any fundamentalism, including religious fundamentalism, because nobody can claim to have a final answer for religious problems. Again in the words of Ong:

Textual bias, proneness to identify words with text and only the text, encourages religious fundamentalists, cultural fundamentalists, and other fundamentalists, but also perhaps most persons, declared fundamentalists or not, in a culture so addicted to literacy as that of the United States, to believe that truth, of various sorts or even all sorts, can be neatly enclosed in a proposition or a limited set of propositions that are totally explicit and self-contained, not needing or indeed even

⁶ W. J. Ong, (1995) “Hermeneutic Forever: Voice, Text, Digitization, and ‘I’”, in: *Oral Tradition* 10(1995), no. 1, p. 20.

tolerating any interpretation. (...) In the case of Christian fundamentalists, for example, what they commonly may not advert to is the biblical statement of Jesus's: "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14, 6). Jesus leaves his followers not list of given number of propositional statements that total up all that he comes to utter as the Word of God⁷.

In this complicated text we find the basis for the fundamental scepticism of any kind of religion that tries to make absolute its own written tradition, including Christianity. In other words, what is needed is a new form of interreligious dialogue in which, not the text, but the people involved, will play the most important role.

Only the beginning

When in Karl Rahner wrote his essay on the occasion of the 1500th anniversary of the Council of Chalcedon, in 1954, he entitled it *Chalcedon—Ende oder Anfang?* [Chalcedon—Ending or Beginning?]. His answer was "Both!" A dogmatic and clear formulation is the end of a (usually long and painful) process of searching for a theological solution, but it is also the beginning of a new understanding:

Once theologians and the ordinary magisterium of the Church have begun to pay attention to a reality and a truth revealed by God, the final result is always a precisely formulated statement. This is natural and inevitable. In no other way is it possible to mark the boundary of error and the misunderstanding of divine truth in such a way that this boundary will be observed in the day-to-day practice of religion. Yet while this formula is an end, an acquisition and a victory, which allows us to enjoy clarity and security as well as ease in instruction, if this victory is to be a true one the end must also be a beginning.⁸

What Rahner is saying is basically that we cannot look at a written text as dead letters, but rather must see it as a departure

⁷ Op. cit. p. 19.

⁸ K. Rahner, (1963) "Current Problems in Christology", in: *Theological Investigation*. vol. I, Helicon Press, Baltimore, pp. 149-200, cit. p. 149.

point for a living and dynamic interpretation in the concrete context of the Church community. It is also important to emphasize that Karl Rahner was one of the most influential theologians during the debates of Vatican II and his interpretation of the documents are particularly significant⁹. Speaking at the Weston School of Theology in 1979, Rahner stated: “The Second Vatican Council is, in a rudimentary form still groping for identity, the Church’s first official self-actualization *as* a world Church.”¹⁰ This searching for identity is particularly true with regard to other world religions.

We have also to see the documents of the last ecumenical council as the end of a long process of clarification but also as the beginning of the new situation of the Church. The tormented history of the declaration *Nostra aetate* is well known and it is not our aim to rehearse it here. What is interesting for us is the comment made by its main author, Cardinal Augustin Bea, at the press conference on the day of its promulgation on October 28th 1965. His observation is very similar to Rahner’s statement on the Chalcedon Christological formula. Cardinal Bea stated:

The Declaration on the Non-Christian Religions is indeed an important and promising beginning, yet no more than the beginning of a long and demanding way towards the arduous goal of a humanity whose members feel themselves truly to be sons and daughters of the same Father and act on this convictions¹¹.

It is really important to notice that the document is seen as “important and promising beginning.” It also means that it is only a point of departure for this new approach toward other religions.

In other words, traditional theology could be declared as no longer fit to describe the situation of Christianity among other world religions. Let us recall two key passages in which the new attitude

⁹ Cf. K. Rahner, “Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II”, in: *Theological Studies* 40 no. 4(1979), 719-727.

¹⁰ Op. cit., p. 717.

¹¹ R. Neudecker, (1989) “The Catholic Church and the Jewish People”, in: *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives. Twenty-five Years After (1962-1987)*, vol. 3, ed. Rene Latourelle, Paulist Press: New York, pp. 289.

toward other religions is stated. The first speaks about common questions formulated by different religions:

Men expect from the various religions answers to the unsolved riddles of the human condition, which today, even as in former times, deeply stir the hearts of men: What is man? What is the meaning, the aim of our life? What is moral good, what sin? Whence suffering and what purpose does it serve? Which is the road to true happiness? What are death, judgment and retribution after death? What, finally, is that ultimate inexpressible mystery which encompasses our existence: whence do we come, and where are we going? (*Nostra aetate*, no. 1)

It is clearly declared that the experience of basic human questions are similar in across different religions, and that there is no reason to treat one as better than the other. And the second key passage speaks about the positive attitude of the Church toward other religions:

The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions. She regards with sincere reverence those ways of conduct and of life, those precepts and teachings which, though differing in many aspects from the one she holds and sets forth, nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men. (*Nostra aetate*, no. 2)

Forty years after these words were written, the Catholic Church is different—interreligious dialogue is a reality deeply rooted in its daily life, with very far reaching consequences also for theological teaching. Many Christians also learn to listen to what followers of other religious traditions have to say. It is also worthy to remember that the impact of Jewish thinkers on no. 4 of *Nostra aetate* dealing with the relationship with Judaism was decisive. In this text the Catholic Church recognized the particular role of Jewish people in the Christian history. Thinkers such as Abraham Joshua Heschel¹²,

¹² In order to understand the impact of Heschel also on Christian theology it is worth to read *No Religion Is an Island. Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. H. Kasimow and B.L. Sherwin, New York 1991.

Irving Greenberg¹³, Geza Veermes¹⁴, Byron L. Sherwin, Harold Kasimow have had a visible impact on the Polish debate. In Poland we do not have original thinkers dealing with this new situation of the Catholic Church, which explains why I have to mention those whose texts are translated in to Polish.

The new identity

This positive opening toward other religions has brought about a new perception of what it means to be a Catholic. I would like to recall the classical division of the Church history made by Rahner in article already quoted:

Theologically speaking, there are three great epochs in Church history, of which the third has only just begun and made itself observable officially at Vatican II. First, the short period of Jewish Christianity. Second, the period of the Church in a distinct cultural region, namely, that of Hellenism and of European culture and civilization. Third, the period in which the sphere of the Church's life is in fact the entire world¹⁵.

The beginning of the third period is still unknown, and explains why the Catholic Church is still searching for a new identity as a world religion.

I would like to finish with a personal note. Over the years I have learned a great deal from many Christians who went to Asia and returned transformed by their exposure to Asian religions. I also learned from Asian people, who came to Europe or America, and

¹³ His last book *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth. The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia 2004 gave me an occasion to look closely to the similarities and differences between Christian and Jewish waiting for the Messiah. Cf. Obirek, "Wspólnie oczekując na Mesjasza" in: *Obrzeża katolicyzmu* (On the fringes of Catholicism), Poznań, 2008, pp. 151-158.

¹⁴ Author of many books concerning the Jewish background of Christianity, for example: *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, London 2000, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*, London 2003, *Who's Who in the Age of Jesus*, London 2005.

¹⁵ Rahner, "Towards..." op. cit. P. 721.

showed us how shallow our Western culture and spirituality could be. Let me mention just a few names: Thomas Merton, Bede Griffiths, Enomiya Lassalle, Heinrich Dumoulin, William Johnston, Anthony de Mello, Raimundo Panikkar and Jacques Dupuis. Thanks to them I discovered how important Buddhism and Hinduism could be for me as a Christian. It is not easy to explain this experience in a few words, but I can say that it was a real discovery for me to learn that as a Christian I could learn from “nonbelievers” or “pagans.” Not only learn, but be aware that without these other religions, I would be less of a Christian. Thanks to this discovery I have been able to discover a more authentic, clearer face to Christianity. Perhaps even more importantly, there was the discovery that other religions are able to teach us, as Christians, how to pray: which is exactly what Jesus himself taught us!

But, I have to admit, that the deepest and most decisive impact on my perception of religion as such, and on my image of God in particular, has been my encounter with Judaism and Jewish thinkers. Together with Abraham Joshua Heschel, I recognize Judaism as my mother religion. Why is this so? I don’t know. I can only say that when I started reading Heschel’s books, and when I met some of his disciples, I discovered that Judaism is my spiritual home. Could it be that one of the explanations for my attraction to Judaism is that I was born in one of those European towns where, before World War II, half of the population was Jewish? Or perhaps could it be that Belzec, one of the most notorious Nazi death camps, was built close to my birthplace? I simply don’t know.

From the many words of Heschel that I love, let me quote the final part of his famous lecture, “No Religion Is an Island,” in which he asks about the purpose of inter-religious cooperation:

It is neither to flatter nor to refute one another, but to help one another; to share insight and learning, to cooperate in academic ventures on the highest scholarly level, and what is even more important, to search in the wilderness for well-springs of devotion, for treasures of stillness, for the power of love and care of [humankind]. What is urgently needed are ways of helping one another in the terrible predicament of here and now by the courage to believe that the word of the

Lord endures forever as well as here and now; to cooperate in trying to bring about a resurrection of sensitivity, a revival of conscience; to keep alive the divine sparks in our souls, to nurture openness to the spirit of the Psalms, reverence for the words of the prophets, and faithfulness to the living God.

It just now came to my mind that one of the reasons why the words of Abraham Joshua Heschel have had such an impact on me could be that he is a survivor of the Holocaust who lost almost his entire family in the disaster of the Shoah. And still he was able to write as he did! And probably it is also a reason why I am glad that I was able to publish a collection of essays by his disciple, and my dear friend, Harold Kasimow, entitled *The Search Will Make You Free: A Jewish Dialogue with World Religions*. It is perhaps also why I feel a deep affinity with his declaration:

I am a Jewish pluralist. As such, I am committed to the Jewish path, not because it is superior, but because it is my path. I view the concept of the chosen people as God choosing the Jews to follow the path of the Torah and at the same time choosing the Hindus to follow the Vedas, the Buddhists to follow the Dharma, the Muslims to follow the Qur'an, and for Christians to follow Jesus of Nazareth. This seems to me to be in the spirit of my great teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel, who stated that 'In this aeon, diversity is the will of God'.

At the end of my short presentation, let me say that I must admit that I am tempted by agnosticism more than I previously thought. And the reason is that I have met so many people who honestly declare the impossibility of belief in God, yet at the same time, give testimony to moral integrity. In other words, many agnostics are living examples of how to remain human in a time of humanity's degradation.

Let me give one example: Stanislaw Lem, a writer, philosopher, and man who never sold-out his conscience, but rather lived as he believed he should. Yet, at the same time, I have met many believers who do not live and practice what they profess—and as a believer, this embarrassed me. Why? Because I know that it is not enough to

declare what one believes, one must also practice it. One ought not to have two versions of life—one for the public and one for God. I would say that agnosticism is part of my being a believer. In my childhood, it was politics and politicians that attempted to convince me that religion is not necessary because they had all the answers to my basic questions. Today we have in Poland the opposite tendency: religion is becoming politics, and religious people (not only priests, but also politicians) are proclaiming that they have all the answers to my deepest questions. Both tendencies are lethal for public life: politicization of religion is the way to a totalitarian system in which a human person becomes an instrument of the realization of political aims. But “religionization” of politics in a way to exclude all those who do not share the politicians’ convictions. Both ways are alien to me. In the time of globalization we need to learn how to harmonize not only different religions, but also religion with non-religious ways of thinking. It is still an open question, if the Catholic Church as an institution will adopt this way as its own. In any case, some Catholic theologians are demonstrating that integrating positive elements from other religions or cultures is not only possible, but even necessary, and that this new way of thinking is acceptable. Let me conclude with the words of Carl Starkloff, in reference to his experience of work with Native Americans¹⁶:

It is my hope that this book might contribute to the creation of a village that expresses the best in village life—hospitality and conversation, and not the worst, such as conflict and manipulation. I realize that this village seems destined to be pluralistic, and that all dialogue must accept the fact of historical pluralism, certainly of cultures (...) and in the historical experience of religion.

It is also my hope that religion will contribute to building a new, more human, world.

¹⁶ C. Starkloff *A Theology of the In-Between.. The Value of Syncretic Process*, Milwaukee: Marquette Univ. Press, 2002, p. 140.

Chapter 2.

Intellectuals and Catholicism in Today's Poland

Poland is a very specific laboratory, where processes are underway that are of significance to more than just its own inhabitants. “Faith and reason (fides et ratio) are as two wings, upon which human spirit is lifted toward contemplation and truth. God himself inoculated the human heart with the desire to know truth, a truth whose ultimate goal is to know Him, so that human beings—in knowing and loving Him—could also reach the complete truth about themselves.” Thus begins John Paul II’s 1998 encyclical *Fides et ratio*, dedicated to the mutual relationship of faith and reason.

The Papal optimism associated with the complementarity of the endeavors of reason and the actions of faith is rarely validated in experience. History teaches that this relationship is complex, and sometimes even characterized by conflict. My remarks below are an attempt to view Poland’s recent history through the prism of its relationship to faith and reason, based on the concrete examples of specific individuals.

I was preordained (no pun intended) to live in a time and place where the relationship between faith and reason was either programmatically questioned (Communist ideology) or was experienced as a loss of faith without ideological pressure. Ultimately, people searched for the possibility to reconcile the demands of reason with the needs of faith (the opposition camp of *Tygodnik Powszechny* [Universal Weekly], *Znak* [The Sign] and *Więź* [The Link], the PAX camp, reconciled with communist realities, as well as institutional Churches and religious associations, which were viewed with disdain by the communist government). A significant source of inspiration also came from the Diaspora and émigré literature. These were not, however, mutually exclusive worlds, but were in fact interdependent.

Right from the start, I must note that for me, Communism, the red totalitarianism, is much more dangerous than fascism, in the sense that it constitutes the devil's attempt to provide a different and perverse meaning to words found in the civilized dictionary. For example, under Communism, there was no simple freedom, only "freedom," within the circumscribed boundaries of party interests. Generally we can say that every concept used by communists has to be seen in this specific ideological context. There was no honesty, only the complete subservience of life to the party, which in practice meant a gradual corrosion of human relationships, as well as the destruction of traditional family, religious and social structures. Those who haven't lived under a communist system yet express themselves on the basis of hearsay or theories have no idea what they are talking about. This is why the gulag literature of Alexander Solzhenitsin and others is so important. This is why Gustaw Herling-Grudziński's most important book, *Inny Świat* (Another World), describes precisely this inhuman world. One can never overstate the fact that the biggest victims of Communism are the nations of the former Soviet Union, with Russia at the top.

Internal conflict

Paradoxically, the postwar years were even more difficult than the war years and the years of the Nazi and Soviet occupation, when it was clear who were the perpetrators and who were the victims. In short, the postwar years can be described as a state of internal conflict (for those who were cognizant of the post-Yalta political situation) or some sort of specific schizophrenia (a split version of history; official in school and "true" at home) for the generation born during or right after the War.

There was no dearth of enthusiasts and builders of the new system, who as true believers mobilized themselves in realizing the dream of a socialist Poland. Warsaw set the tone, gratefully receiving the gift of the Palace of Culture and Science from General Josef Stalin. Polish science and culture sustained great losses; six million Polish citizens died, among them three million Jews. Those who did survive attempted by various means to establish postwar life.

Some philosophers, like Adam Schaff, Tadeusz Kroński and their best students, Leszek Kołakowski and Bronisław Baczko, attempted to provide scientific foundations for the new socialist(?) system. Others, such as Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Roman Ingarden or Henryk Elzenberg, remained faithful to their philosophy—phenomenology, and were quickly marginalized. There were also those who attempted to remain true to themselves while maintaining a presence in official scientific life. They included Tadeusz Kotarbiński and the inheritors of the Lwow-Warsaw school headed by Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz. I only mention philosophers, and among them, those who were best known. They became the inspiration for schools of thought, research centers, academic journals, doctoral dissertations, translations of classics. In short, “normal academic life” developed, except that it was under Communist control, meaning that it was not fully free.

Poems and novels were written, although not many of these works have stood the test of time. Tadeusz Borowski and his camp stories, Zofia Nałkowska as the author of *Medallions*, the poems of Tadeusz Różewicz. A particularly important literary work was Czesław Miłosz's *Captive Mind*, in which Miłosz express the internal conflict of Polish intellectual.

An attempt at salvation

Life perspectives for the generation growing up during this period were varied. This was our only world, with no basis for comparison. We lived in a totalitarian system without realizing it; we only came to see it clearly after the fall of Communism. Among native works, Leszek Kołakowski's monumental *Main Currents of Marxism* deserves particular attention, as does Andrzej Walicki's *Marxism and the Leap to the Kingdom of Freedom: The History of Communist Utopia*. In the case of the first, a former Marxist writes about the temptation of totalitarianism from the perspective of his personal experiences. In the case of Walicki, we have an insightful description of a phenomenon which the author never succumbed to, yet worked out in depth. But these are later developments, a kind of comment many years after. During the communist time this kind of

interpretation was impossible, Kołakowski and Walicki wrote their works outside Poland.

I would call the post-Stalinist political system, an attempt to salvage dignity and create alternative cultural initiatives. The impact of émigré centers became more pronounced. I am thinking here mainly of Jerzy Giedroyc's Paris "Kultura," as well as the writers Witold Gombrowicz, Czesław Miłosz and Gustaw Herling-Grudziński. Within Poland, there was an increasing volume of voices: Sławomir Mrożek, who mercilessly ridiculed the absurdity of Polish Communism; Zbigniew Herbert, who unmasked Communist lies; and Tadeusz Różewicz, who defended the right to an individual view of reality. The weekly *Przekrój* played the role of Trojan horse by "smuggling" contemporary Western literature and culture into Poland at a time when the written word was subject to strict government censorship.

The post-1956 thaw was for many Communist enthusiasts an opportunity to reassess their entire system of convictions and beliefs. Without tampering with the dogma of socialism (the leading role of the party in social and political life, friendship with the Soviet Union, and the infallibility of party leaders), the Communist authorities gradually reduced the totalitarian force. At the same time, the Church gradually increased its ability to realize its spiritual objectives within Poland, due in large measure to the charismatic Primate Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński and the Krakow Metropolitan Cardinal, Karol Wojtyła, and many religious orders began to re-establish their international contacts.

Solidarity of reason and faith

The elevation of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła to the papacy in 1978, his first visit to Poland in 1979, and the establishment of the independent trade union Solidarity in August, 1980, turned the world's attention to Poland. This is all well-known and there is no need to develop this thread. The best introduction to the impact of these changes is in the final pages of *Heart of Europe. A Short History of Poland* by Norman Davis. The imposition of martial law on December 13, 1981, by General Jaruzelski cast a long shadow

over Poland. Civic enthusiasm was crushed, raising the specter of the internally captive person, externally steered and incapable of exercising individual responsibility. The voice of the *homo sovieticus* reappeared. After one year of freedom along the Vistula, the grayness of People's Poland returned, with its all-encompassing hell of suspicions and a sophisticated system of control by the Interior Ministry, the aftermath of which continue to poison interpersonal relations even today.

During this time, many young people left Poland or remained abroad. Secret killings were a gloomy aspect of the times. The most infamous was the murder of Father Jerzy Popiełuszko in November 1984. Today he is worshipped as a martyr for civic and religious freedom. Ironically, there were also some positive consequences of martial law—a genuine sense of international solidarity, the activity of independent associations and publications, solidarity between intellectuals and church representatives across a broad range of political beliefs, on the basis of commonly held values. It was this period that gave birth to friendships across beliefs and beyond religious divisions. Non-believers also looked forward to the visits of religious chaplains to internment camps.

The return of past demons

The political, social and religious situation in Poland circa 2003 has been characterized by the return of past demons, particularly those from the interwar era. A part of the return of old ideologies, the struggle for power, money and media influence has dominated public debate.

The Church is attempting, to some degree successfully, to play the role of a mediator between different conflicting groups. At key moments, the Catholic Episcopate has published pastoral letters, eliciting serious commentary in the media. There are many bishops whose voices carry significant weight, such as Archbishop Józef Życiński, Bishop Tadeusz Pieronek, the long-time secretary of the Polish Episcopate, Bishop Tadeusz Gocłowski, Bishop Muszyński... Each of them also has played a significant role in the debate on Poland's integration into the European Union.

The Catholic laity has centered around *Tygodnik Powszechny* (Universal Weekly) and the high circulation *Gość Niedzielny* (Sunday Guest), while the monthlies *Znak* (Sign) and *Więź* (Link) continue to play major roles. The Institute of National Remembrance has also played an important role. Thanks to its president, Leon Kieres, the Institute has initiated a serious debate on the legacy of totalitarianism in our country—the debate on the July 11, 1941, crime in Jedwabne and the mass killings of Poles in Volhynia. Striving for truth, restoring it to history—this is the most important task of post-communist societies. This restoration of truth needs also to encompass an honest and impartial study of the legacy of religion.

On-going visits from John Paul II generated lively commentary and were an important point of departure, not only for Catholics, but also for post-communist authorities, as was heard from the President Aleksander Kwaśniewski and Premier Leszek Miller.

The debate over the future shape of Polish society is often viewed through the prism of two groups: *Gazeta Wyborcza*, rising out of the milieu of the former communist opposition and led from the very beginning by Adam Michnik; and Radio Maria, founded in 1992 by a Redemptionist priest, Father Tadeusz Rydzyk. I will not hide the fact that the comments below are very personal in nature. I can only speak of these two groupings from such a personal perspective.

a) Faith on the fringes of papal teaching

In 1991, by coincidence, I led academic Lenten recollections at the Jesuit Church in Toruń, which were broadcasted by the local radio station. This station, unknown to me, turned out to be Radio Maria. Let me say a word about this radio station. After the fall of Communism, Radio Maria became identified as the only independent Catholic broadcast medium in Poland. Beyond the religious content, the station's programs have a very strong political component; that is, they are anti-Semitic, anti-modernity, anti-European, anti-everything.

So you can understand my surprise when the following the last recollection, I was invited to the studio and responded on the air to listener questions as part of a program called "Unfinished Conversations." The questions, along with the format of the program,

moved me deeply. Later, I participated in Radio Maria's "traveling programs" three times, always at Jesuit churches (Kraków, Wrocław, Stara Wieś). The format was always the same: a mass, followed by on-the-air radio conversations. The program finale was always "Unfinished Conversations," led by the Redemptionist Fathers. I also led recollections for the Redemptionist Fathers near Tuchów. Among the participants were young priests who worked for Radio Maria. I attempted to convince them to support a debate between the editor-in-chief of *Universal Weekly*, Jerzy Turowicz, and the director of Radio Maria. I was saddened that these priests couldn't imagine such an event. For me, it seemed a necessity at this moment. The last time that I appeared on Radio Maria was in 2001. I gave advent recollections in Toruń at the Church of the Redemptionist Fathers. I said mass over the radio and gave the homily. I even received an anniversary book from Fr. Rydzyk documenting the ten year anniversary of Radio Maria's broadcasting.

As is clear from the description above, these contacts were priestly and pious. I value them greatly. They helped me better understand the positive role this medium plays in the life of many faithful Poles. So it is with particular alarm that I watch this positive aspect, as many others do, be tarnished by the downright anti-Christian nature of many of its political commentaries, in which the current political system is stigmatized as neo-communist and anti-Catholic. The question arises: is this connection between Catholic faith and intolerant politics unavoidable? How can the open attitude of Pope John Paul II, upon whose spiritual patronage Radio Maria so willingly draws, enable/allow for the narrow ideology of Father Rydzyk? The present development of the media run by Rydzyk are called in Poland, does not create optimism. I would not, however, rule out, the possibility of a deep transformation and radical change, something that is not completely unheard of in the history of spirituality. This, however, must be left up to God. In large measure, it also depends on the progress of inter-church dialogue. There are many bishops, with the Primate Cardinal Józef Glemp at the head, who for years have expressed respect for Radio Maria's listeners but simultaneously have voiced anxiety about its leadership. Father Rydzyk, himself, has often stated that he does not want a schism in

the Church. I believe that these statements are honest. The problem is that they have not been subjected to theological analysis.

The suspicion arises, sometimes, that the familiar rhetoric from the totalitarian past (attributing meaning to words only within the closed system of professed “truth”) is present in Radio Maria, as well as the associated daily *Nasz Dziennik* (Our Daily). Particularly surprising is the language of hate and gossip, suggesting that, in reality, nothing in Poland has changed except that Brussels has replaced Moscow.

b) Agnostics concerned with Gospel values

I am a faithful reader of *Gazeta Wyborcza*. I admire its editor-in-chief, Adam Michnik. I am particularly taken by an enlightening anecdote Father Józef Tischner recounted: “One time, I found myself with Adam among my close mountaineer friends. There was a lot of fun and humor. After Adam left, I tossed out the question: ‘Do you know why God created Michnik?’ After a second, one of those present said with a laugh, which betrayed his enlightenment, ‘So that the smart one will get smarter and the dumb one will get even dumber.’

I would just add that it was with Father Tischner and Jacek Żakowski that Adam Michnik carried on a conversation that ended up in the book, *Between the Master and the Plebian*. For me, this book served as a model example of dialogue between believers and nonbelievers. The fact that after several years I published *What Unites Us? Dialogue with Nonbelievers* is to a large extent the fruit of that meeting. Adam Michnik agreed to a conversation, which found itself in this book and from which I will recall his characteristic challenge: ‘I think of it this way: I cannot say that I am a Christian, because I know that I haven’t grown to that. But at the same time, there is no smarter value system than Christianity, whose permanent element is precisely mercy in the face of justice. Because otherwise, the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount become just ornaments and formulas, which are easily discarded and which result in nothing. Something must come of this!... In parentheses, it was around this that Tischner and I thought very much alike—about decommunization, lustration, and so on.” (p.116)

I wonder why an activist of the opposition, the author of many insightful and important books, a man who has drawn close to the Catholic Church, has found himself on the other side of the so to say “imperial” barricade created by a Catholic priest. For whom by nature the ideals voiced by the author of *The Church, the Left: A Dialogue* should be close since they are close to the Gospels. If the director of Radio Maria were a different priest—Father Tischner, for example—I wouldn’t have to wonder. When I say I value Adam Michnik, it’s not to give him pleasure or to irritate his opponents. I say this because I know his writings and his way of seeing reality, as sketched out in *The Church, the Left: A Dialogue*, resonate with me. So it concerns me that his conscientious efforts at “cross-national unity,” as well as sincere attempts at to bring the post-communist nations together, are being met with resistance. His gestures of reaching out to communists are met with accusations of watering down values and a conscious effort to falsify reality. Michnik himself acknowledges this in the already-quoted discussion for *Spiritual Life*, which is included in the book *What Unites Us?*: “After all, it was the Holy Father who wrote: first mercy, then justice; therefore mercy should precede justice. So if I choose to follow this path, why am I accused of blurring the boundaries between right and wrong and relativizing everything?” This is an important question, which a Catholic priest should not leave unanswered.

It is noteworthy that in his introduction to the first edition of *The Church, the Left: A Dialogue*, published outside of censorship, Stefan Kisielewski praised Michnik, precisely for his uncompromising search for truth. He wrote:

The author presents himself in it very interestingly and from many sides: as an uncompromising seeker and finder of truth, drawing on erudition and selective as well as infallible memory; as a courageous and unconventional polemicist, at times rejecting traditional intellectual divisions and comfortable ways of thinking; as unmasking spiritual laziness and brittleness, wherever it may nest; and finally as a person gifted with a chronicler’s instinct to synthesize, which allows him to order and classify recent Polish affairs and to exhibit them in a clear and informative short hand. This is an

important asset in a nation where every recent political event immediately disappears from news columns and speakers and everyone is relegated to forget all, in accordance with the omnipotent ‘therapy of silence.’ For me personally, Michnik is important as a conscious or unconscious agent of Karol Rzykowski’s polemical challenges: struggles at once with everyone, defends all positions from the onslaught of simplifiers, even though he also at times undermines, in order to uncover the entire, complex truth, enters and empathizes with other positions, vouches for others as well as doubts for others. In these actions, he is guided by the ideal of overriding intellectual loyalty and objectivism (p. 5-6).

This is a long quotation, but the often underestimated Kisiel has hit the nail on the head. And if the Catholic Church, bishops, priests and the Pope called for unity (in fact they do!), and urged everyone to come to terms with the past, would the reaction be different? If this was done by the Catholic media, would it lose its Catholic character? Of course not! My relationship with Father Rydzyk is complex. With gratitude, I think about the people I met thanks to his radio program. I admire the effort and initiative of those individuals who selflessly create the radio programs. But I cannot understand the bishops and priests who avoid criticism of its work. It is true that the radio has a great potential for good, and is an example of the implementation of the idea of solidarity, and thus religiosity transforming itself into action. But nothing justifies the propagation of programs in conflict, not only with the Gospels, but also with vital Polish interests.

In addition, the vision of the Church and of Catholicism voiced by Father Rydzyk is, at its core, foreign to me. I can’t find any trace of post Vatican II reflection or papal teaching from the past several decades. In fact, I am convinced that it is an un-Christian, sectarian vision, spawning similar positions among those who uncritically succumb to its influence. I can say the same thing of Radio Maria’s so-called intellectual base, which was so insightfully analyzed by Eliza Michalik and Piotr Lisiewicz in their article “The Political Frequency of Radio Maria,” on the pages of *Gazeta Polska* (December, 4, 2002).

This is not just an academic question. It's a very real danger to the future of the Catholic Church in Poland. Voices arose, not long ago, about the need for a new Vatican Council. It seems to me that it suffices to carefully read the documents of Vatican II and the teachings of John Paul II, to recognize these voices as premature. What the Catholic Church in Poland needs is to carefully listen to the universal teachings of the Church and to implement them in everyday life.

There is also the issue of financial transparency within the private media. With the ongoing "Rywin affair" (Rywingate), in which the well-known film producer attempted to bribe Agora, the private corporation that publishes *Gazeta Wyborcza*, the lack of financial transparency of Radio Maria takes on additional meaning. In short, the legacy of Communism is alive and well not only in the post-Communist camp but also in the "Catholic voice within our homes."

Personally, I would like to combine the openness and critical thinking of Adam Michnik with the pastoral energy and organizational talent of Father Rydzyk. I believe that the *Gazeta Wyborcza* as well as the Radio Maria audiences could appreciate the possibility of a synthesis of their complementary visions of reality. Will such a synthesis of these dialectical elements of Polish reality occur? Personally, I am convinced that it is possible. It already being undertaken in the teachings of John Paul II, who is so dear to Adam Michnik as well as Father Tadeusz Rydzyk. It suffices to review the titles of the consecutive encyclicals of his pontificate, his oft-repeated acknowledgement of the Church's guilt, and his openness toward believers of other faiths. To this we can add a question from the most recently published "Roman Triptych" by John Paul II, a question about God, the Unfathomable One. How distant this is from the arrogant sense of superiority of those "who possess the truth." because the question about God means that only God could give us answer.

In conclusion, let me draw on the tradition dear to the great Jesuit, Piotr Skarga, who taught many Poles of the Israelite prophets: "The Lord says: 'No need to recall the past, no need to think about what was done before. See, I am doing a new deed, even now it comes to light; can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness,

paths in the wilds...The people I have formed for myself will sing my praises' (Isaiah, 43, 18-19, 21)."

I dare to state, that there are many among my friends, for whom the Catholic Church is nothing other than one of many institutions tending to its own interests, and who readily see in it the mirror reflection of a political party. There are also those, with whom I am in agreement, who see in the Church and religion in general, a great opportunity for the rebirth of Polish society.

Collectively we can act on this opportunity by establishing open and ecumenical relations with other Christian denominations, with other religions, and even with humanists not adhering to any religious beliefs. Our point of departure is the great Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions. It may be that in today's Europe we need to also add the Islamic tradition, as well as the great religions of the Far East. I firmly believe that we are living at the pre-dawn of deep transformations rather than unavoidable conflict of civilizations. We should think of our times in the same spirit as the Russian thinker, Vladimir Soloviev, who was fascinated with the God who transforms history; rather than fall prey to the cynicism of Samuel Huntington.

Chapter 3.

Jesuits in Poland and Eastern Europe

Introduction

It is hard to believe that at a time when almost all European countries were facing violent religious conflicts, Poland was welcoming of those fleeing religious persecution different dissidents in faith. In fact Poland received Italian Antitrinitarians, German Lutherans, Dutch Mennonites, English Quakers, Scottish Huguenots—all those who were denied religious freedom in their own country.¹⁷ This is a well know fact in Polish history, and is seen as a symbol for Polish tolerance. We might have in mind today's America, nevertheless, it was, as a matter of fact, Catholic Poland, but of the sixteenth century! We have to add that it was a different Poland, and a different Catholicism, closer to Henry VIII's England than to Rome. For example, Jakob Uchański, then the primate of Poland, was not very concerned by the possibility of being put on trial by Pope Paul IV in 1559, and who was often thought of as “a potential head of the Polish national church.”¹⁸ It was that Poland Erasmus of Rotterdam was talking about when he said “*Polonia mea est*”; he had many friends in Poland, and his influence on the Polish Reformation and Counter-Reformation is well known.¹⁹ Perhaps also

¹⁷ Cf. J. Tazbir, *A State without Stakes: Polish Religious Toleration in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, trans. A. T. Jordan, New York, Kosciuszko Foundation, 1973.

¹⁸ “Some of the Polish bishops sympathized in secret with the new church; the primate Uchański himself was suspected of seeing himself as a potential head of the Polish national church, while his close friendship with Frycz Modrzewski could cast doubt on the orthodoxy of the titular leader of the church in Poland. Rome was not unaware of such doubt.” *Ibid*, 119.

¹⁹ He sold his library to Polish reformer Jan Laski who influenced not only the Polish but also the European Reformation.

the humanistic education,²⁰ which Jesuits were propagating, contributed to his popularity.²¹ In any case, it was clear that when Cardinal Stanisław Hosius, one of the most prominent representatives of Counter-Reformation tendencies in the Polish Church, and an active participant at the Council of Trent (1546-1563), invited them in the year 1564; his dream was to use Jesuits to fight against Reformation. At that time Hosius was considered to be one of the candidates for the papacy, mainly because of his rigid position towards the Reformation.

This date is important because the Society of Jesus was already different from the Jesuits as founded in 1540 by Ignatius Loyola: "The Society in 1565 was different in important respects from what it was in 1540. (...) The Society conformed to the inevitable laws of sociology affecting any group that grows rapidly from an informal bonding among friends to a worldwide organization numbering its members in the thousands."²² Hosius had had an occasion to meet representatives of this new and dynamic religious order at the Council of Trent. Among them were some Jesuits (for example Diego Lainez), who strongly supported papal authority. This powerful organization was seen as a providential tool in the battle against Reformation.

The reasons to look for help from the outside were many. There was the growing popularity of the new religious ideas among Polish and particularly Lithuanian Catholics, where the powerful Radziwiłł family gave full support to the Calvinist Church. Also, the first

²⁰ B. Natoński, "Humanizm jezuicki i teologia pozytywno-kontrowersyjna: szkoła polska w XVI wieku" [Humanism of Jesuits and Positive-controversial Theology], in: *Dzieje teologii katolickiej w Polsce* [The History of Catholic Theology in Poland], vol. II, (Lublin: Katolicki Uniwersytet Lubelski, 1972).

²¹ "Some recent studies on the relationship between Erasmus and St. Ignatius, beginning with Marcel Bataillon, have been instructive in this regard. While attempts to find a textual dependence of the *Spiritual Exercises* on the *Enchiridion* have been largely abandoned, though there are indeed some remarkable similarities in phrasing, we are today far removed from the earlier judgment that these two reformers are irreconcilably opposed." J. O'Malley, "Introduction," in: *Collected Work of Erasmus, Spiritualia*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1988, 30-31.

²² J. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1993, p. 14.

officially Lutheran country in Europe was founded in the year 1525 in the neighborhood of Poland: Prussia, with an important intellectual center in Königsberg. At that time, the Polish episcopate was more interested in politics than in a religious renovation of the Church. This fact is understandable if we remember that Polish Catholic bishops were, automatically, members of the parliament, and the primate of Poland had an important function during the period between the death of a king and the election of a new one, as *interrex*, and was responsible for the legal procedure of electing a new king.

Historiography: Between Pamphlets and Apology

In 1963 Janusz Tazbir published an anthology, *Anti-Jesuit Literature in Poland 1578-1625*, which gave an interesting view of the negative image of the Jesuits in sixteenth and seventeenth century Poland.²³ This anthology was the main source of information about the Society of Jesus in Poland for years. Most likely, the beginning of a new approach toward the Catholic Church *per se* was possible only after the collapse of Communism in central Europe in 1989. It is worth mentioning some themes that were considered in the conference organized in 1991 in Cracow, published afterwards as *The Political Aspect of the Polish Jesuit Theater; The Renaissance and Jesuit Humanism; Marcin Poczebout, S.J., and the Catholic Enlightenment*; The role of the works by Father Piotr Skarga, S.J., in the heritage of St. Dymitr from Rostow and other Russian writers; Father Piotr Skarga's vision of the Church of the East; The vision of the state in the sermons by Father Piotr Skarga (it was not accidental that so vast attention was dedicated to Peter Skarga; later we will consider his impact on central and eastern European Catholicism); The role of the Polish Jesuits in educational work from 1565 to 1773; The role of the Jesuits in the musical culture of the seventeenth-century Polish Republic.²⁴ Janusz Tazbir, a leading Polish historian,

²³ J. Tazbir, *Literatura antyjezuicka w Polsce 1578-1625* (Anti-Jesuitical Literature in Poland 1578-1625), Warszawa: Ludowa Spółdzielnia Wydawnicza, 1963.

²⁴ Only in 1991 a new perspective on the role played by the Order in central and eastern European history was presented. It happened when historians of the Jesuit

wrote in his article, “Anti-Jesuit literature in Poland,” that there is a need for a new perspective in dealing with the Jesuits’ past: “For a long time there were those who looked on its [the Jesuit Order’s] history through panegyric glasses, others only through pamphlets. Today we try to take the middle road, remembering that only indifference kills. In fact, pamphlets are usually written only about movements and people that leave a permanent mark on the history of politics and culture.”²⁵ If we take the number of pamphlets written against the Jesuits as a measure of their political and cultural importance, we would be really surprised. It is enough to think of the extraordinary popularity of *Monita secreta*, written by the former Polish Jesuit Hieronim Zahorowski,²⁶ which became a world bestseller and a source for many slanderous stereotypes about the Jesuits.

A look into the pamphlets written against the Jesuits gives us a more precise idea why the Jesuits were so controversial in the Polish Kingdom: they were seen as an alien element in the Polish society, and too close to the royal court. But of course these two reasons do not explain the whole phenomenon. An interesting book was published in the year 1872 by Stanisław Załęski²⁷ under the provocative title *Was Poland Destroyed by Jesuits?* Nevertheless,

Order and its critics met in Kraków in order to discuss the presence of the Jesuits in Polish culture. The contributors to the conference showed how deeply this presence shaped the character of central and eastern European Christianity: from theater to music, from philosophy to architecture. One of the results of that conference was the awareness of how significant and controversial was the impact of the Order on other Christian confessions; however, the relations with other religions were not considered at that conference. *Jezuici i kultura polska* [The Jesuits and Polish Culture], ed. L. Grzebien and S. Obirek, Kraków, Wydawnictwo WAM 1993.

²⁵ J. Tazbir, *Literatura antyjezuicka w Polsce* (Anti-Jesuit literature in Poland), in: *Jezuici a kultura polska* (Jesuits and Polish Culture), Kraków, Wydawnictwo WAM, 1993, p. 333.

²⁶ S. Pavone, *The Wily Jesuits and the Monita Secreta*, Saint Louis, The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2005.

²⁷ S. Załęski, *Czy jezuici zgubili Polskę?* (Was Poland destroyed by Jesuits?), Lwów: Przegląd Powszechny, 1872.

that book does not really help to comprehend the history of the black legend of the Jesuits.

The first generation

The establishment of the Jesuits in Poland in the sixteenth century was not easy. The first Jesuit to arrive in Poland, Alfonso Salmeron, came in 1555, and was made to feel unwanted, since his efforts to meet King Sigismund Augustus were unsuccessful. In a letter to Ignatius of Loyola he complained not only of the Polish beer, but also of the general lack of interest in inviting Jesuits to the Polish Commonwealth. His memorandum delayed the arrival of the Jesuits to Poland by nearly a decade.²⁸ A few years later, Peter Canisius arrived and was no more fortunate, despite his personal charm and the fact that he had befriended a considerable number of humanists in Poland. Despite his lack of success, his memories of Poland and of the Polish people were always affectionate, and he dreamed of being able to return to that country: "If my superiors were to allow it I would be glad to stay in Poland for the rest of my life."²⁹ Given that Canisius had been named the "second Apostle of Germany," his sentiment is particularly noteworthy.³⁰

When the Jesuits finally arrived in Poland, they rapidly became the most dynamic element in the confrontation with the Reformation movement,³¹ in various ways, from education to court preaching. The first generation of Polish Jesuits had the most decisive impact. Many of them entered the Society of Jesus in Rome, and were educated at the Roman College. Some of the most important were: Jakub Wujek

²⁸ S. Obirek, "The Jesuits and Polish Sarmatism", in: *The Jesuits. Cultures, Sciences, and the Arts, 1540-1773*, ed. J. O'Malley and others, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1999, pp. 555-63.

²⁹ P. Canisius, *Epistulae et acta*, 8 vols., ed. Otto Braunsberger, Freiburg, Herder, 1896-1923, II, pp. 358, 361.

³⁰ Cf. *Petrus Canisius – Reformator der Kirche. Festschrift zum 400. Todestag des zweiten Apostels Deutschlands*, ed. J. Oswald and P. Rummel, Augsburg, Sankt Ulrich Verlag, 1996.

³¹ B. Natoński, "Początki Towarzystwa Jezusowego w Polsce" (The beginning of the Society of Jesus in Poland), in: J. Brodrick, *The Origin of the Jesuits* (Polish translation), Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 1969.

(1541-1597), an erudite Biblical scholar; his Polish translation of the Bible shaped the style of Polish Biblical language for centuries. Piotr Skarga (1536-1612), the author of *Lives of Saints* [Żywoty Świętych], which influenced enormously the religious imagination, not only of Poland but of all of the Slavic world. He was also the court preacher of Zygmunt III for twenty-five years (1588-1611). Stanisław Warszawicki (1530-1591) who, before joining the Jesuit Order, studied under Melancthon in Wittenberg; as a Jesuit he was sent as the papal envoy to Stockholm in 1574, when King John III of Sweden showed interest in becoming a Catholic. Warszawicki was also involved in educating the king's son Zygmunt, the future king of Poland. Those individuals were very important for the creation of a positive image of Jesuits. The first, and the most interesting, generation of the Polish Jesuits were very different from the successive ones. The former were often already mature when they joined the order, and followed a path similar to that of Hosius (as we saw, he was a representative of the hard line against Reformation) before them: from Erasmianism, or humanism, to a confessionism full of pathos, to a disciplined and dynamic piety, which, due to human weakness, often led to rules and prescriptions being adopted as the final ends rather than the means to achieve [what? I don't know].³² To this first generation we must add the first Polish Jesuit saint, Stanisław Kostka (1550-1568), who directly after his death in Rome became the most popular Polish saint and the patron of Catholic youth.

The next generations of Jesuits made an important contribution to Central and Eastern European culture, but it was not as impressive as the previous one. Let us remember just three names: Mateusz Kazimierz Sarbiewski (1595-1640), who was described as the Horace of Poland, the author of *Lycorum libri tres* [Three Books of Lyrics], and the court preacher of Władysław IV; Adam Adamandy Kochoński (1631-1700), the courtier mathematician of Jan III Sobieski, who left extensive correspondence with Gottfried Wilhelm

³² Cf. J. Błoński, *Mikołaj Sep Szarzyński a początki polskiego baroku* (Mikołaj Sep Sarzynski and the Beginning of Polish Baroque), Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 1967, p. 31.

Leibniz; and Marcin Poczobut (1728-1810), also a mathematician and an astronomer, a member of the Royal Academy of Science (London), and of the French Royal Academy. The question of whether they were excellent scholars because they were Jesuits, or simply because of their personal talents, has remained open.

It is also relevant that the first superiors were foreigners, mostly Italians; this fact, on the one hand, helped them to keep distance from local politics. But on the other hand, it also created the impression that the Jesuits were not a part of Polish culture. This may explain why this situation changed later on, once the majority of the candidates to the Society were Polish, and from predominantly one social class: the gentry (*szlachta*).

Shadows and lights of Jesuit education

Roland Barthes famously observed that the influence of Jesuit education in France was so strong that “they [the Jesuits] taught France how to write”³³. This is even more true of Central and Eastern Europe. American historian John O’Malley said about the Jesuits’ schools:

The schools brought about other important changes in the Society—in its relationship to culture, in a pattern of living off endowment rather than alms, and to some extent even in the classes of society to whom the Jesuits would minister. Although the Jesuits’ most official documents never baldly stated it, the schools become of the Jesuits’ self-definition. They symbolized and powerfully helped effect changes that set off from the first eight or twelve years of Jesuit history all that followed.³⁴

Stanisław Bystróż, a Polish anthropologist, laconically remarked on the gentry’s relationship to the various religious orders in Poland: “Thus, the *szlachta* would drink with the Franciscans of Strict Observance; learn the precepts of the ascetic life from the Carmelites; but send their children to the Jesuit schools, and seek

³³ R. Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1971.

³⁴ J. O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, p. 15.

counsels from the Jesuits in the most serious matters.”³⁵ This statement is loaded with religious, social and political implications. It means, in fact, that Jesuits were extremely influential, and in a way responsible for the shape of Polish Catholicism.

The Jesuits to a great degree taught Polish *szlachta* how to read and how to write. The question is open if they also were masters of good style. But what O’Malley wrote on Jesuits as a “teaching order” is particularly accurate concerning the situation in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth:

The Jesuits were the first religious order in the Catholic Church to undertake formal education as a major ministry. They become a ‘teaching order.’ The boldness of the decision for its day is difficult for us to recapture. Its importance for the culture of early modern Catholicism was incalculable. By the time the Society was suppressed by papal edict in 1773, it was operating more than eight hundred universities, seminaries, and especially secondary schools almost around the globe. The world had never seen before nor has it seen since such an immense network of educational institutions operating on an international basis.³⁶

The fate of the Jesuits universities and schools was similar to the fate of the Society of Jesus as such. In some places they were welcomed and in some violently rejected. In the huge Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth they experienced differentiated reception, from enthusiasm (in Vilnius) to open hostility (in Cracow). Indeed, in Cracow the Jesuits spent a lot of energy trying to fight the monopoly of the old *Academia Cracowska* without any positive result; in Vilnius they founded their own Academy, and created a cultural center that radiated Western culture to, not only to Lithuania, but also Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia and Russia. We are still far from a complete picture of the impact of Jesuit education on Eastern and Central European culture. But we can say,

³⁵ S. Bystroń, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce: Wiek XVI-XVIII* (The History of Manners in Old Poland: The Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries), Warszawa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1932, p. 347.

³⁶ O’Malley, *The First Jesuits*, pp. 15-16.

together with Eugenio Garin, that it was education with strongly ideological aspirations,³⁷ and it was probably also the reason why other confessions were so critical towards the partially successful attempt to have a monopoly in this field in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that all Christian denominations were influenced by the humanistic tradition, mainly by the heritage of Erasmus of Rotterdam.³⁸

As Bystron stated, Jesuit education was very popular and influential among the Polish *szlachta*. The number of colleges was around forty, at different educational levels. This number is not so impressive when compared to the hundreds of colleges and many universities in Western Europe, but the function of a bridge between West and East should be highlighted.

What made the Central and Eastern European situation of the Society of Jesus unique was the suppression of the Order in 1773. In that year, two hundred members who worked as Jesuits in the Polish Commonwealth found themselves, after the first partition of Poland, henceforth part of Russia, subjects of Tsarina Catharine II the Great. Most of them worked in Połock College, which soon became an Academy.³⁹ The Tsarina, after visiting Połock and after a debate with her counselors, decided to preserve the Jesuits as teachers, and gave them extensive autonomy. Thanks to her decision, the Society of Jesus survived and after some years was restored. In Prussia, the Jesuit educational system did not meet the expectations of Frederick the Great, who preferred to control all educational systems, and after

³⁷ “L’educazione è liberale perchè è di liberi e rende liberi. La scuola gesuitica riconosce un solo tipo d’uomo, un compito specifico preciso; in essa non circola più quella preoccupazione continua di libertà; in essa domina un principio d’autorità. Non si tratta di aiutare l’uomo à essere libero di scegliere dà se; la scelta è fatta, si tratta di rendere il soldato della Chiesa ben armato ed addestrato”. E. Garin, *L’educazione in Europa (1400-1600)*, Bari, Laterza, 1957, p. 214.

³⁸ B. Bauer, *Jesuitische ‘ars rethorica’ im Zeitalter der Glaubenskaempfe*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang Verlag, 1986.

³⁹ M. Ingot, *La Compagnia di Gesù nell’Impero Russo (1772-1820) e la sua parte nella restaurazione generale della Compagnia*, Roma, Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1997.

a few years he simply expelled the Jesuits from his territory. This explains why the fate of the Jesuits who became citizens of Frederick the Great in Prussia was different from the fate of the Jesuits in Russia. This differentiated attitude toward the Jesuit Order after its suppression could be also an interesting case study of the complex relationship between politics and religion. In the rest of Poland, under the Polish king Stanisław August, most of the former Jesuits (after the suppression of the Order all of the Jesuits were forced to look for new work) became active in the Commission of National Education, founded in 1773 by the King himself.⁴⁰ This should be acknowledged as the Jesuits' contribution to the Polish Enlightenment. In fact, most of those who were prepared for teaching had studied in Western Europe, mainly in Italy and France. A good example is Marcin Poczobut, who after the suppression of the Society of Jesus became the rector of Vilnius Academy and was involved actively in the Commission for National Education. We can say that, on the one hand, he was prepared to make use of new philosophical and theological insights in his scientific and educational activities, and on the other hand, to remain faithful to tradition and Catholic doctrine. In other words, such a combination of theological and scientific interests would have brought Poland more fully into the Catholic Enlightenment, in prayer as well as in practice. That this did not come to pass constituted not only Poczobut's tragedy, but also that of the Jesuits. It was ultimately a significant loss for the Catholic Enlightenment as a pan-European phenomenon.⁴¹

⁴⁰ J. Popłatek, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej. Udział byłych jezuitów w pracach KEN* (The Commission of National Education. The Participation of former Jesuits in the works of CNE), Kraków, Wydawnictwo WAM, 1973.

⁴¹ Cf. M. O'Connor, "Oświecenie katolickie i Marcin Poczobut" (Marcin Poczobut SJ and the Catholic Enlightenment), in: *Jezuici a kultura polska*, pp. 351-352.

Too close to the Royal Court

The presence of the Jesuits in the royal courts of Europe has been extensively studied by Robert Bireley,⁴² but he did not pay much attention to the Polish Commonwealth. The decisive impact of the Jesuits on the religious situation began with their collaboration with the Polish king Stefan Batory (1574-1584)⁴³ who, as a fervent Catholic monarch was very much interested in ideological support of the Society of Jesus. Therefore, he gave them full support in founding new colleges, including the most important educational institution, the *Academy of Vilnius* that he founded in 1579. Also his successor, Zygmunt III (1588-1632), was educated by Jesuits, and was well known for his sympathy toward the Society. Piotr Skarga, for example, was not only the court preacher for almost twenty-five years but also a close friend of the royal family.⁴⁴ It is likely that this close association of the Jesuits with the royal court contributed to the opinion that they were more interested in politics than in religion.

The reason why kings were looking for Jesuits as advisers, preachers and confessors was that the new religious order was strongly supporting the existing political system. For Skarga, the division between the state and the Church did not exist, because, in his opinion, both of them were supposed to serve the same purpose. One Church within one state—that was his idea. He was strongly influenced by biblical models, and he used the example of God as the model of kingship in the patristic tradition. God was said to recommend autocracy, or government under one head, who is above all others. Such a head is like God, who alone rules heaven and earth. This was met by strong criticism, which Skarga tried to refute by pointing out the differences between absolute dominion, based on

⁴² R. Bireley, *Hofbeichtvaeter und Politik im 17. Jahrhundert*, Freiburg, 1970; *The Counter-Reformation Prince: Antimachiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

⁴³ S. Obirek, *Jeziuci na dworach Batorego i Wazów 1580-1668* (The Jesuits at the Courts of Stefan Batory and Vasa Dynasty 1580-1668), Kraków, Wydawnictwo WAM 1995.

⁴⁴ S. Obirek, *Wizja Kościoła i państwa w kazaniach ks. Piotra Skargi SJ* (The Vision of Church and State in the Sermons of Piotr Skarga S.J.), Kraków, Wydawnictwo WAM 1994, pp. 169-185.

God's law, and tyranny. Here he quoted the Old Testament tradition according to which Israel's kings ruled thanks to God's grace, and on the basis of His law.⁴⁵

From the pamphlets we know that their opponents saw the Jesuits as a group strongly involved in politics, and particularly supportive of the dynasty of the Habsburgs, which was not very popular in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. So it is not surprising that, in 1606, Mikołaj Zabrzydowski's army of mutineers (who considered themselves *rokoszanie*—a social group exercising their time-honored privilege of withdrawing their loyalty from a bad monarch) called for the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. One of the justifications they based their demand upon was the foreign provenance of the Society, and hence its connections with foreign powers (they meant the Habsburgs), with certain activities seen as counter to the interests of the Polish state (they meant the Jesuit support for the king's endeavors to increase his power). It became common to associate the Jesuits with Macchiavellian theories of political power, an association that was vigorously disputed by the Jesuits and their supporters. This opinion was shared not only by Protestants, with whom Jesuits were fighting on the doctrinal level, but also by some Catholics.⁴⁶

Inculturation: Sarmatism and Jesuits

One of the most characteristic qualities of the Society of Jesus is its ability to inculturate the Christian message in different cultural and religious contexts. As a matter of fact, this 'inculturation' practice became a hallmark of the Jesuits' pastoral activity, and was the cause of many conflicts with the Roman Curia, and probably was one of the reasons why the Order was suppressed in 1773. It is well known what Jesuits did in Asia and South America. The achievements of Matteo Ricci in China, or of the Guarani Republic

⁴⁵ S. Obirek, *Wizja państwa w nauczaniu jezuitów polskich w latach 1564-1668* (Vision of the State in the Teaching of the Polish Jesuits in 1564-1668), Kraków, Wydawnictwo WAM 1995.

⁴⁶ S. Obirek, "Antymachiawelizm jezuitski" (Jesuit Antimachiavellianism), in: *Jezuicka ars educandi*, Kraków, Wydawnictwo WAM 1995.

in South America, are examples of the ability to translate Christianity into Asian or American culture. But scholars have not paid much attention to the case of Central and Eastern Europe.

In the beginning, this pastoral practice was seen with suspicion by Rome, but today is accepted as positive, and in a way prophetic—adopted by the Catholic Church during Vatican II in the 1960s. The most important intuition of the Jesuits related to their practice of proselytizing was the realization that the Western form of Christianity was only one of many possible ways to be a Christian. This understanding may be obvious today, but in the sixteenth century was viewed by many as heresy. In fact, there can be ambiguous results of a strategy of relativism. The Polish or Central and Eastern European experience can be an interesting case study. And perhaps it might be more appropriate to name as a syncretic process.⁴⁷ It is also important to remember that the Society of Jesus was a part of the history of Christianity, which was characterized by confusion with European culture. This perspective (Christianity as synonymous with Western culture) was largely overcome by Vatican II. What Karl Rahner said in this context is instructive:

Theologically speaking, there are three great epochs in Church history, of which the third has only just begun and made itself observable officially at Vatican II. First, the short period of Jewish Christianity. Second, the period of the Church in a distinct cultural region, namely, that of Hellenism and of European culture and civilization. Third, the period in which the sphere of the Church's life is in fact the entire world of the Christianity.⁴⁸

Rahner's observation could imply that the Jesuits, as an institution, have at times been as much or more part of a European culture as they have been apostles of a purely religious message. They may have given priority to defending the existing, Western

⁴⁷ I'm using this term in the sense elucidated by Carl Starkloff in his *A Theology of the In-Between: The Value of Syncretic Process*, Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2002.

⁴⁸ Karl Rahner, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979), p. 721.

institution of the Catholic Church and its claim to be the embodiment of the only true explanation of the Christian message. This is also true concerning the Jesuit presence in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. When Jesuits arrived to Poland, they intended to change Polish society, but with time they actually became a part of that society. What I have in mind here is the phenomenon known as the Sarmatization of Polish Catholicism. The concept was first developed by Janusz Tazbir, who was concerned with the question of the Sarmatization of the Jesuit order's members, and the price they paid for this transformation.⁴⁹ Tazbir's opinion is that the Jesuits did not seek it out, but rather succumbed to this Sarmatization process:

The Jesuits did not withstand the process of the Sarmatization of the Polish Catholicism, which reached its apogee at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By this term I mean the adaptation of religious concepts, views of the past, and eschatological ideas to the political and constitutional structure of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: and their mixture with folklore and the local historical tradition.⁵⁰

It seems that the Jesuits contributed to the construction of a theological justification for the concept of the state and its structure held by the majority of the *szlachta* (Polish gentry). It seems that over time, they came to feel more and more at home with this concept, and became an integral part of the state. In other words, in the Jesuits' balance of accounts for work accomplished in the seventeenth century it would be hard to overlook the fact that ultimately Sarmatism had the upper hand with the Society's cultural elite. Sarmatism, although familiar to Polish historians, may need some explanation here. Fortunately, we have at our disposal a book written in English by Polish historian Maria Bogudzka. This book deals extensively with the topic, although for our purposes, a short

⁴⁹ Cf. J. Tazbir, "Jezuici między Rzeczpospolitą i Rzymem" (The Jesuits between the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth), in his: *Szkice z dziejów papieżstwa* (Sketches from the History of the Papacy), Warszawa, 1989, p. 75.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

definition will suffice: Sarmatism is the influence of pre-Christian customs and behavior on the Christian society as a whole.⁵¹

Is that fact really an adequate description of the Jesuit presence in the Polish culture? This was one of the questions, to which the participants of an academic conference on the relations between Jesuits and Polish culture, held in 1991 in Cracow, tried to answer.⁵² This conference provided an opportunity for formulating research postulates rather than answers. Some of these postulates were realized in a volume published ten years later on the contribution of the Polish Jesuits to the development of science and culture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and under the Partitions.⁵³

In any case, certain controversial elements in the character of the Polish *szlachta* did not spare the Jesuits either. As early as 1614, Father General Claudio Acquaviva was calling the attention of Father Visitor Giovanni Argentini to this: "Something of vanity has been observed in our people in Poland of gentle stock, and hence also of haughtiness, such as that at the slightest offence they bring to the fore their gentle birth, comparing themselves with others and regarding themselves as better."⁵⁴ It is not surprising that the special importance of the *szlachta* in public life provoked a tendency among the Jesuits to emulate the *szlachta*, by changing family names, and leading a hedonistic life style, with very active socializing that led to the neglect of religious life. This tendency was severely criticized by the superiors in Rome.

In 1634, Father Provincial Marcin Hincza admonished the rectors of the colleges that some of the masters who were not of noble birth

⁵¹ M. Bogudzka, *The Lost World of Sarmatism. Custom as the Regulator of Polish Social Life in Early Modern Times*, Warszawa, Polish Academy of Science, 1996.

⁵² See *Jezuici i kultura polska* (The Jesuits and Polish Culture), ed. L. Grzebień and S. Obirek, Kraków, Wydawnictwo WAM, 1993.

⁵³ *Wkład jezuitów do nauki i kultury w Rzeczypospolitej Obojga Narodów i pod zaborami* (The Contribution of the Polish Jesuits to the development of Science and Culture in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and under the Partitions), ed. I. Stasiewicz-Jasiukowa, Kraków: Wydawnictwo WAM, 2004.

⁵⁴ S. Załęski, *Jezuici w Polsce* (The Jesuits in Poland), vol. 5, Lwow-Kraków, Przegląd Powszechny, 1900-1906, II, p. 273.

had assumed gentlemen's surnames and were using "gentle" surnames for their students, too, which smacked of vanity and had to be stopped; they should be using their former names. The rectors themselves had earned a reprimand in 1648 from Father Provincial Szczytnicki for pursuing a lifestyle that was totally out of line with the community life expected by the Society. They left the house too frequently and without good reason, to make social calls or visit relatives; they spent considerable sums on four-horse carriages and hired bursary singers to accompany them; they were mindful of their own needs but insensitive to the needs of others. Such warnings and reprimands were an expression of the continual effort being made to counteract the bad side of Old Polish social conduct, to which the Jesuits, now more frequently recruited from among the gentry, were susceptible.

Nevertheless, the Jesuits became so deeply integrated in the Polish society that we could speak of a syncretic process, which only in the last years gained recognition in Catholic theology.⁵⁵

Under the wings of the Russian Tsarina

There was a real paradox and unusual coincidence: the Catholic religious order most known for its fidelity to the papacy was suppressed by Pope Clement XIV in 1773, and was saved by non-Catholic monarchs. More than that: when the Catholic Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was divided amongst its three neighbors—Orthodox Russia, Protestant Prussia, and Catholic Austria—in 1772, the Jesuits working in Russia (from 1773 until 1820) and Prussia (for a few years), were able to continue their activity, while in Catholic Austria and the rest of the Polish Kingdom they were

⁵⁵ See C. Starkloff, in his book, *A Theology of the In-Between: The Value of Syncretic Process*, p. 140: "It is my hope that this book might contribute to the creation of a village that expresses the best in village life—hospitality and conversation, and not the worst, such as conflict and manipulation. I realize that this village seems destined to be pluralistic, and that all dialogue must accept the fact of historical pluralism, certainly of cultures (...) and in the historical experience of religion."

suppressed.⁵⁶ This paradox was wittily observed by Frederick the Great of Prussia: despite the exertions of His Most Catholic Majesty of Spain, His Most Apostolic Majesty of Portugal, His Most Christian Majesty of France, and the Holy Roman Emperor, the Jesuits had been saved by His Most Heretical Majesty and Her Most Schismatic Majesty. “His Most Heretical Majesty” expelled them few years later, but “Her Most Schismatic Majesty,” Catherine the Great, and her successors, preserved them until 1820, the year in which they were finally expelled from Russia. However, the Society of Jesus had been restored in 1814, and could absorb the Jesuits from Russia.

This period in Russia, from 1773 till 1820, presents a most exciting example of development that offers, again, a case study, which deserves particular attention.⁵⁷ The influence of the Academy of Połock and of the Collegium Nobilium (1805-1815) in Saint Petersburg especially deserves more attention, as they were centers of radiation of Western culture and Catholicism in Orthodox Russia. The restoration of the Society of Jesus in 1814 would hardly have been possible without the personal support of the Russian tsars, who allowed Jesuits to open many schools and missionary stations in the wide Russian territory. An important role was played by Father Gabriel Gruber who was elected in 1802 to be the general of the Jesuits in Russia. Most likely, it is impossible to fully understand nineteenth century Russian literature and political thought without this presence of Jesuits in the Russian Empire, because many of Orthodox elite was educated by Jesuits. We can also add that the Polish king was following the example of other Catholic Majesties when he suppressed the Society. He transferred its property to the Commission of National Education, founded in the same year. Nevertheless, at the same time, many former Jesuits were engaged in

⁵⁶ M. Inglot, *La Compagnia di Gesù nell’Impero Russo (1772-1820), e la sua parte nella restaurazione generale della Compagnia*, Rome 1997.

⁵⁷ Apart from the known quoted above monography by M. Inglot, I use the results of the research of I. Kadulska, *Akademia Połocka. Ośrodek kultury na Kresach 1812-1820* (The Połock: Center of Culture in the Borderlands 1812-1820), Gdańsk: Uniwersytet Gdański, 2004.

the activities of the Commission founded by the king.⁵⁸ It is one of the reasons why in the Polish historiography we find the concept of “Catholic Enlightenment,” which indicates the involvement of clergy in the process of modernization and adaptation of the Catholic Church into new cultural situations of the eighteenth century. “Suppressed” Jesuits continued to contribute to a process of inculturation.

⁵⁸ J. Popłatek, *Komisja Edukacji Narodowej. Udział byłych jezuitów w pracach Komisji Edukacji Narodowej* [Commission of National Education. The Participation of former Jesuits in Activity of Commission of National Education], Kraków, Wydawnictwo WAM, 1973.

Chapter 4.

The Beginning of Catholic Higher Education in the USA: The Case of Belarussian Jesuits

My intention is to show how a change of place and culture can be fruitful if the host provides the guest with good conditions in which to develop his/her intellectual potential. The American religious context offers a particular perspective for this kind of analysis. The “Pluralism Project” initiated by Diana Eck at Harvard University is a perfect example for my claim.⁵⁹ This “Project” offers a space of encounter between different religions and presents a new face of the USA as a country of interreligious dialogue. Some time ago I wrote about the difficulties of individuals with affiliations to institutionalized religions (in Judaism and Christianity).⁶⁰ Today I would like to speak about individuals who changed, or used religious institutions, in order to promote human creativity. This idea is actually deeply rooted in the American concept of the “melting pot,” or assimilation to American life.⁶¹ Of course, assimilation is a very complex process in which we could distinguish different cultural encounters from contacts through collisions and relationships, according to the classification elaborated by Swiss historian Urs Bitterli.⁶²

⁵⁹ D. L. Eck, *A New Religious America. How a ‘Christian Country’ Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation*, Harper San Francisco, 2001.

⁶⁰ S. Obirek, “Kłopoty z instytucją – Abraham J. Heschel, Jacques Dupuis i Irving Greenberg”, in: *Nowoczesność jako doświadczenie*, R. Nycz and A. Zeidler-Janiszewska (eds.), Kraków, 2006.

⁶¹ M. M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life. The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins*, New York 1964, pp. 115-131.

⁶² U. Bitterli, *Cultures in Conflict: Encounters Between European and Non-European Cultures, 1492-1800*, Oxford 1989.

Perceived those individuals, I am presenting, as creative examples of cultural and religious exchange. I will speak about one Jesuit and a few non-Jesuits working at Jesuit Universities in the USA. The Jesuits are members of a religious order, one which I know from the inside, and appreciate very much for their contribution to cross-cultural studies, or more precisely, for their involvement in religious and cultural dialogue. Recently, Terrence W. Klein, professor of theology at Fordham University wrote: “Jesuit education shares an essential premise with the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. It is founded upon trust, faith that God is active, and leads us, if we allow that to happen, through prayerful self-scrutiny. Ignatius explicitly warns the would-be director of the Exercises not to hamper God’s work and not to confuse the director’s insights with those of the Spirit. The director “should permit the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with his Creator and Lord” (No. 15).”⁶³ And he added: “The faith that animates Jesuit education, trust both in God and in the essential goodness of human learning, especially as it finds expression in the humanities, has a timely role to play in contemporary America.”⁶⁴

The best known example for these activities are the so called “Jesuit Reductions” which were founded and flourished in eastern Paraguay for about 150 years, until their destruction by the Spanish crown in 1767. The “Jesuit Reductions” were communities of local people ruled by Jesuits and are a controversial chapter in the history of Latin America and are variously described, either as socialist jungle utopias, or as authoritarian theocratic regimes. On the missions in colonial Latin America “the Jesuits built some of their most original and influential foundations.”⁶⁵

Another good example of Jesuit activity is the history of their mission in China. It is considered one of the most important events in the early history of the relations between China and the Western

⁶³ T. W. Klein, “A Space for Inquiry. Catholic universities and the search for meaning”, in: Sep. 15, (2008), *America*.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ G. A. Bailey, “Jesuit architecture in colonial Latin America”, in: *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, ed. T. Worcester, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p. 233.

world. It can be described by four major characteristics: 1) a policy of adaptation to Chinese culture, 2) propagation of Christian doctrine “from the top down”, 3) using European science in order to attract the educated Chinese, and 4) openness and tolerance toward Chinese values.⁶⁶ This mission is a prominent example for successful relations between two cultures and belief systems in the pre-modern age. At the time of their peak influence, members of the Jesuit delegation were considered some of the emperor’s most valued and trusted advisors, holding numerous prestigious posts in the imperial government. Now I will turn to the central topic of my paper.

According to Roland Barthes, the Jesuits shaped in great part, thanks to their monopoly in education, the French understanding of literature.⁶⁷ We can also add that they formed our understanding of religion and Christianity, particularly since the 16th century. It was possible because of their close ties with rulers in Catholic countries.⁶⁸ In the USA the situation was different because of the separation between Church and state and the dominant position of Protestant denominations. But surprisingly enough, also in the USA this Catholic religious order was successful in the field of higher education. Perhaps the experience of the Jesuits in Orthodox Russia, where under Catherine the Great they survived the suppression in 1773, was of some help, because the Jesuits lived in a non-Catholic milieu.⁶⁹ The Academy of Połock, founded by Jesuits in Russia, played an important role in shaping the Russian intelligentsia from the second half of the 18th century to the first half of the 19th century.⁷⁰ The link between Byelorussian Jesuits and the United States is almost unknown. And it is pity because it opened an interesting history of the relation between Jesuit Universities and

⁶⁶ N. Standaert, “Jesuits in China”, in: *The Cambridge Companion to the Jesuits*, op. cit., pp. 172-173.

⁶⁷ R. Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, Baltimore 1976, p. 39.

⁶⁸ R. Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince: Antimachiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe*, Chapel Hill, 1990.

⁶⁹ M. Inglot, *La Compagnia di Gesù nell’Impero Russo (1772-1820) e la sua parte nella restaurazione generale della Compagnia*, Rzym 1997.

⁷⁰ I. Kadulska, *Akademia Połocka. Ośrodek kultury na Kresach. 1812–1820*, Gdańsk, 2004.

Central and Eastern Europe. Namely, the Jesuits who went to the USA after being expelled from Russia in 1820 were influential in founding institutions of higher education in their new home country.

Today in the United States, the Jesuits have 28 Colleges and Universities. Some of the oldest, like Georgetown (1789), and Fordham (1841), Holy Cross College (1843), were founded by Byelorussian Jesuits. Most of those Jesuits were educated in the Academy of Połock. In 1773 the Jesuits, as a religious order, were suppressed by the Pope in Catholic countries; they survived only in Orthodox Russia and in Protestant Prussia. Many Jesuits came to Byelorussia from the Western countries of the continent in order to remain Jesuits. When the Jesuit order was later re-established in Catholic countries, they were expelled from Russia, and some of them went to the United States. They were crucial to the origins of Jesuit higher education in the there.⁷¹ Mark O'Connor asked intriguing questions: "How many American historians, even professors at one of our many Jesuit universities, are aware that through the Academy at Połock 'all of Europe' combined to play a crucial role in the establishment of Jesuit higher education in the United States?"⁷²

One of these Jesuits was Franciszek Dzierożyński, who is a perfect illustration of the topic of our conference "Transatlantic Encounters". He was born in 1779 in Orsza, joined the Jesuit Order in 1794 in Połock and died in the USA in the year 1850. He taught in the Jesuit schools at St. Petersburg, Mohylew and Połock from 1803 till 1821. After the expulsion of the Jesuits from Russia he went to the US. There he taught philosophy and theology from 1823 until 1838 at Georgetown University. He took part in the creation of the University in Saint Louis in 1839 and of the College of the Holy Cross in 1843. He was called the "patriarch of American Jesuits."⁷³

⁷¹ M. O'Connor, "An Appreciation from an American Historian. 'Fakty mówią za siebie'", in: *Jezuicka ars historica*, M. Inglot, S. Obirek (eds.), Kraków, 2001, pp. 66-67.

⁷² Ibid, pp. 67-68.

⁷³ F. Domański, "Patriarcha amerykańskich Jezuitów. O. Franciszek Dzierozynski T. J.", in: *Sacrum Poloniae Millenium*, VII, Rome, 1960, p. 459.

It is clear that Dzieżożyński brought with him from the Russian Empire a spiritual heritage: “In seeking to direct others, he probably hearkened back to the journal notes he had taken in Russia from talks on creation, the Trinity, the love of God, humility, sin and its causes, the evangelicals vows, human happiness, and the role of Mary in the spiritual life.”⁷⁴ All these elements are rooted in the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola—the most important devotional book of the Jesuits. Also it is worthwhile to look for possible influence of cultural and political circumstances of his work. At the time Jesuits were working in the Russian Empire—an Orthodox country *ex definitione*, hostile to Catholicism, but, simultaneously, accepting this Catholic religious order because it was useful for the education of the Orthodox intellectual elite.

I believe that more interesting than his spiritual heritage was the cultural impact of Francis Dzieżożyński on the new country and vice versa. The beginning of his stay in the US was not promising. In 1823, Benedict Fenwick, the president of Georgetown College, wrote to General Fortis in Rome: “A rumor has prevailed here that your Paternity has it in contemplation to appoint F. Dzieżożyński who is certainly too little acquainted with the country as yet and too ignorant of its language to act as Superior, to say nothing of the evil consequences that may result from nominating one who is perfectly a stranger and a foreigner.”⁷⁵ However, Dzieżożyński adapted himself to his new country with enthusiasm, learned English quickly and became a successful teacher, wise administrator and religious writer. As Kuzniewski noted: “He translated a number of spiritual works from Latin and Polish into English, including several sermons of Peter Skarga. In all these things, he constituted a living link between the uninterrupted Jesuit heritage in Eastern Europe and the restoration and expansion of Jesuit life and work in the United States.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ A. J. Kuzniewski, “Francis Dzieżożyński and the Jesuit Restoration in the United States”, in: *The Catholic Historical Review*, January (1992), pp. 51-73, quotation, p. 68.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 68.

It seems that his most important contribution was to higher education. He “had trained a generation of Jesuits for their life and work. He drew the best out of most people, and they responded to him on that account.”⁷⁷ It is interesting to note that during his activity in the US Franciszek Dzierożyński was in a frequent conflict with some bishops, but he found a way to overcome these difficulties. For example the bishop from Baltimore, Marechal, wrote in a letter to another Jesuit in 1827 about Dzierożyński: “He is like some of his Brethren, who received their religious education in Poland, whom my Predecessor Dr. Carroll frequently declared destitute of their knowledge of their rules and of the true Spirit of the Society of Jesus.”⁷⁸ This negative reputation did not disturb Dzierożyński’s activity in the field of higher education.

I believe that it is not so important to determine the motives for this conflict but simply to be aware of the spirit of independence in the face of authority. His heritage of open and tolerant attitudes toward the new country continued into the twentieth century: the Jesuits Universities are Catholic but independent from the Church’s authority, and their staff is not necessarily Catholic. Guests from around the world are welcomed, and the only criterion is intellectual excellence. For example, two Polish scholars found new homes at Jesuit Universities after World War II: Oskar Halecki and Jan Karski.

Halecki (1891-1973), the most important Polish historian in the twentieth century, was teaching at Fordham University from 1944 until his retirement in 1961. It was there, in his new country, where he published his most important books: *Borderlands of Western Civilization: A History of East Central Europe* (1952), *The Limits and Divisions of European History* (1962) and the frequently reprinted, *History of Poland* (1983). In the preface to *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, Christopher Dawson underlined the uniqueness of Halecki’s position: “It is this clear recognition of the mission of Europe in the new post-European age which distinguishes the work of Professor Halecki from that of other writers on the

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 73.

⁷⁸ A. Kuzniewski, “Francis Dzierożyński”, art. cyt., p. 63.

subject.”⁷⁹ Similar to the case of the Byelorussian Jesuits in nineteenth century who brought to the USA the cultural heritage of the old continent, this Polish scholar in the twentieth century recalled the importance of Central and Eastern Europe’s contribution to modern culture.

My second example is a Polish scholar from Łódź. Jan Karski (1914-2000) was born as Jan Koziński. He grew up in a multi-cultural neighborhood, where the majority of the population was Jewish. After the war Karski made his new home in the United States and began his studies at Georgetown University, where he received his PhD in 1952. In the foreword to the book *The Emissary: Story of Jan Karski*, Bill Clinton, who was his student at Georgetown, wrote: “He was a messenger throughout his 50 years as an American, bringing to us messages about freedom based on his experience in wartime Poland; messages that he delivered to generations of students seeking to understand the world of international affairs.”⁸⁰ Clinton highlighted the importance of Karski’s legacy: Those who knew Jan Karski will never forget him; and his message will continue to light the path of freedom-loving peoples throughout the years to come. No one could ask for a finer legacy.”⁸¹ The words of the American President are not only occasional eulogy, in those words one could hear the echo of Karski’s own stories of his attempt to save Jews during war: “The Jews were not abandoned by humanity. They were abandoned by governments, by social structures, by structures within the Church—but not by ordinary people. Organized social structures failed them, but not the people—of whom there must have been millions. Herein lies the optimism which should be passed on to the next generations, to whom the Holocaust is only a page taken from a history book.”⁸² We can say that Jan Karski was shaped by Polish and American Jesuits. “He began as a student of a Jesuit secondary school in Poland and ended

⁷⁹ O. Halecki, *The Limits and Divisions of European History*, University of Notre Dame Press, 1962, p. VIII.

⁸⁰ M. Kozłowski, *The Emissary. Story of Jan Karski*, Warsaw 2007, p. 5.

⁸¹ *Ibid*, p. 5.

⁸² *Ibid*, p. 63.

up as the professor of the Jesuit University in the United States.”⁸³ I see in the life of Karski the continuation of the legacy of Franciszek Dzierożyński. Both Halecki and Karski are well known in the USA but not in Poland: Oskar Halecki because he wrote mainly in English, and what he wrote was hardly compatible with the Polish historiography in the communist Poland, and Jan Karski because his understanding of the tragedy of the Holocaust was not comfortable for Poles and role played by some of them in the Holocaust.

I would like to conclude with example from Vietnam. As in the XIX and the XX century European influence was shaping American culture and religion, so in the XXI century Asian cultural and religious elements are more and more evident in the USA. Information provided by the “Pluralist Project” confirms this observation. The Catholic theologian Peter C. Phan was born there, and at present he is teaching at Georgetown University. His concept of dialogue is the perfect illustration of the ideals that Francis Dzierożyński brought to the USA in the nineteenth century. The Byelorussian Jesuit implemented Catholic institutions in a pluralistic context, and Phan now introduces to American religious thinking the experience of Asian religions. As in the case of Dzierożyński who was part of the large educational project of Jesuit Order, so in case of Phan we have a part of vivid and global discussion concerning the place of Christianity in the modern world. We have to say that this discussion was already started in the Bible,⁸⁴ and in modern theology we are only seeing a continuation of this discussion.⁸⁵

According to Phan, openness and the ability to listen is the best way to become fully human. Because for him human knowledge “is gained in a serious and thoughtful give-and-take of mutual learning and teaching, in a respectful and humble conversation with the tradition and the community of fellow seekers, in a word, in a genuine *dialogue* with the other, in which one’s own insights are

⁸³ Ibid, p. 59.

⁸⁴ G. Odasso, *Biblia i religie. Biblijne perspektywy teologii religii*, Kraków, 2005.

⁸⁵ J. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions. From Confrontation to Dialogue*, New York, 2002.

humbly offered, the other's wisdom gratefully appropriated, and the quest for truth is undertaken together in mutual respect and love."⁸⁶

He is interested in liberation theology, inculturation, and interreligious dialogue. He has written three books on these topics⁸⁷. Anthropological and sociological approaches led me to think about Byelorussian Jesuits who were able to transfer to the US what they had practiced in the Russian Empire. They were concentrated on education, without being preoccupied with confessional differences amongst their students. In a similar way, Phan is focused on the phenomenon of religious pluralism, without being concerned how the Church authority will evaluate it. Phan has the ability to find a new language for the new global situation. Phan explains this concept as follows: "By accepting the stranger as friend, we allow his or her 'otherness' to confront us radically, challenging us with stories we have never heard, questions we have never raised, beliefs we have never entertained, and practices we have never imagined. By welcoming and learning to appreciate these new religious realities, we gradually adopt them as our own because our friends have them and share them with us, and thus we begin to acquire, perhaps without being aware of it, multiple religious belonging or double religious identity."⁸⁸ This pluralistic and, so to say, "welcoming" concept challenges traditional theology. But what is even more important than a challenge to traditional theology is an openness to new perspectives, and the readiness for a real dialogue with modern and postmodern culture⁸⁹.

⁸⁶ P. C. Phan, *Being Religious Interreligiously. Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue*, New York 2004, p. XX.

⁸⁷ P. Phan, *Christianity with an Asian Face* (2003), *In Our Own Tongues* (2003), *Being Religious Interreligiously* (2004).

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 81.

⁸⁹ The media was attracted by the fact that in December 2007 the American Catholic bishops issued a "Clarification" – a critical statement on Phan's theology. According to the "Clarification" Phan's *Being Religious Interreligiously: Asian Perspectives on Interfaith Dialogue* suffers from "certain pervading ambiguities and equivocations that could easily confuse or mislead the faithful, as well as statements that, unless properly clarified, are not in accord with Catholic teaching". In other words, the statement takes up three areas of concern: 1) Jesus Christ as the unique and universal Savior of all humankind; 2) the salvific

In conclusion, I would like to again quote Terrence W. Klein who stressed the importance of intellectual excellence of teachers: “Jesuit universities seek the best people for their faculties. Today that may mean recruiting some, who have been trained to see religion itself as essentially irrational and thus profoundly antihuman. That prejudice needs to be met with learning, patience and trust. Many religious young people are tempted to reject anything that questions belief, retreating into the intellectual ghetto of fundamentalism. They need to be challenged by faculty who do not believe, but they also need the same learning, patience and trust given by those who do. The graced strength of Jesuit education, and that which separates it from its secular and its more conservative church counterparts, is that everyone is given the right to speak.”⁹⁰

significance of non-Christian religions; 3) the Church as the unique and universal instrument of salvation. The bishops noted that Phan argues that “the non-Christian religions possess an autonomous function in the history of salvation, different from that of Christianity,” and that “they cannot be reduced to Christianity in terms of preparation and fulfillment. And that these religions may be said to be ways of salvation and that religious pluralism is part of -God’s providential plan”. The bishops wrote in order to “help ensure that the singularity of Jesus and the Church be perceived in all clarity and the universal salvific significance of what he has accomplished be acknowledged in the fullness of truth.”

⁹⁰ T.W. Klein, “A Space for Inquiry”, op. cit.

II. Poland After Communism

Chapter 5.

The Impact of Communism on Culture and Religion in Post-Communist Europe

Historical perspective is helpful in understanding the differences between The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, and Ukraine on the one hand and Bulgaria, East Germany, Moldavia, Rumania, and Russia on the other hand. In countries that were part of the Catholic Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Catholic Church had been a strong presence. However, the impact of this presence was different in each country. In The Czech Republic, Catholicism was imposed, and even hostile toward national identity, whereas in Poland and Slovakia, the same Church was perceived not only as compatible with nationalism but it was thought to foster it. This is why the Catholic influence is still strong in these countries, although even this is changing dramatically. In contrast, religion seems to have lost its importance in East German and Czech public life, and both countries are among the most secularized in Europe. In Ukraine, the situation is unique: the Greek-Catholic Church is identified as the national church, but the Orthodox Church also plays a significant role, particularly in the eastern part of the country. In the Baltic Countries there exists an interesting combination of religion and ethnic elements, with Catholicism as the primary religion in Lithuania, and Protestantism the majority in Latvia and Estonia. In Russia, the Russian Orthodox Church tries again to shape national identity; two-thirds of the population recognize the Orthodox Church as their own. The particular combination of ethnicity and religion in the former Yugoslavia were decisive elements in the recent war, and in the formation of the new state of Kosovo in 2008. The specific *mélange* of historical, ethnic, cultural, and religious elements is crucial in shaping these differences.

Nevertheless, only the common experience of Communism or “real socialism” offers a possible explanation for the return of

aggressive nationalism in all these countries, and a lack of trust in public institutions, civil society, and unhealthy relations between religion and politics. It seems that also the attitude towards the experience of World War II, and particularly the Holocaust, is a new element in dealing with the communist heritage. The aim of my paper is to present this particular phenomenon of Post-Communist Europe in historical and anthropological perspective.

Ken Jowitt, in his well-known book *New World Disorder. The Leninist Extinction* using biblical metaphors. He calls the Cold War the “Joshua period,” and the post-1989 period is the “Genesis environment.” He explains it as follows:

“The Cold War was a ‘Joshua’ period; one of dogmatically centralized boundaries and identities. In contrast to the biblical sequence, the Leninist extinction of 1989 has moved the world from Joshua to the a Genesis environment: from one centrally organized, rigidly bounded, and hysterically concerned with impenetrable boundaries to one in which territorial, ideological, and issue boundaries are attenuated, unclear, and confusing. We now inhabit a world that, while not ‘without form and void’, is one which the major imperatives are the same as in Genesis, ‘naming and bounding’”⁹¹.

Although Jowitt published his book 1992, his diagnosis is valid also in 2008. Post-communist Europe is still looking for its identity. Let us start with Russia.

Cliford J. Levy accurately characterized the situation in Russia in a *New York Times* article:

Over the past eight years, in the name of reviving Russia after the tumult of the 1990s, Mr. Putin has waged an unforgiving campaign to clamp down on democracy and extend control over the government and large swaths of the economy. He has suppressed the independent news media, nationalized important industries, smothered the political opposition and readily deployed the security services to carry out the Kremlin’s wishes. (February 24, 2008)

⁹¹ K. Jowitt, *New World Disorder. The Leninist Extinction*, Berkeley, 1992, p. 307.

Putin himself interprets his government in Russia as follows: “Russia has a healthy democracy, a renewed sense of national pride and a prominent role on the world stage.” His political opponents have a different opinion. For example an independent Russian journalist, Oksana Chelysheva said: “The ruling elite nowadays has no ideology. Their only aim is to obtain as much power as possible, to keep this power, by whatever means, and to profiteer off this power. In this respect, these people, who are so cynical, are much more dangerous than was the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R.”

Nevertheless, Putin, according to his speech on February 14, clearly has the intention of controlling the Russian policy after the presidential election on March 2 2008: “The president is the guarantor of the Constitution. He sets the main directions for internal and external policies. But the highest executive power in the country is the Russian government, led by the premier.” In spite of this antidemocratic attitude, Putin is one of the most popular politicians in Russia. Perhaps Alla Glinchikova, from the Russian Academy of Science, is right to argue that Russia is a paternalistic society unable to function according to civic standards. This fact explains why “the strong Man Putin” is so popular: “Paternalistic consciousness rejects the civic state at a very deep level and can follow its instructions only under the threat of punishment. Furthermore, the less state behavior is civic, the more legitimate it is for paternalistic society”⁹². When asked about the role of the Church in post-communist Russia, Glinchikova wrote to me:

I would say, that the political ‘games’ with the Church are not occasional and not just ‘facade’. The regimes, which were developed after socialism, are not civil still and therefore, they need some ‘ideology’ to get legitimacy in the face of society. Communism is dead, that is why they come back to religion. But religion as an ideology is not religion any more. Another question is the growing interest in religion among the people. It has absolutely different roots and reasons and

⁹² A.G. Glinchikova, “The challenges for global civil society in a ‘post-communist’ world”, in: *Development Dialogue*, No 49 November 2007, pp. 119-128, 123.

elites only ‘exploit’ or try to exploit this really important social trend.

Siergiej Kovalov, one of the most critical commentators on Putin’s Russia, when asked to explain why Putin is so popular, stated strongly: “I should begin by saying that I find the current president of Russia and his policies extremely offensive. I believe that Vladimir Putin is the most sinister figure in contemporary Russian history”⁹³. According to Kovalov:

“Putin has in effect created a myth of the imperial state—a myth derived from elements of pre-revolutionary Russian history and the Soviet past—that serves as a substitute for historical memory. There was a demand for such a surrogate myth and he met it, thus connecting his own regime with longstanding Russian traditions of authoritarian rule. His popularity owes a good deal to it”⁹⁴.

This myth has to do with the Byzantine model of succession. Putin did not invent authoritarianism; the ideological ingredients of Putinism existed in the consciousness of part of the population long before Putin’s rule. His ‘team’ transformed them into usable modern propaganda and aggressively rebroadcast them to the whole country. It appears that this propaganda campaign has been successful—particularly among young people. As well, the members of the political elite are profoundly attached to the idea of their immutable dominance, because it is their own position that is in question. Infusing the values of the imperial state into the public mind, however, is only an intermediate goal for the Russian political establishment. The main goal is to entirely eliminate European mechanisms of power transfer in Russia and to consolidate the Byzantine model of succession. For Siergiej Kovalov the future is depressing; according to him the Byzantine system of power has triumphed for the foreseeable future in Russia. I guess that he is right.

⁹³ S. Kovalev, “Why Putin Wins”, in: *The New York Review of Books*, Volume 54, Number 18, November 22, 2007.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

The most recent events in Russia confirm Kovalov's prophecies. Putin's successor, Dmitri Medvedev, in his speech at the V Krasnoyarsk Economic Forum on February 15 2008, presented himself as a politician who was sensitive to the social and economic problems of Russian people, and offered a program with a social-democratic character in the "old-good" Western style. He was not afraid to mention the most tragic sides of the present situation in Russia, saying that part of the population is still living in a social coma, and that this is one of the causes of alcoholism and a suicide rate that still remains very high. In the same speech, Medvedev underlined that the focus of social policy should not be on particular sectors within the social sphere, but on each citizen, and each family, and it is around these families and individuals that healthcare, education and social support systems must be build. We have to wait and carefully observe how this program will be implemented.

Glinchikova also draws attention to the negative influence of the free market, or better, to the way it was introduced into Russia. And makes particular note of the ambiguity of the presence of Western business: "The West's businessmen who rushed to our countries preferred to use and develop the criminal habits of our post-communist bureaucracy, and enjoy the paternalistic climate of our post-communist permissiveness, rather than introduce their 'Western' democratic tradition of 'rights and freedoms'. It is really difficult to determine which elite was the motor of post-communist corruption"⁹⁵. So we can see that the ambiguous situation in this country has many fathers. It seems to me that similar tendency could be observed also in other countries, not only in Russia, and it is also possible to perceive it as one more aspect of globalization.

One final remark about the situation in Russia: It is well known how close the relations between Russian politicians and the Orthodox Church are, and that the Church supports the country's current policy. It is hard to understand this connection after so many years, as the Orthodox Church was cut off from the public sphere. A possible explanation is the religious image of Russia as a Holy Land of Orthodoxy on the one hand, and the old vision of Russia as

⁹⁵ Glinchikova, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

a political empire—third Rome—on the other. The relationship between the state and the Church might seem odd. After all, it was the KGB (and we shouldn't forget that Putin was a part of that organization), that led the persecution of the Church in the Soviet times, when priests were regularly jailed, tortured and executed. Neither this, nor accusations that Putin is restoring many of the attributes of Soviet regime, seems to bother the head of the Orthodox Church, Patriarch Alexei II. In the Tsarist era, the Church was a committed supporter of the imperial agenda: 'orthodoxy, autocracy and nationhood.' The number of Russians who identify themselves as Orthodox has doubled in the past decade, with two-thirds of the 140 million populations proclaiming faith. This is quite an achievement after seven decades of official atheism. Yet, most Russians say they follow Orthodoxy for national rather than religious reasons. In fact, we have here a kind of return to the old messianic movement of the Russian Orthodox Church from the XIX century. Maria Bobrownicka, a Polish scholar from Cracow, indicates: "In fact Soviet messianism is not so different from the religious messianism of Orthodox Slavophil from the previous century. It is more a continuation although in different cloth. Mission, imperial expansion, anti-Europeism—all this already was"⁹⁶.

Using the term coined by Bassam Tibi we have here a case of the classical politicization of religion and religionisation of politics. This is my hypothesis, it has to be verified to what extent this concept, elaborated in the context of politicized Islam, could be used in cases of politicized Christianity. At this point, I would like to quote Tibi's definition:

Its [Islam's] strength lies in its ability to draw on an ideology rooted not only in a real religious faith but also that has assumed an intensely politicized expression. This process is referred here with the term the 'religionisation of politics', a neologism that, though hardly mellifluous, is needed to distinguish political religions that emanate from the

⁹⁶ M. Bobrownicka, *Patologie tożsamości narodowej w postkomunistycznych krajach słowiańskich* (Pathologies of national identities in post-communist Slavonic countries), Kraków, 2006, p. 121.

politization of religion from those which are sacralized forms of secular politics, such as fascism and communism. The religionisation of politics by jihadists, their extensive use of religious formulae and terms to articulate a political agenda, and their presentation of this strategy as a divine mission, result from the politicization of Islam into Islamism⁹⁷.

One example of politicization of religion is the recent independence of Kosovo. The Serbian Orthodox Church was one of the main forces behind the Serbian protest against the separation of Kosovo from Serbia, for religious reason, and found support from Russian politicians and the Russian Church. For example, Medvedev said that Kosovo's self-styled independence "absolutely" violates international rules. The ties between the Orthodox churches of Serbia and Russia remain strong—a point Medvedev highlighted when he joined the Serbian President, Boris Tadic, for a visit to St. Sava Temple, the biggest Orthodox Christian church in the Balkans.

Other Post-Communist Countries:

I have dedicated this much attention to Russia because the post-communist countries were known as the 'Soviet bloc,' so in a way we can assume that what is going on in Russia is representative for other former Soviet bloc countries. Now I will turn to more general reflections on other Eastern European countries. The overview of the political, cultural and even religious situation of the post-communist countries is masterfully presented by the Romanian-American political scientist and sociologist—Vladimir Tismaneanu. He is a specialist of political systems and comparative politics. He is also the chief editor of *East European Politics and Societies*, a very important journal for understanding the transformation process in post-communist world. His book *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy*,

⁹⁷ B. Tibi, "The Totalitarianism of Jihads Islamism and its Challenge to Europe and to Islam", in: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religion*, vol. 8, nr 1 March 2007, p. 35

Nationalism and Myth in Post-communist Europe published⁹⁸ offers not only his own opinions, but can be perceived as a representative voice of American and Eastern and Central European scholarship. (His life is an interesting commentary to his writings). The correlation between democracy and nationalism, the presence of mythological thinking in politics, the dream of solving social and political problems in an irrational way rather than with public and open debate—these are all the most important issues facing this particular part of the world.

I do not have time to go into detail, so let me mention his latest contribution to the topic, an edition of collection of essays entitled *World Order after Leninism*⁹⁹. This book examines the origins and evolution of world communism, and explores how its legacy has shaped the post-Cold War world order. The heritage of Leninism still influences the post-communist states of the former Soviet Union and China. *World Order after Leninism* began as a conversation between two former students of Ken Jowitt (Rudra Sil and Marc M. Howard). Using divergent case studies, the essays in the volume document the ways in which Jowitt's work on the evolution of Leninism remains relevant in analyzing contemporary post-communist and post-authoritarian political transformations. But not only political scientists are helpful in understanding “the metamorphosis of communism.”

For additional insight, we have to turn to historians and anthropologists. The Polish scholar Maria Bobrownicka offers an interesting illustration of this topic from an historical and cultural point of view. In her book *The Drug of Myth: Essays on National and Cultural Consciousness of Western and South Slavs*¹⁰⁰, she gives a fascinating account of a Slavic mentality deeply rooted in romantic

⁹⁸ V. Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe: Democracy, Nationalism and Myth in Post-communist Europe*, Princeton, 1998.

⁹⁹ *New Order After Leninism*, Edited by Vladimir Tismaneanu, Marc Morje Howard, and Rudra Sil, published by Herbert J. Ellison Center for Russian, East European, and Central Asian Studies, 2006.

¹⁰⁰ M. Bobrownicka, *Narkotyki mitu. Szkice o świadomości narodowej i kulturowej Słowian zachodnich i południowych*, Kraków, 1995.

mythology. She offers a kind of literary and philosophical deconstruction of foundational myths on which nation-states are based. The most important and negative influence of Slavic myths was the falsification of historical evidence and sources concerning the character of the native tradition of Slavic nations¹⁰¹. The most clear example of this is “historical policy,” which consists of choosing a few elements from the past in order to confirm the current policy (e.g., in Serbia the “holy” battle against the Turks in Kosovo in the fourteenth century, in Poland the “providential” role played by Catholic Church, etc.). For the roots of this manipulation of the past we have to look mainly into Romantic literature and particularly to the theories of the Czech romantic philosopher Jan Kollar, because he “contributed to blur the concepts of nation, its language and culture”¹⁰². In Polish literature we have poets who formed ideas about Poland as the chosen nation and the Christ of nations with special messianic mission, to remind only few names: Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Zygmunt Krasiński.

The collapse of Communism in 1989 generated a new situation in this part of Europe. The totalitarian system was succeeded by democracy. But the change of the political system touched only one level of social life. More important and challenging was to transform culture and the core concepts of the previous system. The radical change connected with the collapse of communism, and the discrediting of the ideology inspired by this system, created a deep need for demythologizing the social consciousness of Slavic nations. In the first place, this demythologization is linked to categories of political thinking¹⁰³. It is not hard to imagine what it means on a practical level, in education, in media, and even in religion. For the moment, we can observe a deep crisis in all these dimensions of social life.

How vitally this effort to demythologize the national can be observed in the last decade of the twentieth century, during the Balkan War in the former Yugoslavia. But mythological thinking

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 24.

¹⁰² Ibid, p. 48.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 90.

shaped the mutual relationship between different ethnic groups in places must further afield than just the Balkans. Almost every post-communist European country has its own nationalistic movement. Of course, such groups also exist in Western Europe, however there they are more marginal. In Central and Eastern Europe they are more dangerous, because democracy there is more fragile and less resistant to demagogical argumentation.

Let us say a word about Poland. According to Maria Bobrownicka, infantile, sarmatian Polish nationalism is one of the most dangerous aspects of social life. Those aspects were loud between the two world wars, silenced a little in the Soviet time, and were revived after 1989. These elements, and not economic difficulties, made Poland more “Oriental” than Western. The reason for the success of nationalistic ideas is that they give easy answers and strengthen the certitude of one’s opinions. Also, they “release” a person from autonomous thinking, offering black-white solutions and scapegoats. All this is one of the most dangerous aspects of social life¹⁰⁴. In many publications we find evidence that this is also true in other post-communist countries. It seems that the main target of this nationalistic policy are groups of excluded people or “losers,” as Bauman calls them, who couldn’t find their place during the dramatic changes in the post-communist Europe [citation needed]. We can also see growing stratification between poor and rich people. The former are more and more frustrated and the second more and more arrogant and self-confident. It is a new social gap that explains the increasing social tensions in this part of Europe.

The Polish social movement, Solidarity, provides an interesting case study. From a rich literature on the subject, I would particularly like to mention a book by David Ost *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Post-communist Europe*¹⁰⁵. Ost asked important questions and gave intriguing answers: How did the fall of Communism and the subsequent transition to capitalism in Eastern

¹⁰⁴ M. Bobrownicka, *Pathologies of national identities in post-communist slavonic countries*, op. cit., p. 121.

¹⁰⁵ D. Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*, Cornell University Press, 2005.

Europe affect the people who experienced it? And how did their anger affect the quality of the democratic systems that have emerged? Poland offers a particularly provocative case, for it was there that workers seemed to have won, thanks to the role of the Solidarity trade union, and yet, within a few short years, they had clearly lost. An oppressive communist regime gave way to a capitalist society that embraced economic and political inequality, leaving many workers frustrated and angry. Their leaders first ignored them, then began to fear them, and finally, tried to marginalize them. In turn, workers rejected their liberal leaders. Consequently the door was open for right-wing nationalists to take control of “Solidarity.” To the Polish edition of his book Ost added an explanation of why he wrote this book: “The whole world can learn a lot from the Polish example about the necessary conditions for stable, inclusive, democratic policy”¹⁰⁶.

Ost tells a fascinating story about the evolution of post-communist society in Eastern Europe. Informed by years of fieldwork in Polish factory towns, and many interviews with workers, labor activists, and politicians, his book gives a voice to those who have not been heard. But even more, Ost proposes an original theory regarding the role of anger in politics and shows why such voices matter, and how they profoundly affect political outcomes. Portraying Poland’s experiences, Ost describes a phenomenon relevant to democratization throughout Eastern Europe, by dealing with the conflict between liberal intellectuals and “angry” workers who do not understand the reasons for the deterioration of their economic life. Nationalistic and populist politicians articulate this anger, which explains why they are so popular.

For many observers, the role played by the Catholic Church in the Solidarity movement and its transformation is not clear. The presence of religious symbols in social movements is surprising (usually they are anti-clerical and anti-religious). The explanation has to be found in the 1960s, when the Church offered an alternative to the official communist ideology. An American sociologist,

¹⁰⁶ D. Ost, *Kłeska Solidarności. Gniew i polityka w postkomunistycznej Europie*, Warszawa 2007, p. 18.

Maryjane Osa, in an article published in 1997 on “The Religious Foundations of the Polish Social Movement,” understood the connection between the historiography told by the charismatic leader of the Polish Catholic Church Cardinal Wyszyński and “Solidarity.” First of all, the Church was able to create a real and successful alternative to the communist ideology: “Wyszyński’s philosophical convictions and his ability to utilize cultural elements in novel combinations helped him to create a powerful ideological system, according to which the events of Polish history took on the specifically Catholic meaning”.¹⁰⁷ During the confrontation with the communist regime—a regime perceived by the majority of Poles as alien—it was the Church that offered convincing symbols:

Polish Catholicism managed to relocate its confrontation with Leninism from the substantive ground of public policy to a higher plateau of symbolic politics, where the Church and society *could win*. The ideological and tactical innovations of Great Novena [Anniversary of the baptism of Poland in 1966] set certain parameters for social movement development that facilitated rapid mobilization in August 1980.¹⁰⁸

This connection has its price. In present-day Poland, the Church is tempted to control not only the private life of Catholics, but also the public sphere. As Barbara Stanosz, a well known social activist and philosopher, stated: “In demanding the prerogative to impose its views on both public and private life, the Church seems to be demanding payment from current Polish authorities for its help in the struggle against communism”.¹⁰⁹ Her book *In the Shadow of the Church: Making Democracy in Poland*¹¹⁰ is a good commentary to this statement.

¹⁰⁷ M. Osa, “Creating Solidarity: The Religious Foundations of the Polish Social Movement”, in: EEPS, vol. 11, no 2, spring 1997, p. 354.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 365.

¹⁰⁹ B. Stanosz, “Emerging Democracy or Religious State”, in: *Uncaptive Minds*, vol. 6, no 2 (1993), p. 35.

¹¹⁰ B. Stanosz, *W cieniu Kościoła czyli demokracja po polsku*, Warszawa 2004. In this fragment of her book we can see how Stanosz looks at the present situation in Poland: “Konflikt między instytucją Kościoła katolickiego i modelem nowoczesnej, liberalnej demokracji jest autentyczny i głęboki: interesy i aspiracje

Was the evolution of State-Church relations in Poland inevitable? I would like to leave it as an open question. The answer is not easy, however a comparison with the Catholic Church in Hungary, historically very similar to the Polish Church, can be useful. In Hungary, the Church no longer has influence in the public sphere. Maryjane Osa stated that the Second World War and Communism strengthened the Polish Church: "Paradoxically, the war and the building of a socialist Poland carried unforeseen benefits for the Catholic Church in Poland. (...) With the political changes and dismantling of the latifundia, the remnants of the feudal Church disappeared. By building on wartime contact and constructing a new formal vehicle for the Church, a dynamic organization emerged that was well-prepared to deal with adversity".¹¹¹ I hope that an open and pluralistic society will reduce the political power of the Catholic Church in Poland, because today that Church is polarizing society.

każdej ze stron tego konfliktu są niszczące dla drugiej. Nie ma tu jednak pełnej symetrii. Sytuacja Kościoła w tym konflikcie jest mniej dramatyczna niż sytuacja demokracji. „Pojednanie” może przynieść Kościołowi duże korzyści lub znaczne straty; demokracja ma do stracenia wszystko lub nic. Równość obywateli nie jest bowiem – wbrew żartowi z Folwarku zwierzęcego – pojęciem stopniowalnym: ludzie nie mogą być równi i równiejsi, mogą być tylko równi lub nierówni.

Wolność człowieka jest wprawdzie stopniowalna, mierzy się bowiem sumą przyznanych mu swobód różnego rodzaju, jednakże poniżej pewnego progu suma ta przestaje być wolnością, stając się zniewoleniem.

A właśnie te dwie wartości są ogniskiem konfliktu, o którym mowa. Kościół żąda dla siebie wielu rozmaitych przywilejów, tymczasem demokracja nie może mu przyznać żadnego przywileju, nie gwałcąc zasady równości obywateli, tj. nie przestając być demokracją. Kościół chce też – choć nie nazywa rzeczy po imieniu – zredukować wolność jednostki do rozmiarów, przy których nazywanie jej nadal wolnością jest nadużyciem językowym. A demokracja dopuszczająca zniewolenie człowieka to *contradictio in adiecto*. Kościół natomiast może istnieć także wtedy, gdy jego ambicje zajmowania wyróżnionego miejsca w państwie i sprawowania w nim rządu dusz pozostają niezaspokojone. Licznych przykładów takiego sposobu istnienia Kościoła dostarczają zaawansowane cywilizacyjne kraje Zachodu. Pełni on tam wyłącznie swą rdzenną funkcję – funkcję instytucji, która konsoliduje wspólnotę katolików i zaspokaja indywidualne potrzeby religijne wyznawców katolicyzmu”.

¹¹¹ M. Osa, “Resistance, Persistence, and Change: The Transformation of the Catholic Church in Poland”, in: *EEPS*, vol. 3, no 2 Spring 1989, 296.

Chapter 6.

The Revenge of the “Victims” or About Polish Catholics’ Difficulty with Democracy

The present situation in Poland is full of unexpected changes, not only for the observers from outside, but also for Poles themselves. Two spheres are the most unpredictable: politics and religion. The economic situation in Poland, after a period of dramatic changes in the first years after introducing the free market, have reached a certain degree of stabilization. However, the politics and politicians emergent from the Catholic Church are sources for growing concern. It is surprising because, especially in the recent past, the Church’s presence in politics was not only seen positively, but was also perceived to be vitally needed.¹¹² Nevertheless, there is more than one perspective on the subject.¹¹³ In addition, a careful linguistic analysis of the letters issued in postwar period by Catholic bishops are revealing intellectual weakness of the Church. This institution was unable to face the challenges of fundamental questions of modern society promoting a very traditional model of devotion.¹¹⁴ The question is: does the outcome of recent political, social, and economic changes explain the new role of religion in Polish society?

The answer to this question is not obvious. It seems to me that one of the reasons for the new position of religion in the public sphere is a strong feeling of resentment of politicians who claim to represent

¹¹² A good analysis of the involvement of the Church in politics can be found in the concise historical survey by A. Dudek and R. Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce (1945-1989)*, Kraków, 2001.

¹¹³ A. Grajewski, *Kompleks Judasza. Kościół zraniony. Chrześcijananie w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej między oporem i kolaboracją*, Poznań, 1999.

¹¹⁴ Cf. K. Skowronek, *Między sacrum a profanum. Studium językoznawcze listów pasterskich Konferencji Episkopatu Polski (1945-2005)*, Kraków 2006. Particularity striking is a lack of reception of documents of Vatican II Council, pp. 260-290.

the true Catholic Poland. We can find similar feelings of resentment among relatively large and influential groups of clergy. We can even say that this resentment has a particularly shape today—it is a kind of revenge of the “victims” (or rather, of those who perceive themselves as victims). In a recent book written by David Ost on the failure of the Solidarity movement, he argues that it was the lack of communication between its leaders and the workers that led to its demise/failure/? The latter were left to their destiny by the leaders, who made no attempt to explain to them the nature of the transformation process.¹¹⁵ This lack of communication, and patronizing attitudes, have led to the present situation. It seems to me that the negative role of the Catholic Church has to be included. Not because the Church as such is destructive, but because its leaders are unwilling to accept the limited role of their institution in a democratic and pluralistic society. They not only polarize Polish society, but also force concrete solutions without taking account of the pluralistic structure of modern state; (for example: forcing parliament to legislate obligatory religion classes in schools; financially support Catholic universities from the state budget; and appropriate 40 million zloty (\$12.5 million) for new cathedral in Warsaw). One more reason is the intense political involvement of the clergy in politics, particularly the fundamentalist, conservative, nationalistic, and anti-Semitic clergy involved with Radio Maria.

Radio Maria’s charismatic leader, Fr. Tadeusz Rydzyk, runs this Catholic radio station. A few bishops like Józef Michalik of Przemyśl, Stanisław Stefanek of Łomża, and Adam Lepa from Łódź, who are also radio affiliates, systematically criticize the democratization process. Their proposals are fundamentalist in orientation, and supports their vision of a Catholic theocracy, such that the laws of the state should reflect Catholic doctrine. In this case the activity of the Church is clearly destructive. It is enough to remember the debate on abortion in the Polish parliament that occurred in April 2006, in which Fr. Rydzyk and the above-mentioned bishops played a very active role, in calling for a total ban on abortion, even when the pregnancy endanger a woman’s life. Such actions reflect

¹¹⁵ D. Ost, *Kłeska “Solidarności”*, Warszawa, 2007.

a growing tendency towards interference by the Catholic Church in Polish public life.

In order to explain this phenomenon it is necessary to have in mind some historical facts that shape the Polish identity today. First, allow me to share with you some personal remarks. For many years I have studied Polish Catholicism, and I have also written extensively on the history of the Jesuit Order in Poland. I have also been involved in several cultural initiatives, as a member of this Order, with the firm conviction that this institution has both the historical legitimacy to promote pluralistic society and effective tools to achieve this. Today I'm less optimistic in this regard, and I see the Catholic Church as one of the disturbing elements in the process of Poland's democratization of Poland.

In my view, this is the second time in Polish history that we are seeing the Church act as a barrier to successful democratization. The first time was in pre-war Poland (1918-1939), when the Catholic Church played a negative role in the reconstruction of a multi-ethnic society, instead promoting anti-Semitic tendencies¹¹⁶ and supporting nationalistic parties. The second time is now, in the post-communist period, with the Church supporting taking a negative and, at times, hostile attitude toward pluralistic society, by actively promoting homophobic and chauvinistic attitudes. In both cases, resentment and even feelings of revenge play an important role. But there are also multiple models in the history of the Polish Catholicism: there was a pluralistic model of Polish Catholicism and of the Jagiellonian dynasty (XIV-XVI century) and in the Enlightenment. In order to explain my position, I will need to introduce some historical events, which have shaped the history of my country.

Historical survey

It is hard to believe that in the time when almost all European countries were facing violent religious conflicts, Poland welcomed dissidents in faith. This fact is well known in Polish history and is seen as a symbol of Polish tolerance. In fact, Poland received Italian

¹¹⁶ R. Modras, *The Catholic Church and Anti-Semitism: Poland, 1933-1939*, Chur, Switzerland, 1994, (Polish trans.), 2004.

Antitrinitarians, German Lutherans, Dutch Mennonites, English Quakers, Scottish Huguenots—all those who were denied religious freedom in their own country.¹¹⁷ At this time, Poland was often referred to as *refugium hereticorum* and *paradisum Judeorum*, and reflect this historical reality of Poland as a land of tolerance during a time when the rest of the continent was embroiled in religious conflict. We have to add that it was a different Poland and a different Catholicism, closer to the religion of Henry VIII's England than to Rome. For example, when the primate of Poland, Jakob Uchański, was put on trial by Pope Paul IV in 1559, he seemed to be unconcerned, and was even seen as a possible candidate to be the head of a Polish national church.¹¹⁸ It was in reference to this tolerant incarnation of Poland that Erasmus of Rotterdam, who had many friends living in Poland at the time, said *Polonia mea est*; his influence on the Polish Reformation and Counter-Reformation is well known.¹¹⁹ But this inclusivity and openness came to its end with the victory of the Counter-Reformation and the weak presence of other confessions. And the Jesuit Order seems to have played an important role in this process, which is why I have decided to focus attention on the order's role in Polish history.

Roland Barthes famously observed that the influence of Jesuit education in France was so strong that “they [the Jesuits] taught France how to write”¹²⁰. This is even more true of Central and Eastern Europe. Stanisław Bystroń, a Polish anthropologist, laconically remarked on the gentry's relationship to the various religious orders in Poland: “Thus, the *szlachta* would drink with the

¹¹⁷ Cf. J. Tazbir, *A State without Stakes: Polish Religious Toleration in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century*, trans. A.T. Jordan, New York, Kosciuszko Foundation, 1973.

¹¹⁸ “Some of the bishops even secretly sympathized with the new faith; the primate Uchanski himself was suspected of seeing himself as a potential head of a Polish national church, while his close friendship with Frycz Modrzewski could cast doubt on the orthodoxy of the titular leader of the church in Poland. Rome was not unaware of such doubt.” *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹¹⁹ He sold his library to Polish reformer Jan Laski who influenced not only the Polish but also the European Reformation.

¹²⁰ R. Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1971.

Franciscans of Strict Observance; learn the precepts of the ascetic life from the Carmelites; but send their children to the Jesuit schools, and seek counsels from the Jesuits in the most serious matters."¹²¹ This statement is loaded with religious, social and political consequences. It means, in fact, that the Jesuits were extremely influential, and in a way responsible for the shape of the Polish Catholicism.

The role played by former Jesuits in the Catholic Enlightenment was only one example of the creative and enthusiastic involvement of many Polish bishops, such as Ignacy Krasicki or the Załuski brothers: the former was a prolific and popular author; the latter founded the first public library in Poland. Unfortunately this influence was dramatically cut by successive partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century (1772, 1793 and 1795). Today we can say that this tradition has been almost completely forgotten by the Catholic Church in Poland, although it is still very influential in other parts of the world, for example Jesuit higher education in the United States is still very robust. In the USA, many of the universities were founded by Polish Jesuits.¹²² As far as I can observe, the spirit of the Catholic Enlightenment is preserved there. In Poland this tradition is ignored. It seems that the spirit of sarmatism (meaning the adaptation of religious concepts, views of the past, and eschatological ideas to the political and constitutional structure of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: and their mixture with folklore and the local historical tradition)¹²³ won. Even the

¹²¹ S. Bystron, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce: Wiek XVI-XVIII* (The History of Manners in Old Poland: The Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries), Warszawa, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy 1932, p. 347.

¹²² A.J. Kuzniewski, "Francis Dzierzynski and the Jesuit restoration in the United States", in: *Jezuicka ars historica*, Kraków, 2001.

¹²³ What I have in mind here is the phenomenon conventionally known as the Sarmatization of Polish Catholicism. The concept was first used by Janusz Tazbir for whom more interesting is the question of the 'Sarmatization' of the order's members, and the price which the Jesuits paid for this than the question of the Jesuits' influence on the Polish society. Tazbir's opinion is that the Jesuits succumbed to this process: "The Jesuits did not withstand the process of the Sarmatization of the Polish Catholicism, which reached its apogee at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. By this term I mean the adaptation of

Polish Pope, John Paul II, who tried to revitalize the heritage of the Jagiellonian dynasty in the Catholic Church was unsuccessful. What was taken up enthusiastically was his critical attitude toward modernity, particularly his promotion of “civilization of life,” as an alternative to a “civilization of death.” Both concepts are difficult to define and it is one of the reasons for its ambivalent reception in Poland today. The strong moral rhetoric of the Pope’s doctrine has a very disturbing “double speak” characteristic: modernity is condemned for its secularism, consumerism, pornography, lack of respect for family values, pro-contraceptive stand, and support for abortion, etc.; yet at the same time, the Church ignores and hides “sins”—crimes—that are committed by clergy, and conceals them by the pretext of “the Church’s good”.¹²⁴ (*ad maiorem Ecclesiae gloriam*)

The present situation

The political and religious situation in Poland today can be characterized as a return of demons from the past, in particular those from the interwar era. The Catholic laity has centered around *Tygodnik Powszechny* (Universal Weekly) and the high circulation *Gość Niedzielny* (Sunday Guest), while the monthlies *Znak* (Sign) and *Więź* (Link) which played an important role in the communist time, are now on the margin of public debate and, in fact, have no support from the Church. The main player is Fr. Tadeusz Rydzyk who I mentioned before. I would like to dedicate more time to this phenomenon, which is not only religious and not only political. Since the beginning of 1992 it is the most controversial topic not

religious concepts, views of the past, and eschatological ideas to the political and constitutional structure of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth: and their mixture with folklore and the local historical tradition”. (Cf. J. Tazbir, “Jezuici między Rzeczpospolitą i Rzymem” (The Jesuits between the Polish Lithuanian Commonwealth), in his: *Szkice z dziejów papieżstwa* (Sketches from the History of the Papacy), Warszawa, 1989, p. 96).

¹²⁴ A good example of this double policy is well known, namely, the attempt to hide sexual abuse by priests, cf. T.P. Doherty, A.W.R. Sope, P.J. Wall, *Sex, Priests, and Secret Codes. The Catholic Church’s 2,000-Year Paper Trail of Sexual Abuse*, Volt Press, Los Angeles, 2006.

only in the Church but also in the public at large. It is an embodiment of all possible pathologies in a post-communist country.¹²⁵ Hate speech is the most fitting description of what Rydzyk is propagates, and he is not only a master in using and abusing religious rhetoric for political purposes, but has effectively created an anti-democratic model of civil society.

The Institute of National Remembrance has also played an important role. Thanks to its president, Leon Kieres, the Institute has initiated a serious debate on the legacy of totalitarianism in our country—the debate on the July 11, 1941, crime in Jedwabne and brought these events back into the Polish historical consciousness. Striving for truth, restoring it to history—this is the most important task of post-communist societies. This restoration of truth needs also to encompass an honest and impartial study of the legacy of religion.

From November 2005 when PiS (Law and Justice), the party of the brothers Kaczyński, won the elections we have observed a growing process of using this institution for ideological purposes. The symbol of this process is lustration, or verification of some social group based on the documents produced during the communist time by the secret police. The language used by political leaders (mainly former Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński) is reminiscent of the language of communist propaganda; the only difference is that instead of communist ideology we now have “the one and only” Catholic and nationalistic ideology.

It seems to me that the political success of PiS would be impossible without the support of extremely chauvinistic and, in fact, fundamentalist oriented Catholics. As a result we have a kind of mutual interdependence of these two forces in the public sphere. For example: In the last time there were efforts made to regulate the health system according to Church doctrine. Physicians are harassed by the police, searching out so-called “illegal abortions,” and the authorities use anti-democratic methods like investigating women patients, confiscating confidential reports from the hospitals etc.

¹²⁵ A good analysis of the language used not only in “Radio Maria” but also in the media related to it could be found in: S. Kowalski, M. Tulli, *Zamiast procesu: Raport o nienawiści*, Warszawa, 2003.

For many Poles the Catholic Church is just one of many institutions defending its own interests, like any other political party. But it is not just one more party, because it is the only one that has really been successful, because politicians from all the other parties look to the Church for support, even the ex-communists of SLD. There are also those who see in the Church, and religion in general, a great opportunity for the rebirth of the Polish society. The main reason is rooted in Poland's multiethnic, multicultural and multireligious historical tradition, which was supported not only by the Jagiellonian dynasty but also by the Catholic hierarchy. The problem is that only a few Catholics are willing to see this tradition as a real chance for modern Poland. On the one hand, Polish society is not entirely prepared for democracy and is willing to accept authoritarian leaders. And, on the other hand, the Church surrenders to the temptation to use politics in order to achieve its own aims.

But in order to embrace this perspective it is necessary to change the paradigm of Polish Catholicism. As happened during the Jagiellonian Commonwealth in the fourteenth century, and in the Catholic Enlightenment of the eighteenth century however, we have to look for inspiration outside of Poland. I see a real chance for separating religion from politics in circles where inter-religious dialogue is taking place. Today I find examples of such dialogue in Asia and in the United States where interreligious dialogue is a daily life experience of religious people. In Poland, where 97% of the population self-identifies as Catholic, it is hard to see a sphere for a dialogue.

Chapter 7.

Distributive Justice: Aspects of Making Democracy in Poland

As I understand it, distributive justice cannot be applied in a society where there are privileged groups and essential institutions do not function or are controlled by political one-sidedness, and are too weak to enforce basic legislation. Therefore, citizens remain unprotected, and basic democratic rights are not guaranteed. Distributive justice, as I see it, relates not only to economic matters, but also to the exercise of civil rights in a democratic society.

The transformation of the political system in Poland after 1989, and the slow adaptation of its central institutions (parliament, the law, courts, and so on) to the democratic model, facilitated the acceptance of certain normative principles. Nevertheless, the “allocation of benefits and burdens of economic activity”¹²⁶ is still problematic. To complete the definition of Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy we have to add also political and cultural activity, which is also a part of distributive justice. In this chapter, I focus my attention on five elements: the dysfunction of state institutions; the emergence of populist parties; the return of nationalistic ideology; the place of religion; and, mass media and pseudo-scientific historical research by state institutions. It is hopefully clear that I will not be dealing directly with the concept of distributive justice, but rather will speak about certain aspects of social life in Poland that are perceived as injustices by some groups and considered just by others.

The complexity of implementing democratic rules in Poland is illustrated by frequent, drastic changes in the ruling parties. The volatility of Polish political parties is not a result of the democratic process, but rather of the emotional fluctuation of voters, which

¹²⁶ Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, in:
<http://www.science.uva.nl/~seop/entries/justice-distributive/>

produced some collateral effects as: political disillusionment skepticism, and the emergence of the extremist parties Self Defense (Samoobrona) and League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin). I will not concentrate on analyzing this phenomenon which is, after all, not exclusive to Polish politics. In that context it is good to remember Ernesto Laclau's in his book *On Populist Reason*¹²⁷. (The inability of the left to deal with social and ethnic tensions raised the popularity of populist groups). Since November 2007 there has been a relatively reasonable government led by Civic Platform (Platforma Obywatelska) with Donald Tusk as the Prime Minister. But the possibility that the populist party Law and Justice (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość) will come back to power, along with its leader Jarosław Kaczyński, cannot be discounted. There is also now a new initiative, The Movement of National Turn (Ruch Przełomu Narodowego), created by Jerzy Robert Nowak and supported by Catholic extremists gathered around Tadeusz Rydzyk and his anti-Semitic sponsor from Uruguay, Jan Kobyłański. This new movement tries to fulfill the void after the disappearance of LPP by articulating the most xenophobic and chauvinistic tendencies in Polish society. All these parties are right wing oriented, from the liberal Civic Platform to the nationalistic Movement of National Turn—all are close related to the Catholic Church. On the left, in the parliament, there is only the Democratic Left Alliance (Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej) which is still trying to recover from its failure in the last elections, and recently nominated a new leader, Grzegorz Napieralski. Napieralski takes as a model the leader of the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, but the historical differences between these two countries make me doubt a possible political success in the future of the Polish left wing.

1. First institutions.

The most important challenges to Poland's new democracy were recently articulated by Leszek Balcerowicz, a liberal economist, and the main architect of the economic transformation in Poland after 1989. The main obstacle in the implementation of the free market is,

¹²⁷ E. Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, Verso, London, 2005.

according to Balcerowicz, a bloated social state, weak law system, mainly in the activity of the public prosecution, and a lack of participation in the democratic system.

In a speech delivered at Warsaw University in March, 2008, Balcerowicz stated: “What differentiates Poland most from economic miracle countries—i.e. those that grew at the rate of 5-6% not only over three years, but over 30 years—is a bloated social state. This state generates high expenditures, high taxes, budget deficits and low rates of employment”. It is worth mentioning that the present economic prosperity in Poland is more a result of the financial support of the European Union than an outcome of dynamism of the Polish economy. A real problem is the high rate of emigration of young Poles to other European countries, the collapsing health system, and the low average national income. The cost of living is on par with that of wealthier states in the European Union, but the average income is three times lower. Monthly salaries are barely adequate for those in the public sector, not to mention those working in the service industry.

Besides the problem of the welfare state, there is a severe problem in the judicial system in Poland, which is under strain and needs to be improved. According to Balcerowicz:

The tasks of institutional economics comprise also the study of a system of incentives that motivates public prosecutors to accept appropriate risks both when they neglect matters that should be investigated and when they initiate prosecution proceedings without due cause.

Behind this statement there is a long list of legal abuses strictly connected to the political dependence of the public prosecutors. I would add that also the Catholic Church is exercising a political influence, which can hardly be reconciled with democratic rules. And finally, a practical factor deserves our attention. Poland has a problem with low levels of popular participation in the democratic process. This has to do with the political and social immaturity of citizens. Balcerowicz again notes:

Let us have an ambitious goal: Even the most populist politician who would like to limit law and order, to inhibit

privatization, to increase insecure expenses, to permit a populist law, will not dare to propose these kinds of postulates for fear of losing elections.

We can describe this program as a democratic minimum, but we have a real problem implementing even this minimum. At this time, I am still not sure whether or not Polish society has really absorbed democratic values and rules; participation in elections is weak, public prosecutors are afraid to exercise their legal authority, and the influence of populist politicians is still too high. This raises the question of whether the main architect of Poland's economic transformation is not, himself, responsible for many of the illnesses he so clearly describes? It seems that liberal economy economics is not necessarily the best response to the post-communist disaster; perhaps a stronger welfare state could help overcome the economic and cultural difficulties that were created by the transformation process.

Why populism?

An important historical comment to what Balcerowicz had said could be found in the evolution of the Solidarity movement. David Ost, in *The Defeat of Solidarity: Anger and Politics in Post-communist Europe*¹²⁸ asked some important questions about how the fall of Communism and the subsequent transition to capitalism in Eastern Europe affected the people who lived through it, and how their anger affected the quality of the democratic system that subsequently emerged? Poland offers a particularly provocative case, for it was there where workers most famously seemed to have won, thanks to the role of the Solidarity trade union. And yet, within a few short years, they had clearly lost. An oppressive communist regime gave way to a capitalist society that embraced economic and political inequality, leaving many workers frustrated and angry. Their leaders first ignored them, then began to fear them, and finally tried to marginalize them. In turn, workers rejected their liberal leaders, and

¹²⁸ D. Ost, *The Defeat of Solidarity Anger and Politics in Postcommunist Europe*, Cornell University Press, 2005.

the door was opened for right-wing nationalists to take control of Solidarity. To the Polish edition of his book Ost added an explanation of why he wrote this book: “The whole world can learn a lot from the Polish example about the necessary conditions for stable, inclusive, democratic policy”¹²⁹. I am not sure if Ost is right, as I am of the opinion that the current post-Solidarity parties are a good illustration of the failures and mistakes made by Solidarity.

Ost tells a fascinating story about the evolution of post-communist society in Eastern Europe. Informed by years of fieldwork in Polish factory towns, interviews with workers, labor activists, and politicians, his book gives a voice to those who have not been heard. But even more, Ost proposes an original theory regarding the role of anger in politics and shows why such voices matter, and how they profoundly affect political outcomes. Portraying Poland’s experiences, Ost describes a phenomenon relevant to democratization throughout Eastern Europe, dealing mainly with the conflict between liberal intellectuals and “angry” workers who do not understand what has caused the deterioration of their economic lives. Nationalistic and populist politicians articulate this anger, explaining why they are so popular. Similar descriptions of the growing popularity of populist parties in other European countries are discussed in *On the Political*, by Chantal Mouffe¹³⁰. The post-Marxists thinkers, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, are among the ideological mentors of the Polish new left group Critical Politics (Krytyka Polityczna) and its leader Sławomir Sierakowski. I believe that The Movement of National Turn on the right side and Political Critic on the left will shape the political scene in the next years because both groups are very outspoken in articulating their respective political goals.

The return of nationalist ideologies

The overview of the political, cultural and even religious situation of the post-communist countries is masterfully presented by the Romanian and American political scientist and sociologist

¹²⁹ D. Ost, *Kłeska Solidarności. Gniew i polityka w postkomunistycznej Europie*, Warszawa, 2007, p. 18.

¹³⁰ Ch. Mouffe, *On the Political*, New York, 2005.

—Vladimir Tismaneanu. His book, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism and Myth in Post-communist Europe*¹³¹ deals with the correlation between democracy and nationalism, the presence of mythological thinking in politics, attempts to solve social and political problems in irrational ways rather than with public and open debate—all of which are the most important issues facing this particular part of the world. The Polish scholar Maria Bobrownicka offers an interesting illustration of this topic from an historical and cultural point of view. In her book *The Drug of Myth: Essays on National and Cultural Consciousness of Western and South Slavs*¹³² she gives a fascinating account of a Slavic mentality deeply rooted in romantic mythology. She offers a kind of literary and philosophical deconstruction of foundational myths on which nation-states are based. The most important and negative influence of Slavic myths was the falsification of historical evidence and sources concerning the character of the native tradition of Slavic nations¹³³. The most clear example of this is “historical policy,” which consists of choosing a few elements from the past in order to confirm the current policy (e.g., in Serbia the “holy” battle against the Turks in Kosovo in the fourteenth century, in Poland the “providential” role played by Catholic Church, etc.). The collapse of Communism in 1989 generated a new situation in this part of Europe. The totalitarian system was succeeded by democracy. But the change of the political system touched only one level of social life. More important and challenging was to transform culture and the core concepts of the previous system. The radical change connected with the collapse of communism, and the discrediting of the ideology inspired by this system, created a deep need for demythologizing the social consciousness of Slavic nations. In the first place, this demythologization is linked to categories of political thinking¹³⁴. It is not hard

¹³¹ V. Tismaneanu, *Fantasies of Salvation: Democracy, Nationalism, and Myth in Post-Communist Europe: Democracy, Nationalism and Myth in Post-communist Europe*, Princeton, 1998.

¹³² M. Bobrownicka, *Narkotyki mitu. Szkice o świadomości narodowej i kulturowej Słowian zachodnich i południowych*, Kraków, 1995.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

to imagine what it means on a practical level, in education, in media, and even in religion. For the moment, we can observe a deep crisis in all these dimensions of social life.

The importance of demythologizing the nation is apparent when evaluating the last decade of the twentieth century, during the Balkans war in the former Yugoslavia. But mythological thinking shaped the mutual relationship between different ethnic groups in places must further afield than just the Balkans. Almost every post-communist European country has its own nationalistic movement. Of course, such groups also exist in Western Europe, however there they are more marginal. In Central and Eastern Europe they are more dangerous, because democracy there is more fragile and less resistant to demagogical argumentation.

The place of religion

“Where are the borders of hypocrisy?”¹³⁵, Magdalena Środa asked recently in the newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Her question considered the presence of the Catholic Church in public life in Poland. For two years in Poland we observed a kind of alliance between PiS (the ruling party from 2005-2007) and the Catholic Church that was a serious threat to democracy. Even after the elections at the end of 2007, that threat still endures. The main reason is the lack of political will to defend civil rights, and sometimes even human rights, against the Church.

Was the evolution of State-Church relations in Poland inevitable? I would like to leave it as an open question. The answer is not easy, however a comparison with the Catholic Church in Hungary, historically very similar to the Polish Church, can be useful. In Hungary, the Church no longer has influence in the public sphere. Maryjane Osa, whom I already quoted but I believe it is worth to repeat, stated that the Second World War and Communism strengthened the Polish Church:

Paradoxically, the war and the building of a socialist Poland carried unforeseen benefits for the Catholic Church in

¹³⁵ M. Środa, “Gdzie są granice hipokryzji?”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 13.06 (2008).

Poland. (...) With the political changes and dismantling of the latifundia, the remnants of the feudal Church disappeared. By building on wartime contact and constructing a new formal vehicle for the Church, a dynamic organization emerged that was well-prepared to deal with adversity.¹³⁶

I hope that an open and pluralistic society will reduce the political power of the Catholic Church in Poland, because today that Church is polarizing society.

The development of the relations or even the tension between religion and politics is still *in statu nascendi* and can take different paths. In shaping this path an important role is played by mass media.

Mass media and the problematic historical policy of the state

I do not want to enter into the complex field of the mutual interdependence of politics, media and the society, but as an example I would like to mention an interesting and important debate on the Jewish-Polish relations. It seems to me an important aspect of distributive justice in Poland, no less than the role played by media and educational institutions. Emblematic was the debate initiated by the books by Jan Tomasz Gross: *Neighbors* (2000) and *Fear* (2008). The creation of the Institute of National Remembrance and its approach to dealing with the recent past is also significant. Jan Grabowski, a Polish historian working in Ottawa wrote an article on “Rewriting the History of Polish-Jewish Relations from a Nationalist Perspective”¹³⁷. A similar analysis of re-writing history with an ideological and political agenda in Poland could have been written also on relations with other nations—with Russia, Germany, Lithuania, Ukraine, The Czech Republic.

And this is exactly the problem. As far as I can see, in Poland only small group of left-oriented intellectuals is willing to deal with

¹³⁶ M. Osa, “Resistance, Persistence, and Change: The Transformation of the Catholic Church in Poland”, in: EEPS, vol. 3, no 2 Spring 1989, p. 296.

¹³⁷ J. Grabski, “Rewriting the History of Polish-Jewish Relations from a Nationalist Perspective: The Recent Publications of the Institute of National Remembrance”, in: Yad Vashem Studies no 36 (2008).

the past in honest way. The majority are defending “historical policy,” in which Polish heroism is at the center! Polish intellectuals on the right are close to the Catholic Church, and they promote not only the official teaching of this institution but also nationalistic ideology.

III. Polish-Jewish Relations After the Holocaust

Chapter 8.

Why do Polish Catholics Have Problems Facing the Holocaust?

This question—why do Polish Catholics have problems facing the Holocaust?—is one I address above all to myself. Dealing with the aftermath of the Holocaust is, of course, a problem for everyone, not just for Polish Catholics. It is a problem for all Christians, all Jews, and for that matter, all humanity. Until now, the fullest, most elaborate responses have been provided by Jewish thinkers, particularly by survivors, although there have been attempts made by a few Christian theologians as well.

Several Polish historians (Feliks Tych, Jan T. Gross, Dariusz Libionka), sociologists (Ireneusz Krzemiński), philosophers (Zygmunt Bauman), literary critics (Kazimierz Wyka, Jan Błóński), and particularly poets (Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Różewicz, Wisława Szymborska) have formulated important answers as to why the Holocaust took place in Poland and why the Polish population behaved as it did. But we rarely find Polish Catholics dealing with the Holocaust *as* Catholics. This is an enigma I will try to confront in my paper. When we consider that the Second World War was, and still is, an important element of contemporary Polish identity and the Catholic Church, the absence of such a response becomes all the more perplexing and necessary. The Holocaust remains scarce in Polish literature. Only in recent years has there been a growing interest in the Shoah.

Listen to the Silent God

I consider myself a pluralist Christian: I take as my starting point the notion that no religion is superior to any other, or even to atheism. As a believer I try to understand the problem of the Holocaust from a theological perspective, although I am aware that

philosophers rather than theologians have been more reflective on this subject. I spent many years studying the Christian theological tradition and I have to admit that the problem of the Shoah is rarely taken into account. To be honest, I must admit that my teachers—and not just those in Poland—were too busy trying to present the complicated history of Catholic theology, most especially the impact of Vatican II on the relation of the Church with the modern world, to pay adequate attention to the Holocaust. Such a broad mandate left them, and us, no space for the study of other religious traditions such as Judaism, never mind the complex, particular problem of the Shoah. Given these circumstances, the Shoah became what I would term (for want of a better way to express this) “my private business.” With such a small body of commentary to turn to, I instead tried to look directly to the sacred texts for answers.

As a trained theologian, I searched first to find a context, some kind of answer for the Holocaust in “sacred history.” I looked for answers in different religious traditions; I hoped to find confirmation of the passionate care of the Creator towards His creatures. I found some examples, which I would now like to cite. The first is from the Hebrew Bible where we read: “I have seen how cruelly my people are being treated in Egypt; I have heard them cry out to be rescued from their sufferings, and so I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians.” The message of the Hebrew Bible is clear—God is not only interested in His people, He is also able to intervene in history and rescue them!

The same message can be found in the Christian New Testament where Jesus of Nazareth is presented as the Messiah, the final Redeemer and the fulfillment of all the promises given by God to the Jews. Similar conviction we can find in *The Bhagavad Gita*, a holy text of Hinduism, demonstrates a similar conviction: “Whenever there is falling away from the true law and an upsurge of unlawfulness, then, Bharta, I emit myself. I come into being age after age, to protect the virtuous and to destroy evil-doers, to establish a firm basis for the true law” (IV, 7-8). Those texts are an expression of the unshaken certitude that God is taking care of all humanity.

The experience of the Holocaust is not compatible with that optimistic perspective. Or, perhaps, we should interpret the idea of

God differently as Hans Jonas suggested in his inspiring article *The Concept of God after Auschwitz*:

After Auschwitz we can assert with greater force than ever before that an omnipotent deity would have to be either not good or totally unintelligible. But if God is to be intelligible in some manner and to some extent (and to this we must hold), then His goodness must be compatible with the existence of evil, and this is only if He is not *all*-powerful. Only then can we uphold that He is intelligible and good, and there is yet evil in the world.¹³⁸

Jonas offers a new concept of God, close to the ancient Kabbalistic idea of *tzimtzum*—God giving space to creation and giving to humanity the freedom to shape the world.

For reasons decisively prompted by contemporary experience I entertain the idea of a God who for a time—the time of the ongoing world process—has divested Himself of any power to interfere with the physical course of things, and Who responds to the impact on His being of worldly events—not *beyad chazakah ubizeroah netuyah* [with strong hand and stretched-out arm], but with the mutely insistent appeal of His unfulfilled aim.¹³⁹

A similar notion can be found in Abraham Joshua Heschel's writings, particularly in two passionate books *God in Search of Man* and *The Prophets*.

To my Christian ear this concept is not totally alien. In the letters of Paul we can find something comparable: "He [Jesus Christ] was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross." Following Paul's interpretation, Jesus' road to salvation is a total resignation of life. Jesus, in choosing this way, did so intentionally. The same, however, cannot be said about the victims of the Shoah who were dehumanized and deprived of any choice.

¹³⁸ H. Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz", in: *Out of the Whirlwind. A Reader of the Holocaust Literature*, ed. A. H. Friedlander, New York, 1968, p. 472.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

The problem lies exactly in that point. For Christians it is almost impossible to separate the suffering of the Holocaust's victims from the death of Jesus on the cross, because this is what Christian theology taught them. This interpretation is, of course, incomprehensible for the Jews. But it explains why Catholic theologians and Popes, dealing with the Shoah and the suffering of the Jewish people, are placing it in a larger context that is Christian in its assumptions. In the Catholic tradition it is natural to heed the voice of authority. To be a Catholic basically means the willingness to recognize the teaching of the Pope as obligatory for one's own conscience. This is the reason why I am presenting the official position of the current Pope toward the Shoah.

Pope Benedict XVI in his speech delivered in Auschwitz on May 28th 2006¹⁴⁰ said:

To speak in this place of horror, in this place where unprecedented mass crimes were committed against God and man, is almost impossible—and it is particularly difficult and troubling for a Christian, for a Pope from Germany. In a place like this, words fail; in the end, there can only be a dread silence—a silence, which is itself a heartfelt cry to God: Why, Lord, did you remain silent?

This humble attitude, on the one hand, evoked admiration from Christians and Jews in Poland, but on the other hand, does not help us understand why the tragedy happened, nor the role humans (particularly Germans) played in it. So the head of the Catholic Church, too, has no answer.

When Benedict XVI quoted his predecessor we did not become wiser, since the Polish Pope spoke only about Poles: “Six million Poles lost their lives during the Second World War: a fifth of the nation.” John Paul II said this during his visit in Auschwitz in the

¹⁴⁰ All quotations from:

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060528_auschwitz-birkenau_en.html.

year 1979 and since then this phrase was frequently quoted and gave occasions to many different interpretations¹⁴¹.

What both Popes had to say in Auschwitz became the official explanation of Polish Catholics: we were victims; we suffered. Moreover, Polish Catholics were not able to identify within the number given by the Pope, that three of those six million Poles Jews perished. Considered from this perspective, for Polish Catholics the Holocaust is a part of their painful national history. This kind of historiography is hardly compatible with the facts, and with interpretations given by historians. Moreover, testimonies from that time present a different picture. The more I read the Pope, the less I understand, because it is really problematic how to find a place for dialogue, and for mutual understanding with Jews, who have a different interpretation of the same event.

Perhaps James Carroll the author of *Constantine's Sword* gives an explanation when he writes:

As is obvious by now, I had been raised with an anachronistic idea of Judaism: the Scribes and the Pharisees worship at the Temple, the stereotype of the vengeful Old Testament God. Catholics like me knew nothing of the living tradition of Jewish thought and observance, ignorance that reflected the Christian assertion that after Jesus, Israel had been superseded by the "new Israel", the Church.¹⁴²

In this perspective it is easy for a Catholic not to see Jews at all:

The Jew's job is to disappear. From the Christian point of view, just by continuing to exist, Jews dissent. Because of the threat it poses to the faith of the Church, that dissent can be

¹⁴¹ Cf. A critical view of John Paul II's attitude toward Jews: "The late Pope made some noteworthy gestures toward Jews; he met with Jewish communities all over the world and gave friendly messages on television. But a deeper look into his written and spoken words reveals a strong will to Christianize the Shoah and to introduce many ambiguities rather than reach clarifications". Sergio I. Minerbi, "Pope John Paul II and the Jews; An Evaluation", in: *Jewish Political Studies Review* 18: 1-2 (Spring 2006).

¹⁴² J. Carroll, *Constantine's Sword. The Church and the Jews*, Boston, 2001, p. 47.

defined by Christians as the core of Jewish belief, which of course continues the insult.¹⁴³

The authors of an important Jewish statement, *Dabru Emet*, from the year 2000, represented an important step in mutual Jewish-Christian understanding. In it, they tried to present a balanced picture of the period of the Holocaust, while acknowledging the role of Christian anti-Judaism in the preparation of the Nazi ideology:

Without the long history of Christian anti-Judaism and Christian violence against Jews, Nazi ideology could not have taken hold nor could it have been carried out. Too many Christians participated in, or were sympathetic to, Nazi atrocities against Jews. Other Christians did not protest sufficiently against these atrocities.

The second part of this important section of *Dabru Emet* indicates the complex relationship between Jews and Christian in Nazi times:

But Nazism itself was not an inevitable outcome of Christianity. If the Nazi extermination of the Jews had been fully successful, it would have turned its murderous rage more directly to Christians. We recognize with gratitude those Christians who risked or sacrificed their lives to save Jews during the Nazi regime. With that in mind, we encourage the continuation of recent efforts in Christian theology to repudiate unequivocally contempt of Judaism and the Jewish people.

I'm not going as far as Daniel Goldhagen in his last book, *A Moral Reckoning: The Role of the Catholic Church in the Holocaust and its Unfulfilled Duty of Repair*¹⁴⁴, who claims the need for a radical deconstruction of the Church, but I do recognize the necessity for an admission of the negative role of many Christians during the Holocaust. I also recognize that it is a problem emergent from Catholic theology, Christian dogmas, and long centuries of official teaching of contempt toward Jews. That said, Christian

¹⁴³ Op. Cit. p. 50.

¹⁴⁴ New York, 2002.

responsibility is not the one and only explanation for the Holocaust. Let us read again from the words of the current, German Pope:

Pope John Paul II came here as a son of the Polish people. I come here today as a son of the German people. (...) a son of that people over which a ring of criminals rose to power by false promises of future greatness and the recovery of the nation's honor, prominence and prosperity, but also through terror and intimidation, with the result that our people were used and abused as an instrument of their thirst for destruction and power. Yes, I could not fail to come here.

This urge to come to Auschwitz has nothing to do with the suffering of the Jewish people, but for purification of the Christian conscience. It is obvious that for the German Pope, Christians—Poles and Germans—were also victims. We have to bear in mind, however, that “a ring of criminals rose to power” (as the Pope named the Nazis), were elected by those same German Christians to be their political leaders. In other words, I do not find in Benedict XVI's speech an answer to the fundamental question: “who is guilty?” This question was first raised by Karl Jaspers, an agnostic philosopher and one of the few German intellectuals not involved with Nazism, immediately after the war in his work, *Die Schuldfrage*¹⁴⁵. Rather than search for answers, the German Pope is only complaining.

And while he poses difficult questions, he has not tried to overcome the old theology, which is no longer adequate. He uses outdated, unsuitable tools, unlike Hans Jonas. For Jonas also has questions, but he is simultaneously seeking and proposing solutions, including the radical one that we have to change our concept of God¹⁴⁶.

¹⁴⁵ K. Jaspers, *The Question of German Guilt*, New York, 1961.

¹⁴⁶ Asking for comments I received an interesting note from Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin which with his permission I quote: “Your call to “change the theology” to deal with the Holocaust is good. But Jewish thinkers did not have to do so. Jonas, as you indicate, was using ideas from Jewish theology, specifically kabbalistic theology, though his approach seems too deistic to me. Heschel always said that the idea of divine omnipotence was not a biblical or rabbinic concept, but one imported into Judaism from Islamic philosophical theology in the middle ages. Therefore, the idea that God is not omnipotent in this world, and

The position of Catholic theology is surprising, again in the words of Benedict: How many questions arise in this place! Constantly the questions come up: Where was God in those days? Why was he silent? How could he permit this endless slaughter, this triumph of evil?" Furthermore, when the Pope mentioned the Shoah he was "contextualizing" this event into a larger, and in fact, Christian context: "By destroying Israel, by the Shoah, they ultimately wanted to tear up the taproot of the Christian faith and to replace it with a faith of their own invention: faith in the rule of man, the rule of the powerful".

What we have in this interpretation is a kind of common destiny of Christians and Jews in front of the Nazi "ring of criminals." Johann-Baptist Metz, a German Catholic theologian, offers a different perspective that he formulated in the year 1984, a perspective which takes the form of four theses. First, "Christian theology after Auschwitz must—at long last—be guided by the insight that Christians can form and sufficiently understand their identity only in the face of the Jews"¹⁴⁷. To Metz it is important to underline that this identity has to be established in front of Jews and not of Judaism, and so in front of the face of a concrete person and not in front of an abstract religion. He goes further still: "Christians can protect their identity only in front of and together with the history of the beliefs of the Jews"¹⁴⁸. In other words: "forgetting" Jews in the history of Christianity represents an alteration of Christianity as such. The third thesis is the following: "Christian theology after Auschwitz must stress anew the Jewish dimension in Christian belief and must overcome the forced blocking-out of the Jewish heritage within Christianity"¹⁴⁹. According to Metz: "The problem, with a view toward Auschwitz, is not merely a revision of the Christian theology of Judaism, but of a revision of Christian theology altogether." And

that he suffers with humankind, is not a new idea, but one deeply rooted in biblical and rabbinic thought. Jews therefore have no need to change their theology, but only to emphasize some teachings rather than others".

¹⁴⁷ J.-B. Metz, "Facing the Jews. Christian Theology after Auschwitz", in: "Concilium" 175 5(1984), p.26.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 28.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 31.

his final thesis: “Christian theology after Auschwitz must regain the biblical-messianic concepts for its ecumenical endeavors”¹⁵⁰. In other words, there will be no unity amongst Christians without dialogue with Jews.

Johann-Baptist Metz expressed the same idea in 1997 during the conference “Shoah Between Interpretation and Remembrance,” in a more self-referential way, and that makes his contribution as a Catholic and German theologian really unique¹⁵¹. From Metz’s paper I would like to call to mind one question, posed in a very similar to that of Adorno’s: “I asked myself, after this catastrophe, ‘Does there still exist a God to whom it is possible to pray?’”¹⁵² Metz is also looking for answers in the history of Catholic theology, which according to him was not sensitive enough to the historical dimension¹⁵³. To his question the Catholic theologian has no answers. There is only one possible conclusion: God was silent during the Holocaust and theologians—experts in dealing with divine questions—leave us empty handed. For a Polish Catholic like me, this is a problem.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 33.

¹⁵¹ I was trying to elaborate this problem in “Holokaust – problem Boga czy człowieka?” (The Holocaust the Problem of God or of Man) in: “Państwo i Społeczeństwo”, V: 2005 nr 4, pp. 139-152.

¹⁵² J.-B. Metz, *Teologia polityczna*, Kraków, 2000, “Należę do pokolenia Niemców, którzy uczyli się wolno – zbyt wolno – pojmować siebie jako pokolenie ‘po Auschwitz’ i staram się uwzględniać to w moim sposobie uprawiania teologii, na ile starcza mi sił. Auschwitz oznaczało dla mnie przez lata przerażenie we wszystkich znanych nam odmianach teologii, strach, który okazał się nagle tak wyraźny, że mówienie o Bogu bez określonego kontekstu jest mową pustą i ślepą. Stawiałem sobie więc pytanie, czy istnieje Bóg, do którego można się jeszcze modlić po takiej katastrofie?” p. 235.

¹⁵³ Ibid, “Czy w jej (teologii chrześcijańskiej) spojrzenia na historię nie używała ona zawsze zbyt ‘mocnych’ kategorii, które wszystkie historyczne zranienia, wszystkie rozdarte rany, wszystkie upadki i katastrofy zbyt szybko pokrywała i które oszczędzały bólu wspomnienia mówieniu przez nią o Bogu? Czy co najmniej *Shoah* nie powinna była działać jako ultimatum dla zbyt łagodnego teologicznego obejścia się z historią? Czyż co najmniej teraz nie powinno się pojawić pytanie o miejsce i rangę przerażenia pośrodku teologicznego logosu? Czyż teologia nie powinna być co najmniej teraz przekonana o tym, że nie leczy ona wszystkich ran?” pp. 238-239.

The human silence

One of the most striking things about the Polish reaction to the Shoah is ... silence. Nevertheless, it has not been a total silence. We have some very eloquent voices describing the tragedy of the Polish Jews as witnessed by their Polish neighbors. I can mention the powerful reports by Jan Karski, who was one of the first to let Western Europe and America know what was going on with the Jews in Central and East Europe. We know how the Vatican reacted concerning the fate of Jews in Poland; we know better and better how the Catholic Church, as an institution, behaved at the time. But these historical data are not the center of my attention.

In this regard a book by Feliks Tych, *The Long Shadow of the Shoah*, in which he collected and analyzed some memoirs written during the time of the war, is well worth reading¹⁵⁴. One of them is a *Memorial from the Time of Occupation* by Zygmunt Klukowski, a physician from Szczebrzeszyn¹⁵⁵. According to Tych, it is the most important testimony of that time. Let me recall some of his observations. In August 8th 1942 he noted: “Many Poles, mainly boys, are helping them [Germans] to find Jews”¹⁵⁶. A bit later on October 24th he wrote: “With the help of civilians policemen take Jews from different places, kill them right away or take them to the Jewish cemeteries and there they kill them (...) A lot of citizens of the town took everything possible without any scruples”¹⁵⁷. Kazimierz Wyka made similar observations in his *Życie na niby* [Unreal life], although in more general terms¹⁵⁸: “The methods in

¹⁵⁴ Feliks Tych, *Długi cień Zagłady*, Warszawa, 1999.

¹⁵⁵ Zygmunt Klukowski, *Dziennik z lat okupacji*, Lublin, 1958.

¹⁵⁶ “Sporo ludności polskiej, zwłaszcza chłopaków, gorliwie pomaga przy wyszukiwaniu Żydów”, Tych, p. 34

¹⁵⁷ “Przy pomocy ludności cywilnej żandarmi i policjanci wyciągają Żydów z najrozmaitszych dziur, rozstrzeliwują na miejscu lub prowadzą na kirkut i tam zabijają (...). Sporo mieszkańców miasta bez żadnego wstydu rabowało przy tym, co się tylko dało”. pp. 34-35

¹⁵⁸ Skrót bowiem gospodarczo-moralnego stanowiska przeciętnego Polaka wobec tragedii Żydów wygląda tak: Niemcy mordując Żydów popełnili zbrodnię. My byśmy tego nie zrobili. Za tę zbrodnię Niemcy poniosą karę, Niemcy splamili swoje sumienie, ale my – my już teraz mamy same korzyści i w przyszłości

which the Germans exterminated the Jews will be a burden for their conscience. The reactions to those methods will be a burden for our conscience”¹⁵⁹.

In poetry, probably best known is the poem written in the spring of 1943 by Czesław Miłosz, “Campo di fiori,” in which he described the reaction of Poles to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The interpretation of this poem, by Jan Błoński in 1987, was the occasion for the first deep discussion in Poland on Jewish-Polish relations¹⁶⁰. But I would like to recall a poem written in 1948 by Tadeusz Różewicz “Warkoczyk” [Pigtail] which was not discussed. (I could, of course chose different poems by Różewicz, or different poets, but I chose this one because [fill in some explanation here]).

*“When all the women in the transport
had their heads shaved
four workmen with brooms made of birch twigs
swept up
and gathered up hair*

*Behind clean glass
the stiff hair lies
of those suffocated in gas chambers
there are pins and side combs
in this hair*

*The hair is not shot through with light
is not parted by the breeze
is not touched by any hand
or rain or lips*

*In huge chests
clouds of dry hair
of those suffocated*

będziemy mieli same korzyści, nie brudząc sumienia, nie plamiąc dłoni krwią”. Kazimierz Wyka, *Życie na niby*, Kraków, 1984, p. 157.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, “Formy, jakimi Niemcy likwidowali Żydów, spadają na ich sumienia. Reakcja na te formy spada jednak na nasze sumienia”.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. Jan Błoński, *Biedni Polacy patrzą na getto* (Poor Poles Looking at the Ghetto), Kraków, 1996.

*and faded plait
a pigtail with a ribbon
pulled at school
by naughty boys.
The Museum, Auschwitz, 1948¹⁶¹*

This is a poet's memory, and it is likely that the most touching memory of the Holocaust is preserved in Polish poetry.

The memory of young people was different. Jan Tomasz Gross, the author of important books about the World War II era, observed in his most recent book that after the war:

As Świda-Zięba points out in the book, Polish youth devoted little thought to the Holocaust. The destruction of Polish Jewry was not registered by the generation of young Polish intelligentsia as a subject deserving serious examination. 'I can only note this as an astonishing fact today, which I do not comprehend fully, but it was indeed so' (p. 94).¹⁶²

I would like to look more closely to the observation of at Świda-Zięba's observation. For years I was convinced that the "Jewish problem" was related to the manipulation of politicians, and also a result of a calculated amnesia on the part of the Catholic Church. Świda-Zięba, a leading Polish sociologist, offers a different explanation:

It seems to me that examination of the 'Jewish problem' reveals paradoxes of a generation's mentality (worthy of psychological analysis) dealing with the problem of 'time'. The 'time after the war' is strongly experienced, but has not a final shape; it is undefined time. The time of the war' is perceived as 'the school of life', but is experienced as 'separated' from 'my life'. The 'time before the war' (which was discovered by those youngsters after the war) became vivid. Consequently, it created a mechanism of 'time leap' (with frequent imitation of the parents' attitude), as if the

¹⁶¹ T. Różewicz, *Selected Poems*, trans. by Adam Czerniawski, Kraków, 1995.

¹⁶² J. T. Gross, *Fear. Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz – An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 188.

reality of the war and the present do not exist. I can only note this as an astonishing fact today, which I do not comprehend fully, but it was indeed so.¹⁶³

I am not sure that this is a good explanation, but at least it is an attempt. It demonstrates a desire to forget the horror of the war in order to be fully involved in constructing and shaping the present, and the future. But still, it is hard to understand why the tragedy of the Jewish people was excluded from the memory of those people. In any case, I have to add that in fact it is a common experience of my generation, as well. The “Jewish problem” did not exist in our memory either. Today we try to deal with this topic, we are not astonished anymore, our perception of history is less enigmatic. We know why, as Poles, we were and are unwilling to confront the shadow of our history.

A year ago I gave a lecture in Tel Aviv, which I ended with a personal note and that I will now repeat:

I would like to share with you my experience of Jewish-Christian dialogue in Poland, the country which I come from, and where I was born and grew up. My small town—Narol—is remembered in Jewish history for two reasons. In 1648 Chmielnicki’s Cossacks killed all its inhabitants, including 12,000 Jews, and during WWII, not far from Narol, Germans perpetrated the most dark deed in our history—the death camp Belżec, where in less than one year (from February to November 1942) almost 600,000 Jews perished. But this part of the history of my town was long unknown to me. My awareness of the Holocaust was affected by a calculated amnesia that permeated Polish society, especially the post-war generation. The founders of “the best system,” took care that Polish young people would remember only the martyrology of the Polish nation with a strictly limited remembrance of Jews and others. Thus, although I was born in 1956, I heard about the Holocaust for the first time when

¹⁶³ H. Świda-Ziemba, *Urwany lot: Pokolenie inteligenckiej młodzieży powojennej w świetle listów i pamiętników z lat 1945-1948* (Broken Flight: The Generation of Postwar Intelligentsia Coming of Age, in the Light of Letters and Diaries from the Years 1945-1948), Kraków, 2003, p.94.

I was 18. I have to add that the same perspective was presented by the Polish Catholic Church, in which only Catholic martyrology was presented. Of course after the collapse of Communism Poland is a different country; the “Jewish question” is a topic openly discussed from different perspectives, and the book *Neighbors* by Jan Gross, plus the discussion on the Polish collaboration in the Shoah, is no longer a taboo. The same has to be said of the problem of *szmalcownicy*. I would like to recall the work of Maria Orwid and her team on Holocaust children. They started to work on the psychological consequences of posttraumatic experiences of concentration camps and Holocaust in the late fifties.¹⁶⁴

Today I’m more skeptical. Different initiatives from various individuals, Poles and Jews, are not encouraged by either official politicians or the Church’ hierarchy. In fact, the opposite is true. The book by Jan Gross, *Fear*, had already been met with violent and hysterical reaction, as opposed to reasonable critique, even before it had been published in Polish in 2008¹⁶⁵. Catholic priests involved in the Jewish-Christian dialogue are marginalized, and anti-Semitic literature is available near many churches. As far as I know, the teaching at seminaries has been relatively unchanged by new post-councilor ideas concerning Jewish-Christian relation. The so-called “Catholic media” is full of anti-Semitic ideas, anti-Semitic journalists are promoted in the state media (for example, a journalist Michalkiewicz). What has changed is that today more and more Poles are confronting this reality, and this is a significant difference between now and then.

It is necessary to deal with the whole history because it is impossible to forget. The memory of the past is coming back. “Two of the most unfortunate outcomes of World War II have been the persistence of Polish anti-Semitism which holds all Jews responsible for the problems of Poland, and a reactive Jewish anti-Polonism, which holds Poles equally responsible with the Germans, for the

¹⁶⁴ Not published: *Catholics, Jews and the teachings of Abraham Joshua Heschel*. (Tel Aviv University September 19th 2005).

¹⁶⁵ A good example: “Historia jako wycinanka” (Cut-and-Paste History) by Marek Jan Chodakiewicz, in: *Rzeczpospolita* 18-18 November 2006.

entire Holocaust. Despite the common experiences of loss and persecution during the German and Soviet occupation, the Polish and Jewish communities in Poland and elsewhere are still at odds about the meaning and interpretation of the Holocaust”¹⁶⁶. I agree with the interpretation given by John J. Hartman, an American psychiatrist who for years has worked with students at the University of Michigan, teaching them how to deal with different kind of conflict situations. At the present he is working in Poland as the founder and an activist of “Remembrance and Reconciliation Action.” According to Hartman:

The key to any reconciliation between Poles and Jews is the willingness to acknowledge the suffering of the other, to realistically accept the responsibility of one’s own group’s failures and inadequacies, and to accept and mourn the losses tangible and psychological associated with the war. This means modifying the paranoid-enemy mentality. If this were done both Poles and Jews could acknowledge their thousand-year mutual journey together in which both groups benefited more from contact with each other than if they had never met.¹⁶⁷

This positions sounds too utopian to me, so I would like to conclude with words by Yoram Kaniuk from his book *Der Letzter Berliner*. In its pages, he described the complicated relationship between Jews and Germans/Germany, but it applies just as well to relations between Poles and Jews. He wrote: “One day we will be the parts of one whole, real victims of the same tragedy. I was hoping for a dialogue but we missed it for long years. Dialogue shall come because Jews and Germans are doomed to live within each other, in one way or the other, forever. Each and every one of us is an answer to a question, which is not asked. We lived and died together for 1800 years. Together we are a riddle, which propounds riddles, and

¹⁶⁶ J. J. Hartman, *Polish-Jewish Relations and the Holocaust: a Psychological Perspective in: I Remember Every Day...The Fates of the Jews of Przemyśl during World War II*, Przemyśl, 2001, p. 283.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, p. 297.

only love-hate relations recognized as such will mend and heal each other's wounds¹⁶⁸.

Is this a satisfying conclusion? Probably not, but it is a good point of departure for further research.

¹⁶⁸ Y. Kaniuk, *Der Letzte Berliner*, Muenchen, 2002, p. 270.

Chapter 9.

Catholics, Jews and the Teachings of Abraham Joshua Heschel

Why this title?

I'm Catholic and for some years I have been deeply interested in Jewish theology, particularly in the teaching of Abraham Joshua Heschel. The topic of the relationship between Catholics and Jews is very complex and emotionally loaded, so it is good to speak indirectly, using Abraham Joshua Heschel as a kind of parable to help me understand this complex and difficult topic.

I am writing this to share some of my reflections on the possibility of a Jewish-Christian dialogue, with the thought of an eminent Jewish thinker as a background. I belong to a growing group of Christians, for whom rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel's life and thought became a vivid light and a model for religious experience and social engagement. Reading his writing is like coming back to a common—Jewish and Christian—heritage. To read Heschel means to allow his thoughts to penetrate the deepest recesses of your heart. This paper was presented in slightly different form at a meeting of Jesuits working in the field of dialogue, and I was fortunate that one of the other participants presented a paper on Martin Buber, Abraham J. Heschel, and Ignatius of Loyola, identifying similarities between those Jewish thinkers and the founder of the Jesuit Order, which provoked a good introductory discussion. I would like to recall just two questions asked by participants: 1. If Buber and Heschel are so similar to Ignatius Loyola and his *Spiritual Exercises*, what do we need Jesus Christ for? And 2. If, with *Nostra aetate* forty years ago, the Catholic Church had recognized other religions, and particularly Judaism, as having their own way of salvation for their followers why did that same Church never explicitly say that (belief in?) Jesus is not required for salvation? The Jesuits, in that meeting,

were unable to find an answer, and I think that in the Church of today, an answer could not be found¹⁶⁹.

But, before speaking about Heschel and his impact on me, I would like to remind you all of Fr. Stanisław Musiał, a Polish Jesuit, who in 1997 wrote an important essay concerning the problem of anti-Semitism in Poland: “Black is Black.” He was deeply involved in the “cross controversy in Auschwitz,” taking a clear position, which was shared by Jews and only by few Poles. For this he was strongly criticized by Cardinal Glemp, Primate of Poland and also by some Catholic media. In the meantime Fr. Musiał, unexpectedly, passed away in March 2004, but his legacy in Poland is still very (and perhaps after his death even more) vivid, particularly among Polish Jews, although not so much in the Catholic Church. It was, probably, the first time in the history of Polish Jesuits that the Jewish prayer kadish was said by a Hassid a descendent of the rabbi of Bobowa, a village not far from the place where Musiał was born, at the funeral (according to his personal wishes).

Why am I reminded of Musiał and his text? Because Jewish-Christian relations in Poland are not only a field of academic discussion, but are a problem that effects the whole of a man—his soul, his heart, his mind, and even his body. Stanisław Musiał, in a way, paid the highest price for his commitment to the Jewish-Christian dialogue and mutual understanding. He was rejected by his own institution, the Society of Jesus included, but at the same time he was considered a great friend of the Jewish people, and the state of Israel, as the current ambassador of Israel to Poland, David Peleg, recently said.

Let me end here this commemorative note. My own involvement in the field is also an emotional one. It is similar to the journey of Israeli writers coming to Poland:

A journey to Poland, in Israeli literature, is not a typical one. A person who decides to travel to Poland is not simple a tourist who wants to explore unknown places, climates,

¹⁶⁹ D. Moore, “An Ignatian Perspective on Contemporary Jewish Spirituality”, in: *Friends on the Way. Jesuits Encounter Judaism*, Th. Michel (ed.), New York, 2007, pp. 57-70.

habits, works of art etc. The decision is not a chance one, like in the case when, for example, one hesitates whether to spend their time by the beach in Greece or visit museums in Paris.

A journey to Poland in Israeli literature is a very loaded one. The narrator is not an ignorant traveler who is going to a place he does not know anything about, or to a place he has not seen before. The narrator who travels to Poland was there before, even if not physically, he was there psychologically. Even if he was born in Israel and has never been to Poland before, he comes to Poland full with knowledge, stories, stereotypes, prejudice, beliefs, pictures, smells, memories, nostalgia, pain and horror. In this respect, even for those who were not born in Poland, the journey to Poland is a return¹⁷⁰.

So for myself, becoming acquainted with Jewish theology was a kind of new reading of my own theological studies, but with a completely different perspective. Until now, for me, the central figure had been Jesus Christ—the promised Messiah—as the definitive fulfillment of the promises of the Hebrew Bible. However, by Jewish theology, he was almost completely ignored. Therefore, my question is: is it possible to reconcile both perspectives? Is it at all thinkable to pray together to the same God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

And, generally speaking, is it not a situation of a Christian theologian, who tries to read Jewish thinkers? James Carroll, describing his discovery of Abraham Joshua Heschel's thought, is using different concepts than Shoshana Ronen quoted above, but the idea behind is similar—that this encounter is a transformative one:

To read Heschel was to step aboard the endangered but still seaworthy idea that the most transforming adventure of all can be intellectual. Heschel changed my notions not only of Judaism but of religion itself, and of God... As is obvious by now, I had been raised with an anachronistic idea of Judaism: the Scribes and the Pharisees, worship at the Temple, the stereotype of the vengeful Old Testament God.

¹⁷⁰ S. Ronen, *In Pursuit of the Void. Journeys to Poland in Contemporary Israeli Literature*, Kraków, 2001, pp.45-46

Catholics like me knew nothing of the living tradition of Jewish thought and observance; ignorance that reflected the Christian assertion that after Jesus, Israel had been superseded by the ‘new Israel’, the Church. Heschel’s vital theology rooted in a biblical vision but informed by two millennia of rabbinical wisdom, was a stark rebuttal of this. The central thought of Judaism is a *living God*...The craving for God has never subsided in the Jewish soul. Heschel put words on that craving as I experienced it, requiring me to revise entirely what I thought of Judaism. He did something similar for many Catholics¹⁷¹.

Carroll is treating Heschel as his own rabbi and his perception of Heschel’s thought is a very personal one. I would like to quote him again:

When the priest at the consecration says, ‘This is the cup of the New Covenant’, he is pronouncing the Old Covenant superfluous. It’s job, after Jesus, is to leave the sanctuary. The Jew’s job is to disappear. From the Christian point of view, just by continuing to exist, Jews dissent. Because of the threat it poses to the faith of the Church, that dissent can be defined by Christians as the core of Jewish belief, which of course continues the insult¹⁷².

It is easy to criticize Carroll by saying that his perspective is shaped by his very personal approach, influenced by his decision to leave the priesthood. Nevertheless, I think that his doubts have to be taken seriously. The same has to be said about many other former priests, who left the priesthood for theological reasons—we can learn a lot from “exes.” Let me mention one more—Geze Vermes and his inspiring books *Jesus the Jew* and *The Changing Faces of Jesus*. And now, as of September 1st, 2005, I am among the “exes” too. Let us come back now to Abraham Joshua Heschel and his theology. From the variety of his well known books I will concentrate on two articles: *No Religion Is an Island* and *The God of Israel and*

¹⁷¹ J. Carroll, *Constantine’s Sword. The Church and the Jews*, Boston, 2001, p. 47.

¹⁷² Op. Cit. p. 50.

Christian Renewal. I hope to be able to clarify for you the reasons behind this choice.

What we have in common?

Heschel's inaugural lecture "No Religion is An Island" was delivered in 1965 at The Union Theological Seminary. John C. Bennett, the president of the Union, at the time had this to say:

In that lecture he [Heschel] gave two essential messages, one to Christians and one to Jews. He asked Christians not to seek to convert Jews to Christianity. His message to Jews, somewhat less expected by the audience, was: 'It is our duty as Jews to remember that it was the Church that brought the knowledge of the God of Abraham to the Gentiles. It was the Church that made the Hebrew Scripture available to all mankind. This we Jews acknowledge with grateful hearts'¹⁷³.

These forty years changed a lot in our mutual relationship, but some of the remarks made by Heschel are still valid and have not lost their relevance.

I would like to start with a Jesuitical accent in this text. The questions directed by Heschel to Gustav Weigel I hear, in a way, as questions directed to myself:

Gustav Weigel spent the last evening of his life in my study at the Jewish Theological Seminary. We opened our hearts to one another in prayer and contrition and spoke of our own deficiencies, failures, hopes. At one moment I posed the question: Is it really the will of God that there be no more Judaism in the world? Would it really be the triumph of God if the scrolls of the Torah were no longer taken out of the Ark and the Torah no longer read in the synagogue, our ancient Hebrew prayers in which Jesus himself worshipped no more recited, the Passover Seder no longer celebrated in our lives, the Law of Moses no longer observed in our homes? Would it

¹⁷³ "Heschel's Significance for Protestants", in: *No Religion Is an Island. Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. H. Kasimow and B.L. Sherwin, New York, 1991, pp. 124-125.

really be *ad maiorem Dei gloriam* to have a world without Jews?¹⁷⁴

Of course we can say that these are only rhetorical questions; it is obvious that God's will is to preserve Judaism with all its beauty and theological richness. But it is not so obvious that the Church agrees, according to some of its more recent documents. Several times I heard those questions from my Jewish friends—religious and agnostics—how can you believe in all that the Church and the priests are preaching, particularly in my Catholic Poland. Those questions are louder today than at any previous time. It is worth spending some time to listen carefully to these questions, and it is perhaps more important than quoting several Church's documents. I am tempted to quote Heschel: "Humility and contrition seem to be absent where most required—in theology. But humility is the beginning and end of religious thinking, the sacred of faith. There is not truth without humility, no certainty without contrition" (p. 245).

But in this part I wanted to emphasize the common elements in both our religions, as are presented by Heschel. He speaks in his opening lecture of a variety of common elements. The first is our common condition of being human; second, he underlines the obvious reality that *no religion is an island*; and third, speaking about Jewish-Christian relations, Heschel mentioned *pathos*. These three elements, in his own words:

First and foremost, we meet as human beings who have much in common: a heart, a face, a voice, the presence of a soul, fears, hope, the ability to trust, a capacity for compassion and understanding, the kinship of being human. My first task in every encounter is to comprehend the personhood of the human being I face, to sense the kinship of being human, solidarity of being¹⁷⁵.

¹⁷⁴ All the quotations of Heschel are from the book edited by Susannah Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity. Abraham Joshua Heschel*, New York, 1996, p. 246.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*, p. 238.

It is obvious that he has Levinas in mind, with his passionate defense of otherness. It is very touching to read the passage which shows how deeply Heschel was aware of the pluralistic reality of world religions:

The religions of the world are no more isolated than individuals or nations. Energies, experiences, and ideas that come to life outside the boundaries of a particular religion or all religions continue to challenge and to affect every religion.

Horizons are wider, dangers are greater... *No religion is an island*. We are all involved with one another. Spiritual betrayal on the part of one of us affects the faith of all of us. Views adopted in one community have an impact on other communities. Today religious isolationism is a myth. For all the profound differences in perspective and substance, Judaism is sooner or later affected by the intellectual, moral, and spiritual events within the Christian society, and vice versa¹⁷⁶.

And the third important element for both religions—the divine pathos—which involved the core of each religion:

The supreme issue is today not the *halacha* for the Jews or the Church for the Christian—but the promise underlying both religions, namely, whether there is a *pathos*, a divine reality concerned with the destiny of man which mysteriously impinges upon history: the supreme issue is whether we are alive or dead to the challenge of the expectation of the living God. The crisis is engulfed all of us. The misery and fear of alienation from God make Jews and Christian cry together¹⁷⁷.

Is this *pathos* still alive in our both religions? And what exactly does it mean? It is not easy to answer¹⁷⁸ but I think that we can call it the seriousness of life—seen from both the human and the divine perspective. It could also be called being faithful to our deepest convictions, and when necessary, having the courage to change our

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 237.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 237.

¹⁷⁸ Cr. J.C. Merkle, “The Pathos of Divine Concern”, in: *Abraham Joshua Heschel. Exploring His Life and Thought*, London, 1985.

life projects or the most direction of our lives. They are situations in which being faithful means to change!

Those three elements, the awareness that we all are human, that we are connected, and that we have to take our life seriously, are the foundation for a real and honest dialogue.

Dialogue must not degenerate into a dispute, into an effort on the part of each to get the upper hand. There is an unfortunate history of Christian-Jewish disputations, motivated by the desire to prove how blind the Jews are and carried on in a spirit of opposition, which eventually degenerated into enmity. Thus any conversation between Christian and Jews in which abandonment of the other's partner faith is a silent hope must be regarded as offensive of one's religious and human dignity¹⁷⁹.

And Heschel's wish, which, by the way, is fulfilled by so many Jewish-Christian initiatives, is: "Let there be an end to disputation and polemic, an end to disparagement. We honestly and profoundly disagree in matters of creed and dogma. Indeed, there is a deep chasm between Christian and Jews concerning, e.g., the divinity and messianism of Jesus. But across the chasm we can extend our hand to one another". And allow me one last quotation from "No Religion is An Island," which addresses the complex issue all religions making a claim to truth:

Religion is a means, not an end. It becomes idolatrous when regarded as an end in itself. Over and above all beings stands the Creator and the Lord of history, he who transcends all. To equate religion and God is idolatry. Does not the all-inclusiveness of God contradict the exclusiveness of any particular religion? The prospect of all men embracing one form of religion remains an eschatological hope. What about here and now? Is it not blasphemous to say: I alone have all the truth and the grace, and all those who differ live in darkness and are abandoned by the grace of God?¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*. Abraham Joshua Heschel, p. 243.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 243.

This question is still an important one, for Jews and perhaps particularly for Christians.

Differences as a blessing

Two years later after his opening lecture at The Union Theological Seminary in New York, Heschel was invited to take part in the Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church Centenary of Canada, 1867-1967, where he spoke on “The God of Israel and Christian Renewal.” Just the fact of being invited by Catholic theologians was for Heschel a blessing: “Is it not a moment of blessing that this congress of illustrious Catholic theologians is willing to submit the great movement of Christian renewal to a confrontation with Jewish understanding of the meaning of the God of Israel?”¹⁸¹ Heschel is very honest and open in presenting his understanding of a possible and a real dialogue with Christianity. First of all the condition *sine qua non* is a mutual respect, or as he calls it “mutual reverence,” which is just achieved:

I believe that one of the achievements of this age will be the realization that in our age religious pluralism is the will of God, that the relationship between Judaism and Christianity will be one of mutual reverence, that without denying profound divergences, Jews and Christians will seek to help each other in understanding each one’s respective commitment and in deepening appreciation of what God means¹⁸².

On this basis it is possible to formulate the difficulty of understanding the fundamental Christian conception of God and the role of Jesus Christ: “With your permission, I should like to say that it is difficult for a Jew to understand when Christians worship Jesus as the Lord, and this Lordship takes the place of the Lordship of God the Creator. It is difficult for a Jew to understand when theology becomes reduced to Christology”¹⁸³. I have to say that also the most

¹⁸¹ *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, pp. 268-285.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p. 272.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, pp. 274-275.

recent Christological discussion between Christian theologians is not helping me to answer Heschel's question. And it is obvious, this question lies at the core of interreligious dialogue and its understanding by Catholic theology.

The next important difference between Judaism and Christianity is the respective understanding of redemption. For Christians the only and universal Redeemer is Jesus Christ, for Jews the problem is formulated differently:

The world is unredeemed and deficient, and God is in need of man to be a partner in completing, in aiding, in redeeming. Of all the forms of living, doing is the most patent way of aiding. Action is truth. The deed is elucidation of existence, expressing thirst for God with body and soul. The Jewish *mitzvah* is a prayer in the form of a deed. The *mitzvot* are the Jewish sacraments, sacraments that may be performed in common deeds of kindness. The nature is intelligible if seen in the light of God's care for man. The good act, ritual as well as moral, is a *mitzvah*, a divine offer, a divine representative.

Ultimate issues confront us in immediate situations. What is urgent for the Jew is not the acceptance of salvation but the preparing of redemption, the preparing *for* redemption.¹⁸⁴

And Heschel is concluding this passionate deliberation on the essence of redemption in Judaism with a call to "reveal God's love in His name: The urgent issue is not personal salvation, but the prevention of mankind's surrender to the demoniac. The sanctuary has not walls; the opportunity to praise or to aid has not limits. When God is silent, man must speak in His place. When God is hiding His compassion, man must reveal His love in this name"¹⁸⁵. It was a long quotation but necessary in order to understand Heschel's approach to human activity, understood as an effective collaboration with God in the redemption of the present world. On a practical level, the Christian understanding is very similar (particularly the Protestant one), but on the level of theological reflection we need significant clarification. This approach is also appealing to many agnostics. In

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 278.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 278.

the hopes that poetry can help us overcome theological differences, let me quote a British Jesuit and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, who more than hundred years ago wrote beautifully:

Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells:
Selves—goes its self; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *What I do is me: for that I came.*¹⁸⁶

The final part of Abraham Joshua Heschel's essay is dedicated to his recent visit to Israel where he discovered "a new radiance, a new awe." It seems to me that the importance of the existence of the state of Israel for modern Jewish thought, and also for Abraham J. Heschel, has to be discovered and evaluated, also for Jewish-Christian relations. And I'm really glad that I could finally come back to Israel after more than 20 years (my first visit was in September 1984), to share with you my new understanding of Jewish-Christian dialogue. I consider rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, who was born in Poland in 1907 and was able to leave a few weeks before the Shoah started, and his teachings, to be an excellent point of departure for Polish-Israeli mutual understanding.

Let us come back to the beginning of Christianity, to the time of Jesus of Nazareth. What happened after his death? Some of the Jews recognized in him the Messiah, but most of them did not! It was not the first and not the last time in Jewish history that someone was considered to be the messiah. First of all, Judaism is a religion that is waiting for the Messiah, so it is no wonder that messiahs keep coming. The problem is that until now nobody has been successful, not even Jesus of Nazareth. But the religion, which claims that he is its Founder, has been successful! And this is a problem for Jews, and also for Christians. The Jews were wondering why this group of Jews and many gentiles recognized in this failed messiah the **Final Messiah**. The Christians (former Jews and former gentiles) were amazed that not all Jews became Christian. (Cf. the last book by Rabbi Irving Greenberg *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New*

¹⁸⁶ Quotation from G.M. Hopkins, *33 wiersze*, selec. And trans. St. Barańczak, Kraków, 1981, from "As Kingfishers Catch Fire".

Encounter Between Judaism and Christianity). This amazement we know all too well—and also the consequences!

And now, in 2005, the year 5765 of the Jewish era, we are two different religions! We have a lot in common, but we are focused in our daily life on differences. Honestly we have to say that we ignore our respective traditions, we do not remember how much our prayers, our feasts have similar roots, or more precisely—how deeply Christianity is rooted in Judaism. But there are exceptions! The most eminent figures of our time are very much involved in mutual understanding, and we observe a growing interest for tradition and history among the younger generation. What we have to understand is that we have the right to have different memories of the past, but we cannot remain in the prison of this past. We have to remember history in order to transform our future.

Heschel became one of the most eminent Jewish thinkers of the 20th century. He died in the USA in 1972, having produced works that greatly influenced the Second Vatican Council, particularly its declaration *Nostra aetate*.

Today I'm still proud that Abraham Joshua Heschel, a great Jewish thinker, and a real prophet of our time, was born in my country. And I am glad that his teachings and his legacy are becoming more and more popular among Jews and Christian.

Chapter10.

Is Christology an Obstacle for Jewish Christian Understanding?

In 1967 during “The Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church Centenary of Canada, 1867-1967” Abraham Joshua Heschel gave a paper entitled “The God of Israel and Christian Renewal.” In this paper, he directed an important observation to his Catholic fellow participants: “With your permission, I should like to say that it is difficult for a Jew to understand when Christians worship Jesus as the Lord, and this Lordship takes the place of the Lordship of God the Creator. It is difficult for a Jew to understand when theology becomes reduced to Christology”.¹⁸⁷ He cited, with amazement, some Christian theologians who have said, “We can do without God and hold to Jesus of Nazareth”.¹⁸⁸ The aim of my paper is to reflect on the theological implication of Heschel’s observation, and its consequences for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

It also seems that thanks to Heschel’s influence Christian theology changed dramatically in the time after Vatican II, and some new Christological interpretations offer space for a genuine interreligious dialogue, including Jewish-Christian understanding. But it is necessary to introduce (also in the official teaching of the Catholic Church) a change of paradigm—one in which God, and not Christ, has to be at the center of theological reflection. Unfortunately, the theologians who elaborate new Christological concepts face heavy criticism from the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, which represents the official teaching of the Vatican.¹⁸⁹ For example this Congregation openly declared that books by Anthony de Mello, Jacques Dupuis, Roger Haight and Jon Sobrino were not compatible

¹⁸⁷ A. J. Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, p. 274-275.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 275.

¹⁸⁹ cf. on the official web sight of the Vatican.

with the Catholic doctrine. The declaration *Dominus Iesus* from the year 2000 is the most explicit example of how difficult it is to change the traditional paradigm.

There is a similar way of thinking in Karl Rahner's writings. In 1954 he wrote an essay, entitled "Chalcedon—Ende oder Anfang?" (Chalcedon—Ending or Beginning?), on the occasion of the 1500th anniversary of the Council of Chalcedon, formulating the most important Christological concepts. His answer was "both"! A dogmatic and clear formulation is, usually, the end of a long and painful process of searching for a theological solution as well as the beginning of a new understanding.¹⁹⁰

Rahner's point is basically that we cannot look at a written text as dead letters, but rather must see it as a point of departure for a living and dynamic interpretation of the concrete Church community context. It is also important to emphasize that Karl Rahner was one of the most influential theologians during the debates of Vatican Council II and his interpretation of the documents is particularly significant.¹⁹¹ Speaking at the Weston School of Theology in 1979 Rahner stated: "The Second Vatican Council is, in a rudimentary form still groping for identity, the Church's first official self-actualization *as* a world Church."¹⁹² This search for identity is particularly salient in regard to other world religions. Rahner, as well as Ong, does not sanctify any one text, even holy ones. Rather the opposite; they encourage the search for new and more adequate

¹⁹⁰ Cf. "Once theologians and the ordinary magisterium of the Church have begun to pay attention to a reality and a truth revealed by God, the final result is always a precisely formulated statement. This is natural and inevitable. In no other way is it possible to mark the boundary of error and the misunderstanding of divine truth in such a way that this boundary will be observed in the day-to-day practice of religion. Yet while this formula is an end, an acquisition and a victory, which allows us to enjoy clarity and security as well as ease in instruction, if this victory is to be a true one the end must also be a beginning". K. Rahner, (1963) "Current Problems in Christology", in: *Theological Investigation*. vol. I, Helicon Press, Baltimore, pp. 149-200, cit., p. 149.

¹⁹¹ Por. K. Rahner, "Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II", in: *Theological Studies* 40 nr. 4(1979), pp. 719-727.

¹⁹² Op. cit., p. 717.

theological and dogmatic formulations, and a new interpretation of the Holy Scripture.

In the same way we should look at the documents of the last ecumenical council as the end of a long process of clarification but also as the beginning of a new situation for the Church. The tormented history of the declaration *Nostra aetate* is well known and it is not our aim to rehearse it here. What is interesting for us is the comment made by its main author, Cardinal Augustin Bea.¹⁹³ His observation is very similar to Rahner's:

The Declaration on the Non-Christian Religions is indeed an important and promising beginning, yet no more than the beginning of a long and demanding way towards the arduous goal of a humanity whose members feel themselves truly to be sons and daughters of the same Father and act on this conviction.¹⁹⁴

It is important to notice that *Nostra aetate* is seen as “an important and promising beginning.” It also means that it is only a starting point for the new approach toward other religions. In other words, traditional theology could be declared as no longer fitting to describe the current situation of the Christian religion among other world religions.

Today, especially, it is worth noting the great impact of Abraham Joshua Heschel on *Nostra aetate*. This short text opened a large debate also between Jewish thinkers. From many names we can recall again Abraham Joshua Heschel,¹⁹⁵ Irving Greenberg¹⁹⁶, Geza

¹⁹³ At the press conference on the day of its promulgation on October 28th 1965.

¹⁹⁴ R. Neudecker (1989), “The Catholic Church and the Jewish People”, in: *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives. Twenty-five Years After (1962-1987)*, vol. 3, ed. Rene Latourelle, Paulist Press: New York, p. 289.

¹⁹⁵ For seeing the impact of Heschel on Christian theology see: *No Religion Is an Island. Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. H. Kasimow and B.L. Sherwin, New York 1991.

¹⁹⁶ His last book *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth. The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 2004.

Vermes¹⁹⁷, Byron L. Sherwin¹⁹⁸, Michael Signer¹⁹⁹, David Novak²⁰⁰ and Harold Kasimow²⁰¹: their impact is also visible in Polish debate. In other words Jewish theology become a real partner in theological thinking.

The positive openness toward other religions has brought a new perception of what it means to be a Catholic. I would like to recall the already classical division of the Church's history made by Karl Rahner:

Theologically speaking, there are three great epochs in Church history, of which the third has only just begun and made itself observable officially at Vatican II: First, the short period of Jewish Christianity. Second, the period of the Church in distinct cultural regions, namely, that of Hellenism and of European culture and civilization. Third, the period in which the sphere of the Church's life is, in fact, the entire world.²⁰²

The development of this third period is still in an initial stage so its result is unknown, and this explains also why the Catholic Church is still looking for her own identity as a world religion. Over years I have learned a great deal from those Christians who went to Asia and returned transformed by their exposure to Asian religions.²⁰³

¹⁹⁷ Author of many books concerning the Jewish background of Christianity, for example: *The Changing Faces of Jesus*, London 2000, *The Authentic Gospel of Jesus*, London 2003, *Who's Who in the Age of Jesus*, London, 2005.

¹⁹⁸ B. L. Sherwin, *We współpracy z Bogiem. Wiara, duchowość i etyka społeczna Żydów*, Kraków, 2005.

¹⁹⁹ M. A. Signer, "Searching the Scriptures: Jews, Christians, and the Book, in: *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, ed. T. Frymer-Kensky, D. Novak, Colorado, 2000.

²⁰⁰ D. Novak, "Mitsvah", in: *Christianity in Jewish Terms*, op. cit.

²⁰¹ H. Kasimow, *The Search Will Make You Free. A Jewish Dialogue with World Religions*, Kraków, 2006.

²⁰² Rahner, "Towards..." op. cit. p. 721.

²⁰³ I would like to mention just a few names: Thomas Merton, Bede Griffiths, Enomiya Lassalle, Heinrich Dumoulin, William Johnston, Anthony de Mello, Raimundo Panikkar and Jacques Dupuis. Thanks to those people I discovered how important Buddhism and Hinduism could be for me as a Christian. It is not easy to explain this experience in a few words but I can say that it was a real

Asia, especially, is the place where Catholic theologians elaborate new christological approaches. Jacques Dupuis, for example, invented there the concept of “pluralistic inclusivism”.²⁰⁴

Peter Phan, an American theologian from Georgetown University, writes in a similar spirit:

There is then a reciprocal relationship between Christianity and the other religions. Not only are the non-Christian religions complemented by Christianity, but also Christianity is complemented by other religions. In other words, the process of complementation, enrichment and even correction is two-way or reciprocal.²⁰⁵

If so, perhaps also Jews and Christians can learn from each other’s the religious experience as Heschel showed in his magnificent essay “No Religion is an Island”?

From the many words of Heschel that I love, let me quote the final part of this famous lecture in which he asks about the purpose of interreligious cooperation:

It is neither to flatter nor to refute one another, but to help one another; to share insight and learning, to cooperate in academic ventures on the highest scholarly level, and what is even more important, to search in the wilderness for well-springs of devotion, for treasures of stillness, for the power of love and care of [humankind].²⁰⁶

What I hear here is the same concern which I found in Walter Ong.

Nevertheless many thinkers, Christians and Jews, believe that a real theological dialogue is impossible. For such Christians the dialogue is only aimed to convert Jews into Christianity. Jews, on the

discovery for me to learn that as a Christian I could learn from “nonbelievers” or “pagans”.

²⁰⁴ J. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions. From Confrontation to Dialogue*, New York, Orbis Books, 2001, p. 94

²⁰⁵ P. C. Phan, “Multiply Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church”, in: *Theological Studies* 64(2003), p. 502.

²⁰⁶ A. J. Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, New York, 1996, pp. 249-250.

other hand, understand dialogue as losing their own identity. The Israeli philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz is a good example in that matter.

The Christian symbol is that of the deity who sacrifices his only son for man. This is the great contrast between theocentric religion, in which man strives to serve God, and anthropocentric religion, in which God fulfils man's need for salvation. The actual manifestation of Jewish faith in daily living was, historically, the system of Mitzvoth, [...] In contrast, the program of Christianity from its inception to this very day emphasized the abrogation of the "Law". This is the "subtle nuance" which distinguishes Judaism from Christianity. Only Jews who have cast aside the yoke of Torah and have emptied Judaism of all specifically Jewish content can overlook this nuance, as can Christians who have lost their faith in man's salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus.²⁰⁷

This enormous opposition between the two religions has historical basis, but new theological views show the possibility of overcoming such an opposition. We can even find extreme positions like that of Daniel Boyarin who sees the separation of Christianity and Judaism as a historical accident. And the consequence of his conception even abolishes the difference between the two religions. "Among the various emblems of this different difference remains the fact that there are Christians who are Jews, or perhaps better put, Jews who are Christians, even up to this very day".²⁰⁸ In other words Boyarin believes that this separation was not necessary and, in fact, was the result of political decisions.

In the title of my paper I asked: Is Christology an obstacle for Jewish Christian understanding? My answer is that it is and will be. But we can overcome this obstacle if we will hear to the legacy of Heschel, who made theology a source of life. Perhaps his question

²⁰⁷ Y. Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, Cambridge, 1992, p. 259.

²⁰⁸ D. Boyarin, *Border Lines. The partition of Judeo-Christianity*, Philadelphia, 2004, p. 225.

directed to Christian theologians has to be understood as an appeal to discover the common source of inspiration for the belief in God of Abraham, Isaak and Jacob. It was also the God of Jesus from Nazareth and of Heschel from Warsaw.

Chapter 11.

Christology as a Christian Form of Idolatry

Every religion tries to find ways to communicate with the Divine. As a human invention, religion uses human language to express this longing for Transcendence. For some religions, creation is a medium to discover the Divine; for others history, or the combination of both. I sometimes get the impression that, in the present moment, all religions need to find a new way to express their basic intuition. What is really needed is an openness to questioning and a readiness to accept change. Looking at the history of religions, it is clear that it happens all the time, but that not all of the adherents of a religious system are willing to admit this historical dimension of their own tradition. In particular, some religions' leaders refuse to rethink and modify their fundamental theological concepts according to the new pluralistic reality of modern world. They are also tempted to identify their own religious beliefs with the only true way to God. In other words, they look at other religions as inferior and deficient. This temptation is known as idolatry.²⁰⁹ Abraham Heschel, the Jewish theologian, offers a clear explanation of the idea: "Religion is a means, not the end. It becomes idolatrous when regarded as an end in itself. Over and above all being stands the Creator and Lord of history. He who transcends all. To equate religion and God is idolatry."²¹⁰ We can find a similar concept in the theology of Irving Greenberg who wrote: "Any claim that one understanding of God is the *definitive*, superior one is a form of idolatry."²¹¹

²⁰⁹ In dictionaries we find the definition as follows: "Idolatry – 1. The worship of a physical object as a god. 2. Immoderate attachment or devotion to something.

²¹⁰ A. J. Heschel, "No Religion Is an Island", in: *No Religion Is an Island. Abraham Joshua Heschel and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. H. Kasimow & B. L. Sherwin, New York, 1999, p. 13.

²¹¹ In *Religions in Dialogue: From Theocracy to Democracy*, ed. A. Race and I. Shafer, Ashgate: Burlington, VT, 2002, p. 30.

I am not going to analyze the various different forms of idolatry. I would like to draw attention to the Christian manner of presenting its way for salvation as unique and the only truth. As Wilfrid Cantwell Smith pointed out in his book *Towards a World Theology*, the traditional way to speak about God in Christianity has some limitations, which need to be overcome. The main problem is reducing and identifying religion with the revelation in the Bible. And even more, Christian theology identifies religious salvation with Jesus Christ:

Christian theology has sometimes said that there is a divine revelation in nature, and in history, but has gone on to say that God is (or: was) revealed fully in Christ. (Some have gone on to say, was revealed fully only in Christ.) I suggest that the future theology may profitably learn to speak a different language. God is not revealed fully in Jesus Christ to me, not indeed to anyone that I have met; or that my historical studies have uncovered.²¹²

It is important to notice that W. C. Smith speaks as a Presbyterian minister, as a Christian theologian, but first and foremost as a member of human kind. And he is familiar with the history of other religions which he studied deeply.²¹³

A few years later, in his contribution to the book edited by John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, W. C. Smith formulated a more radical thesis: "For Christians to think that Christianity is true, or final, or salvific, is a form of idolatry."²¹⁴ I agree that this way of perceiving a theological system, reducing the possibilities of the entire religious universe to only one tradition, is a form of idolatry because it excludes interreligious dialogue. No wonder, then, that Christianity, as other religions, elaborates its own theological language in order to express its understanding of God. But the problem is that this theological elaboration excludes other

²¹² W. C. Smith, *Towards a World Theology. Faith and the Comparative History of Religion*, London 1981, p. 175.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²¹⁴ W. C. Smith, "Idolatry in Comparative Perspective", in: *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness*, eds. J. Hick, P. F. Knitter, New York, 1987, p. 59.

ways of speaking about God: “The doctrine of divinity of Christ is a conceptual form of Christians’ knowledge of God.”²¹⁵ This is a key problem for mutual understanding. We have to remember *Deus semper maior* (“always greater God”)²¹⁶, means that God transcends any human language, including the language of Christian theology.

This doctrine can and should be seen in a concrete cultural and theological context. In fact, in contemporary Christian theology, we can observe the vivid and exciting discussion of how the divinity of Christ has to be understood. This renewal was initiated by Karl Rahner’s article on the theological meaning of the Christological formula elaborated by Council of Chalcedon. This formula has been, since 451 A.D. until today, the most important Christian dogma: that Christ is one Person in two natures, the Divine of the same substance as the Father, and human of the same substance as us; and, that these two natures are united without confusion, immutably, indivisibly, and inseparably. For Rahner, this formula is both an end and a beginning for theological reflections, and he demands a doctrinal discussion of this basic Christological dogma.²¹⁷

Similar questions were raised also by Jewish theologians. For example in 1967, during The Congress on the Theology of the Renewal of the Church Centenary of Canada, 1867-1967, in his paper *The God of Israel and Christian Renewal*, Heschel directed the following question to the Catholic participants: “With your permission, I should like to say that it is difficult for a Jew to understand when Christians worship Jesus as the Lord, and this Lordship takes the place of the Lordship of God the Creator. It is difficult for a Jew to understand when theology becomes reduced to Christology”.²¹⁸ Further, he quotes, with amazement, some Christian theologians who say “We can do without God and hold to Jesus of

²¹⁵ Ibid, p. 61.

²¹⁶ E. Przywara, *Deus semper maior. Theologie der Exerzitien*, T. 1-3, Freiburg, 1938-1940.

²¹⁷ K. Rahner, “Chalcedon—Ende oder Anfang?” *Das Konzil von Chalkedon*, ed. by A. Grillmeier and H. Bacht, Vol. III, Würzburg, 1954, pp. 3-49.

²¹⁸ A. J. Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, New York, 1996, pp. 274-275.

Nazareth”.²¹⁹ Irving Greenberg, an orthodox rabbi, proposed in this context an interesting concept of “failed messiah” which could be acceptable also for the Jews.²²⁰

It also seems that, thanks to interreligious dialogue, Christian theology changed dramatically after Vatican II. Some new Christological interpretations offer space for a genuine interreligious dialogue. But it is necessary to shift the paradigm: God, and not Christ, has to be at the centre of theological reflection. Unfortunately, the theologians who elaborate new Christological concepts face penetrating criticism from the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, which represents the official teaching of the Vatican.²²¹ For example, this Congregation openly declared that books by Hans Kueng, Edward Schillebeeckx, Anthony de Mello, Jacques Dupuis, Roger Haight and Jon Sobrino are not compatible with the Catholic doctrine. The declaration *Dominus Iesus* from the year 2000 is the most explicit example of the difficulties in changing the traditional paradigm. A recent development of doctrinal discipline of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and its *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church* (June 29, 2007) only confirm the non-dialogical attitude of this institution. Waclaw Hryniewicz, a prominent Polish theologian, pointed out this aspect of the document.²²² For the moment it seems that the official Catholic teaching is not interested in constructive theological dialogue.

About 40 years ago it seemed as if the Church was taking a new theological path with the declaration of *Nostra aetate*. For the first time, the Catholic theology spoke in a positive way about other religions. New language in theology is a sign of a new attitude toward the possibility of formulating religious conviction via

²¹⁹ Ibid, p. 275.

²²⁰ I. Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth. The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*, Philadelphia, 2004.

²²¹ http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/doc_doc_index.htm.

²²² W. Hryniewicz, “The Saviour... uses many tunes” – On the abuse of religious language in the recent document of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, in: *Open Theology*, no 1, 2007, version on line: <http://www.opentheology.org>.

language. One of the most important Catholic thinkers to articulate this new way of thinking was Walter Ong. According to Ong not the words but the individual, and not only Jesus, is in the centre of the Christian message: “The [...] person of every human being, for believers and non believers, lies in a way beyond statement. The ‘I’ that any one of us speaks lies beyond statement in the sense that although every statement originates, ultimately, from an ‘I’, no mere statement can ever make clear what constitutes this ‘I’ as against any other ‘I’ spoken by any other human being”.²²³

The theological consequences of this way of thinking are really enormous. Namely it means that it is not the doctrinal formulations that are in the centre of theological reflection but the human being. In other words, before we start a dialogue between religions we have to meet a human being. How far this new approach will lead us I don’t know. It seems that this kind of dialogue is the only way to avoid dangerous aspects of any fundamentalism. Ong speaks about American culture, but his observation is also appropriate for the European context. Ong says that each and every text should not be treated as the final truth, which cannot be interpreted further.²²⁴ This conviction is valid also for the Church’s doctrinal formulations.

In Ong’s thinking we can find a basis and also support for a fundamental scepticism toward uncritical acceptance of written tradition, Christian tradition included. In other words what is needed is a new form of interreligious dialogue in which not the text but the persons involved will play the most important role.

²²³ W. J. Ong, “Hermeneutic Forever: Voice, Text, Digitization, and ‘I’”, in: *Oral Tradition* 10(1995), no. 1, p. 20.

²²⁴ “In a culture so addicted to literacy as that of the United States, to believe that truth, of various sorts or even all sorts, can be neatly enclosed in a proposition or a limited set of propositions that are totally explicit and self-contained, not needing or indeed even not tolerating any interpretation. (...) In the case of Christian fundamentalists, for example, what they commonly may not advert to is the biblical statement of Jesus’s: “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14, 6). Jesus leaves his followers not list of given number of propositional statements that total up all that he comes to utter as the Word of God”. Op. cit. p. 19.

I have already mentioned the essay by Karl Rahner, entitled “Chalcedon—Ende oder Anfang?” (Chalcedon—Ending or Beginning?), on the occasion of the 1500th anniversary of the Council of Chalcedon, formulates the most important Christological concepts. His answer was “both”! A dogmatic and clear formulation is, usually, the end of a long and painful process of searching for a theological solution as well as the beginning of a new understanding.²²⁵

Rahner’s point is basically that we cannot look at a written text as dead letters, but rather must see it as a point of departure for a living and dynamic interpretation of the concrete Church community context. It is also important to emphasize that Karl Rahner was one of the most influential theologians during the debates of Vatican Council II and his interpretation of the documents is particularly significant.²²⁶ Speaking at the Weston School of Theology in 1979 Rahner stated: “The Second Vatican Council is, in a rudimentary form still groping for identity, the Church’s first official self-actualization *as* a world Church.”²²⁷ This search for identity is particularly salient in regard to other world religions. Rahner, as well as Ong, does not sanctify any one text, even holy ones. Rather the opposite; they encourage the search for new and more adequate theological and dogmatic formulations, and a new interpretation of the Holy Scripture.

In the same way we should look at the documents of the last ecumenical council as the end of a long process of clarification but

²²⁵ Cf. “Once theologians and the ordinary magisterium of the Church have begun to pay attention to a reality and a truth revealed by God, the final result is always a precisely formulated statement. This is natural and inevitable. In no other way is it possible to mark the boundary of error and the misunderstanding of divine truth in such a way that this boundary will be observed in the day-to-day practice of religion. Yet while this formula is an end, an acquisition and a victory, which allows us to enjoy clarity and security as well as ease in instruction, if this victory is to be a true one the end must also be a beginning”. K. Rahner, (1963) “Current Problems in Christology”, in: *Theological Investigation*. vol. I, Helicon Press, Baltimore, pp. 149-200, cit. p. 149.

²²⁶ Por. K. Rahner, “Towards a Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II”, in: *Theological Studies* 40 nr. 4(1979), pp. 719-727.

²²⁷ Op. cit., p. 717.

also as the beginning of a new situation for the Church. The tormented history of the declaration *Nostra aetate* is well known and it is not our aim to rehearse it here. What is interesting for us is the comment made by its main author, Cardinal Augustin Bea.²²⁸ His observation is very similar to Rahner's:

The Declaration on the Non-Christian Religions is indeed an important and promising beginning, yet no more than the beginning of a long and demanding way towards the arduous goal of a humanity whose members feel themselves truly to be sons and daughters of the same Father and act on this conviction.²²⁹

One could only wonder if one eminent representative of the Catholic Church made this statement. Forty years after the promulgation of this document I do not see that it was a promising beginning, yet no more than the beginning of a long and demanding way towards the arduous goal of a humanity, but rather as the unwanted and disturbing element in the traditional and exclusive theology.

It is important to notice that *Nostra aetate* is seen as “an important and promising beginning.” It also means that it is only a starting point for the new approach toward other religions. In other words, traditional theology could be declared as no longer fitting to describe the current situation of the Christian religion among other world religions. The positive openness toward other religions has brought a new perception of what it means to be a Catholic. I would like to recall the already classical division of the Church's history made by Karl Rahner:

Theologically speaking, there are three great epochs in Church history, of which the third has only just begun and made itself observable officially at Vatican II: First, the short period of Jewish Christianity. Second, the period of the Church in distinct cultural regions, namely, that of Hellenism

²²⁸ At the press conference on the day of its promulgation on October 28th 1965.

²²⁹ R. Neudecker (1989), “The Catholic Church and the Jewish People”, in: *Vatican II Assessment and Perspectives. Twenty-five Years After (1962-1987)*, vol. 3, ed. Rene Latourelle, Paulist Press: New York, p. 289.

and of European culture and civilization. Third, the period in which the sphere of the Church's life is, in fact, the entire world.²³⁰

The development of this third period is still in an initial stage so its result is unknown, and this explains also why the Catholic Church is still looking for her own identity as a world religion. Over years I have learned a great deal from those Christians who went to Asia and returned transformed by their exposure to Asian religions. Asia, especially, is the place where Catholic theologians elaborate new christological approaches. Jacques Dupuis, for example, invented there the concept of "pluralistic inclusivism".²³¹

Peter Phan, an American theologian from Georgetown University, writes in a similar spirit: "There is then a reciprocal relationship between Christianity and the other religions. Not only are the non-Christian religions complemented by Christianity, but also Christianity is complemented by other religions. In other words, the process of complementation, enrichment and even correction is two-way or reciprocal".²³² This enormous opposition between the two religions has an historical basis, but new theological views show the possibility for overcoming this. We even can find extreme positions like that of Daniel Boyarin who sees the separation of Christianity and Judaism as an historical accident. As a result, he denies the difference between the two religions: "Among the various emblems of this different difference remains the fact that there are Christians who are Jews, or perhaps better put, Jews who are Christians, even up to this very day".²³³ In other words Boyarin believes that this separation was not necessary and, in fact, was the result of political decisions.

²³⁰ Rahner, *Towards...* op. cit. p. 721.

²³¹ J. Dupuis, *Christianity and the Religions. From Confrontation to Dialogue*, New-York, Orbis Books, 2001, p. 94

²³² P. C. Phan, "Multiply Religious Belonging: Opportunities and Challenges for Theology and Church", in: *Theological Studies* 64(2003), p. 502.

²³³ D. Boyarin, *Border Lines. The partition of Judeo-Christianity*, Philadelphia, 2004, p. 225.

I do not share this point of view, but I see the potential to discover a common ground for both religions. In any case, this is my own religious experience. And I have to admit that the deepest and most decisive impact on my perception of religion, and on my image of God in particular, has been my encounter with Jewish thinkers.

One of Heschel's disciples, Harold Kasimow, wrote: "I am a Jewish pluralist. As such, I am committed to the Jewish path, not because it is superior, but because it is my path. I view the concept of the chosen people as God choosing the Jews to follow the path of the Torah and at the same time choosing the Hindus to follow the Vedas, the Buddhists to follow the Dharma, the Muslims to follow the Qur'an, and for Christians to follow Jesus of Nazareth. This seems to me to be in the spirit of my great teacher Abraham Joshua Heschel, who stated that 'In this aeon, diversity is the will of God'".²³⁴

In the title of my paper: *Christology as a Christian Form of Idolatry*, I had no intention of suggesting that it is necessary to reject Christology, as such. But I wanted to point out that the most sublime elaboration of theological language could become an obstacle for mutual understanding of religious people. My suggestion is that Christology does not have to be an obstacle for interreligious dialogue, but that it will be if Christians focus their attention on Christology as the ultimate doctrinal definition of God. This appeal is valid for all religions, particularly those that claim divine revelation only for their sacred texts, and do not see the same value in other religious traditions. As Wilfred Cantwell Smith suggested: "Scripture's role in the past poses a challenge for the future: how may we hear the voice of the universe, however finitely, and find ways to think it, and to talk to one another about it, and to be motivated to order our life so that we may live in tune with it, and find the courage and delight to do so ourselves and find encouragement also from one another?"²³⁵

²³⁴ H. Kasimow, *The Search Will Make You Free: A Jewish Dialogue with World Religions*, p. 208.

²³⁵ W. S. Smith, *What Is Scripture? A Comparative Approach*, Minneapolis, 1993, p. 242.

Coming back to our subject: how to overcome the idolatry of Christian theology, which we can observe in some Christian Churches. We can find a possible solution in Walter Ong's appeal, to renew theological language. As we already saw above, Ong concentrated his attention on every human being and not only on Christ. We see a similar tendency in the theological vision elaborated by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a visionary French Jesuit, whom Ong met in Paris in the 1950s. When they met "Ong himself had already been thinking along parallel lines, and he found it encouraging and exhilarating to read Teilhard's work."²³⁶

In his posthumously published books, *The Phenomenon of Man*, and *The Divine Milieu: An Essay on the Interior Life*²³⁷, Teilhard de Chardin wrote on the unfolding of the material cosmos, from primordial particles to the development of life. This process is going on from human beings to the *noosphere*, and finally the *Omega Point* in the future. All these are elements of the same evolutionary process conducting towards God. We can see in Teilhard de Chardin's theology a new interpretation of Paul's Christology in his letters. Of course, this way to present Christ is very inclusive, and allows other religions to be perceived, along with Christianity, as a way to God.

Perhaps representatives of other religions could accept this kind of "cosmic Christology." Still it is an open question whether we should call it Christology or simply a certain way to approach the Divine. It is obvious that the writings of Teilhard de Chardin are an attempt to reconcile his religious faith with his academic interests as a paleontologist. According to him, evolution is an ascent toward consciousness, and, therefore, signifies a continuous upsurge toward the Omega Point, which is God. If science was open to this perspective, then we could see our century as more religious than any other. In any case, as much as religious language could be tempted by idolatry, the same could be said about scientific language. And

²³⁶ Th. J. Farrell, *Walter Ong's Contribution to Cultural Studies. The Phenomenology of the Word and I-Thou Communication*, Cresskill NY, 2000, p. 45.

²³⁷ Teilhard de Chardin, *The phenomenon of man*, New York, 1959; *The divine milieu: An essay on the interior life*, New York, 1960.

perhaps the discussion about this hidden or open temptation could be a good opportunity to overcome idolatry.

Chapter 12.

A Common Destiny: Why Jewish-Christian Dialogue is Important to Me?

Religious Jews, to welcome Sabbath, used to sing: “Lecha dodi, likrat kalah, p`nei Sabbath nekablah” (Come my Beloved to greet the bride—the Sabbath presence let us welcome!). This wonderful song was composed by Rabbi Shlomo Halvey Alkabetz (1505-1584), one of the Kabbalists of Safed. And the name of the Friday evening service is *kabbalat Sabbath*, which, according to Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, helps us to understand the distinction of the Sabbath, “which means to accept the sovereignty as well as to welcome the presence of the day. The Sabbath is a queen as well as a bride” (*Sabbath*, p. 62).

When, as a non-Jew I am invited by my Jewish friends to help welcome the Sabbath, and share the joy of this particular moment, by saying a few words, I find that I am embarrassed and confused by this. Particularly as a Christian, a Catholic priest, and a Pole. There are many reasons for why a Polish Catholic priest might feel uneasiness in a synagogue. But since we started the prayer of Sabbath together, we are in the sacred time. When we are in sacred time and sacred space, difficulties can and should be transformed into the sources of sabbatical joy!

I would like to share with you my experience of Jewish-Christian dialogue in Poland, where I was born and raised. My small town—Narol—is remembered in Jewish history for two reasons. In 1648 Chmielnicki’s Cossacks killed all its inhabitants, including 12,000 Jews, and during WWII, not far from Narol, Germans perpetrated the most dark deed in our history—the death camp Belżec, where in less than one year (from February to November 1942) almost 600,000 Jews perished. But this part of the history of my town was long unknown to me. My awareness of the Holocaust was affected by a calculated amnesia that permeated Polish society, especially the

post-war generation. The founders of “the best system,” took care that Polish young people would remember only the martyrology of the Polish nation with a strictly limited remembrance of Jews and others. Thus, although I was born in 1956, I heard about the Holocaust for the first time when I was 18. In recent years, we have seen some positive initiatives by the Catholic Church in Poland. For example, Pope John Paul II has published extensively on the topic of Jewish-Christian dialogue. In 1990 an important document from the Polish episcopate was published, asking forgiveness for all anti-Semitic acts of commission and omission. For the third time, on January 16, 2000, a special day commemorating Judaism was held in Kraków. In Kraków, there are many institutions which ex professo are engaged in exploring Jewish culture and history. We have a small but active Jewish community that is trying to preserve Jewish heritage, and to re-introduce it as a part of the cultural and religious landscape of our city. For some years, the popular, month-long festival Month of Jewish Culture has been held in Kazimierz, the ancient Jewish quarter of Kraków.

At the end of 1998, the first international congress of Jesuits working in the field of Jewish-Christian relations was held in Kraków. Forty Jesuits from all over the world participated, along with Rabbi Leon Klenicki as our special guest. I do not have time to read the report of this meeting in its entirety, but allow me to quote a small segment. We Jesuits asked, by way of example:

— “In a spirit of true repentance, how can we meditate upon our Jesuit history, which moves from St. Ignatius’ appreciation of the Jewishness of Jesus to a certain Jesuit complicity in the teaching of contempt for Jews and Judaism?”

— “How can we deepen our understanding of this history in order to strengthen our resolve to fight against all manifestations of anti-Judaism and racism?”

Our focus as Jesuits at this meeting was not on guilt, but on shared responsibility. I think it is fair to say that we re-committed ourselves to the commandment Elie Wiesel quotes in his latest memoir: “Thou shalt not stand idly by”. In 2005 in July we will have

a Seminar²³⁸: Jesuits in Dialogue with Jews in Switzerland and I'm preparing a paper: *Theology of Judaism of Abraham Joshua Heschel as a Challenge for Catholic Theology*. Since then, I have had many more opportunities to admitting to this shared responsibility with my Jewish friends.

The most important, and deepest, dimension of our mutual understanding is the human relationship. Let me mention just a few names. First of all, Rabbi Byron L. Sherwin from Chicago, (disciple of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel), the first rabbi who lectured to Polish Catholic seminarians about Judaism, and who I also met in our Jesuit College some years ago. When I asked him how it started for him he, just wrote me an email:

My involvement with Catholic-Jewish dialogue began when I was a teenager in New York. Many of my friends were Catholic, especially Italians. In New York, Italians and Jews were quite close. So, it evolved naturally. I was curious to learn about the faith of my friends. My involvement in Polish-Jewish dialogue has two sources. One was the late Cardinal Bernardin. He was a great champion of Catholic-Jewish dialogue. When he become archbishop of Chicago, with its large Polish population, he wanted to help reduce stereotypes (mostly negative) and to improve relations between Poles and Jews both in Chicago and elsewhere. He was very good friends with Card. Macharski and asked for his help regarding relationships in Poland itself. The second involvement was that I wanted to learn more about the place from which my grandmother and my ancestors come—Poland.

We can say it is so simply, and still it is so difficult.

During my last visit in Chicago, Byron Sherwin, who knew that I would be staying for a semester in Saint Louis in order to study the thought of Fr. Walter Ong simply said to me: you have to meet a good friend of mine—Prof. Howard Schwartz which I did. And since this meeting, some weeks ago, I cannot stop reading his

²³⁸ *Friends on the Way. Jesuits Encounter Contemporary Judaism*, ed. Thomas Michel, New York, 2007.

fascinating book, *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*. It was Howard Schwartz who said to me: you have to meet our Rabbi Susan Talve, she is really an incredible woman. So I did... Other names: Prof. Harold Kasimow from Grinnell, also a disciple of Rabbi Heschel, just twice lectured in Poland, dr. Rene Lichtman from Detroit—who was saved as a hidden Jewish child in France during the WWII, who invited me last November to Detroit to meet together different groups in Detroit and to speak about the possibility to find the common language between Poles and Jews.

But I would like to speak today about our common destiny, about our common past, our different present and our uncertain future. Let me start with history.

Our common past

I am aware that for some of you it is not easy to hear that Jews and Christians have a common past. But it is so. The founder of my religion, Jesus of Nazareth, was a Jew, as was his mother and his father. And his first disciples were all Jews, as well. After his death things changed, but during his lifetime and for some years after his death, it was not easy for the Romans to see any differences between these two Jewish groups.

On the Sabbath, Jesus used to go to the synagogue. He was asked to explain the Hebrew Bible. In his teachings he quoted the Jewish holy texts almost exclusively. He was a rabbi and a teacher. There were different opinions amongst Jews of his time, as there are different opinions today, but there is no question that Judaism was his religion.

What happened after his death? Some Jews recognized in him the Messiah, but most of them did not! It was not the first, nor the last time in Jewish history, that someone was considered to be the messiah. First of all, Judaism is a messianic religion, in which they are always awaiting the Messiah, so it is no wonder that messiahs keeping coming. The problem is that until Jesus, no one had been successful in convincing a significant proportion of believers. Jesus of Nazareth also was not. But his religion has been successful! This is a problem for Jews, and for Christians as well. At the time, many

Jews wondered why this group of Jews and gentiles recognized in this particular failed messiah the Final Messiah. The Christians (former Jews and former gentiles) were amazed that not all Jews became Christian. (Cf. the last book by Rabbi Irving Greenberg *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*). We know this amazement all too well—and the consequences as well!

Our different present

Now, Christianity and Judaism are two different religions. They have much in common, but their practitioners are focused, in their daily lives, on differences. Honestly, we have to say that we ignore our respective traditions, we do not remember how similar the roots of our prayers and ours feasts are, or rather, how deeply Christianity is rooted in Judaism. But there are exceptions! The most eminent figures of our time are very much involved in mutual understanding, and we observe a growing interest in tradition and history among the younger generation. What we have to understand that we have the right to have different memories of the past, but we cannot remain in the prison of this past. We have to remember history in order to transform our future.

Our uncertain future

We are afraid of the future, because we are afraid of ourselves! We in Poland and also you in America. But we, Jews and Christians, know that our future is not only in our hands but first of all in the hands of our God! And this conviction allows us to pray to Him with hope that he will also transform our fears into joy!

And let me finish, again with a quotation. This time from the paper which I delivered at a conference dedicated to the Abrahamic heritage in Europe: “I feel privileged to be a member of an educational institution headed by John Paul II, the former bishop of my city of Kraków. But I am also proud to be a member of the nation into which the wonderful Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was born, in Warsaw, in 1907. Heschel became one of the most eminent Jewish thinkers of the 20th century. He died in the US, in 1972, having

produced works which, I think, greatly influenced the Second Vatican Council, particularly its declaration *Nostra aetate*. And John Paul II was the first Pope to visit the Roman synagogue and who finally recognized the State of Israel in 1993. The first friend invited for a private audience after his election to the Papacy in October 1978 was Jerzy Kluger, a Jew from Wadowice, living in Rome not far from Vatican. So perhaps there is a future for our common destiny and our enjoying together the feast of Sabbath?

Chapter 13.

Between Enthusiasm and Silence: Polish Catholic Theologians and the Jews

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Holocaust is the most difficult problem for theology as such, not only for Christians but also for Jews. This complex relationship can be simplified into three main camps. The first, what I call “the enthusiasts,” is represented by those theologians who perceive the Holocaust, Jews and Judaism as a means by which to overcome the narrowness of Polish Catholicism, which is focused on its own martyrology and nationalistic narratives. The second camp, “the skeptics,” is characterized by fear and elements of anti-Semitism. These theologians see Jews as a real threat to Polish identity. Finally, the third camp is represented by a few pluralist theologians in Poland who try to include “theology after Auschwitz,” with its consequences, into their theological reflections.

But first let me present the official position of the Catholic Church. For Christians, it is almost impossible to separate the suffering of the Holocaust’s victims from the death of Jesus on the cross. This interpretation is, of course, not acceptable for the Jews. However, this approach explains why Catholic theologians and Popes, dealing with the Shoah and the suffering of the Jewish people, place it in a Christian context. In the Catholic tradition it is natural to follow the voice of authority, to be a Catholic basically means the willingness to recognize the teaching of the Pope as obligatory. Although there are exceptions, as Cardinal John Henry Newman quipped, “Certainly, if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts, I shall drink to Conscience first, and to the Pope

afterwards”²³⁹. Nevertheless, this approach is not common. Most Catholics would drink first to the Pope. This is the reason why I would like to present the official position of the Pope toward the Holocaust.

Pope Benedict XVI in a speech delivered at Auschwitz on May 28, 2006 said:

To speak in this place of horror, in this place where unprecedented mass crimes were committed against God and man, is almost impossible—and it is particularly difficult and troubling for a Christian, for a Pope from Germany. In a place like this, words fail; in the end, there can only be a dread silence—a silence, which is itself a heartfelt cry to God: Why, Lord, did you remain silent?²⁴⁰

This humble attitude, on the one hand, evoked admiration from Christians and Jews in Poland, but on the other hand, does not help us understand why the tragedy happened, nor the role humans played in it.

When Benedict XVI quoted his predecessor we did not become wiser, on the contrary, for the reason that the Polish Pope spoke only about Poles: “Six million Poles lost their lives during the Second World War: a fifth of the nation.” John Paul II said this during his visit to Auschwitz in the year 1979 and since then this phrase has been frequently quoted and given rise to many different interpretations²⁴¹. Perhaps John Paul II was not aware that, in fact, he

²³⁹ J.H. Newman, *A Letter Addressed to the Duke of Norfolk on Occasion of Mr. Gladstone’s Recent Expostulation*, quotation from:
<http://www.newmanreader.org/works/anglicans/volume2/gladstone/index.html>.

²⁴⁰ All quotations from:
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060528_auschwitz-birkenau_en.html.

²⁴¹ Cf. A critical view of John Paul II attitude toward Jews: “The late Pope made some noteworthy gestures toward Jews; he met with Jewish communities all over the world and gave friendly messages on television. But a deeper look into his written and spoken words reveals a strong will to Christianize the Shoah and to introduce many ambiguities rather than reach clarifications”. Sergio I. Minerbi, “Pope John Paul II and the Jews; An Evaluation”, in: *Jewish Political Studies Review* 18: 1-2 (Spring 2006).

repeated communist propaganda, which silenced the annihilation of the Jews, and always referred, in this context, to “Polish citizens.” Although on several other occasions the Polish Pope did mention the suffering of the Jewish people, his teaching was not absorbed by his Polish audience.

What both Popes had to say in Auschwitz became the official explanation of Polish Catholics: we were victims; we suffered. Moreover, Polish Catholics were not able to identify within the number given by the Pope, that three of those six million Poles Jews perished. Considered from this perspective, for Polish Catholics the Holocaust is a part of their painful national history. This kind of historiography is hardly compatible with the facts, and with interpretations given by historians. Testimonies from that time also present a different picture. What we have in the Catholic interpretation is, according to Sergio Minerbi: “a strong will to Christianize the Shoah and to introduce many ambiguities rather than to reach clarifications”²⁴², or, in other words, a vision of the common destiny of Christians and Jews in front of the Nazi “ring of criminals”.

I would like to begin by discussing “the sceptics.” To this group also belong the theologians Jerzy Bajda (1928), Czesław Bartnik (1929), and Henryk Jankowski (1936). All of them cooperate with the chauvinistic, nationalistic and anti-Semitic newspaper *Nasz Dziennik*, and with Radio Maria, founded by Tadeusz Rydzyk, a notoriously anti-Semitic priest. This publication, which is represented as “the Catholic voice in your home,” and which Rydzyk uses to advertise Radio Maria, is a direct continuation of the anti-Semitic ideology of pre-war Catholic media in Poland.

Waldemar Chrostowski is a typical example of theologians of this persuasion. At the end of the 1990s, Chrostowski published the article, “The State of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue in the Perspective of the Universal Church and the Church in Poland”²⁴³. As a sign of

²⁴² Sergio I. Minerbi, “Pope John Paul II and the Jews; An Evaluation”, in: *Jewish Political Studies Review* 18: 1-2 (Spring 2006)

²⁴³ W. Chrostowski, “Stan dialogu katolicko-żydowskiego w perspektywie ogólno-kościelnej i polskiej”. Quoted after: <http://mateusz.pl/czytelnia/wch-sdkz.htm>.

progress in this dialogue he mentioned “mutual disillusion”²⁴⁴. In fact, he had in mind that both Polish Catholics and Jews had discovered an unknown face of one another, and this makes dialogue impossible, because, as he claims, their intentions are incompatible. In 2001, he presented a paper at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, which was later published in the Catholic weekly magazine *Niedziela*, under the title “The Ways and Devious Paths of Catholic Jewish Dialogue”²⁴⁵. Some of his points can be taken to be the authoritative ideology of the majority of Polish bishops, taking into consideration their public voice. First of all, according to Chrostowski, Catholics are characterized by their search for truth, while Jews are driven to make business—Holocaust industry²⁴⁶. The anti-Semitic events in Poland in 1968 were, according to Chrostowski, an internal communist game and not an expression of the anti-Jewish attitudes of Poles²⁴⁷. The most important issue for him is the theological concept of dialogue.

According to Chrostowski it is impossible to have a dialogue without recognizing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah for all²⁴⁸.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, “Miarą postępu w dialogu jest także to, że w pewnych przypadkach zdążyliśmy się do siebie nawzajem rozczarować”.

²⁴⁵ W. Chrostowski, “Drogi i bezdroża dialogu katolicko-żydowskiego”, Warszawa, 2001.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, “My więc chcemy ustalić prawdę, Żydzi natomiast skupiają się na tym, co jest prawdziwe dla nich, czyli możliwe do przyjęcia z ich perspektywy. Nakręcanie koniunktury "przemysłu Szoah" spowodowało nowe spojrzenie na "trójkąt": Niemcy, Polacy, Żydzi. Tym razem w gronie prześladowców coraz częściej obok Niemców umieszczano Polaków, podczas gdy jedynymi ofiarami pozostawali Żydzi. Cała wojna została sprowadzona do paradygmatu prześladowania Żydów przez nie-Żydów”.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, “Przejawem zastarzałej, peerelowskiej inżynierii społecznej jest przedstawianie tzw. wydarzeń marcowych z 1968 r. jako sprawy między Żydami a Polakami i Polską, podczas gdy trzeba je widzieć przede wszystkim jako przejaw i rezultat wewnętrznych rozgrywek w ramach byłej partii komunistycznej, w której ścierały się wzajemnie nieufne i niemal zawsze silnie zantagonizowane tendencje i frakcje”.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, “Nierozróżnianie judaizmu biblijnego od pobiblijnego oraz traktowanie tego drugiego jako zwyczajnej kontynuacji religii biblijnego Izraela miało i ten skutek, że mniej więcej od początku lat 80. zaczęło się forsowanie traktowania chrześcijaństwa i judaizmu jako dwóch równoprawnych dróg zbawienia. Nawet

For him, it is clear that Jews also need Jesus as a Messiah in order to be saved²⁴⁹. Chrostowski suggests that anti-Semitism is a marginal question, and even proposes a new definition of an anti-Semite, namely, a person who Jews do not like²⁵⁰. He also describes the dialogue in Poland in a very peculiar way: “the Jews want to have a dialogue only with selected groups, these which share their opinions”²⁵¹. Finally, Chrostowski sees Poland as a laboratory of Jewish-Polish dialogue, and is convinced that “we can find a way to overcome difficulties”²⁵². At the moment, Chrostowski’s way of representing dialogue becomes the position of most of Polish bishops²⁵³. There are only a few bishops who try to create space for a real theological and spiritual exchange between Catholics and

pewna grupa teologów chrześcijańskich, włączonych do dialogu katolicko-żydowskiego twierdziła, że dla chrześcijan drogą zbawienia jest Jezus Chrystus, natomiast Żydzi mogą się zbawić bez Niego. W tym kontekście zawrotną karierę zrobiła formuła, którą niegdyś przedłożył żydowski myśliciel Franz Rosenzweig: “Droga chrześcijan do Ojca jest przez Syna, natomiast Żydzi nie potrzebują Syna, bo zawsze byli z Ojcem”. Te słowa przejęli i uznali za swoje także niektórzy teologowie katolicy, również w Polsce”.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, “Cały Nowy Testament nie zostawia żadnych wątpliwości, że również Żydzi potrzebują zbawienia i pod tym względem ich sytuacja nie różni się od położenia nie-Żydów”.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, “Oprócz faktycznych antysemitów mnożą się antysemitami z nominacji. Antysemitami są nie tylko ci, którzy z jakichś względów nie lubią Żydów, lecz i ci, których nie lubią Żydzi”.

²⁵¹ Ibid, “Strona żydowska chce dialogu wyłącznie z tymi, których sama uzna za właściwych i przydatnych. To uwarunkowanie widać doskonale również w Polsce. Są u nas środowiska powiązane rodzinnie, zawodowo, społecznie, finansowo, które chętnie mówią i upowszechniają to, co się Żydom podoba. Znacznie rzadziej są skłonne uszanować tożsamość i wrażliwość katolicką i polską. Chodzi o krąg ludzi związanych z Gazetą Wyborczą, Tygodnikiem Powszechnym, Znakiem i Więzią, ale nie jest to pełna lista tytułów”.

²⁵² Ibid, “Mając na względzie wszystkie te okoliczności i uwarunkowania, można powiedzieć, że Polska jest w pełnym tego słowa znaczeniu laboratorium dialogu katolicko-żydowskiego. Te i inne napięcia znamy bowiem z własnej historii i doświadczenia. Zagłada Żydów została dokonana na naszych ziemiach i z pamięcią o niej mamy do czynienia na co dzień”.

²⁵³ He is a professor at UKSW (the head of the department of “Old Testament and Jewish Studies”) and the chief editor of “Collectanea Theologica” – a review of Polish theology.

Jews, for example: Stanisław Gądecki in Poznań; Józef Życiński in Lublin; Henryk Muszyński in Gniezno. Chrostowski can be summarized as follows: “we need a dialogue with Jews because this is the official position of the Church but we can’t change anything in our tradition.” Interesting that these theologians find support for their concept of dialogue in the teaching of John Paul II, and are unable to see any contradiction between their anti-Semitism and the official position of the Vatican. Zygmunt Bauman named the peculiarity of Christian anti-Semitism as a Jewish incongruity²⁵⁴. He proposed a special term for this attitude “allosemitism” (*allus*—other), in order to underline the otherness of Jews in Christian perception²⁵⁵.

I think that modern anthropology has developed useful tools for understanding this position. For example, Clifford Geertz’s conception of religion as a cultural system:

Religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seems uniquely realistic²⁵⁶.

Polish Catholicism is a perfect illustration of this, since it identifies religion with Polish national tradition and culture, and any attempt to change this identification is perceived as a threat to the national identity of Poles. Consequently, Geertz is right when he suggests that we have to analyze not only the religious system but also its relationship to “social-structural and psychological processes”²⁵⁷. Therefore, we have to consider why a hostile attitude toward any change of traditional theology dominates this way of

²⁵⁴ Z. Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, Ithaca, Cornell University, 1989, pp. 37-41

²⁵⁵ Z. Bauman, “Wytlumaczyć niewytłumaczalne”, in: *Wokół strachu*, Kraków, Znak, 2008, pp. 204-207

²⁵⁶ C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York, 1973, p. 90.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid*, “The anthropological study of religions is a two-stage operation: first, an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up the religion proper, and second, the relating of these system to social-structural and psychological processes” p. 125.

thinking. It seems to me that it has to do more with politics than with religion.

A this point I would like again to recall the concept elaborated by Bassam Tibi in the context of Islam. According to Tibi:

Its [Islam] strength lies in its ability to draw on an ideology rooted not only in a real religious faith but also that has assumed an intensely politicized expression. This process is referred here with the term the ‘religionisation of politics’, a neologism that, though hardly mellifluous, is needed to distinguish political religions that emanate from the politicization of religion from those which are sacralized forms of secular politics, such as fascism and communism. The religionisation of politics by jihadists, their extensive use of religious formulae and terms to articulate a political agenda, and their presentation of this strategy as a divine mission, result from the politicization of Islam into Islamism²⁵⁸.

It seems that the main obstacle to finding a balanced picture of the past in Poland has to do with the Church hierarchy’s idealization of its own tradition, and its unwillingness to recognize the positive contribution of other religious groups to its culture.²⁵⁹ We can also describe this phenomenon as “one-sided memory,” which underlines its own tradition and represses or even erases the tradition and memory of the “other.” We have to consider the problem of the Holocaust in this context. In the position described above we have an example of repression of the Holocaust, however, we can also see that this was not always so, but was also included in theological reflection in order to understand this darkest period in human history.

We all find such reflections among Polish theologians such as Michał Czajkowski (1934), Stanisław Musiał (1938-2004), and Romuald Jakub Weksler-Waszkinel (1943). Both Czajkowski and

²⁵⁸ B. Tibi, “The Totalitarianism of Jihads Islamism and its Challenge to Europe and to Islam”, in: *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religion*, vol. 8, no 1, March 2007, p. 35

²⁵⁹ K. Skowronek, *Między Sacrum A Profanum. Studium językoznawcze listów pasterskich Konferencji Episkopatu Polski (1945-2005)*, Kraków, 2006.

Musiał took part in a conference on “The Polish Catholic Church and the Struggle Against anti-Semitism,” at the Centre for Jewish Culture in 2000. I would like to recall their views. For Czajkowski it is obvious that the Church must struggle against anti-Semitism “because after all it follows from its own principles, from the message of the Gospel, the teaching of the Holy See, the Pope. And we know how strong the influence of this Church is in Poland, not only on the faithful, and not always positive”²⁶⁰. After recognizing that “a direct struggle against anti-Semitism is not very effective,” Czajkowski proposed a very concrete step:

The point is to sensitize young Poles to the Holocaust. It seems to me that it is very important to place different memoirs, reminiscences, even novels, but above all authentic documents, into the hands of our youth. I believe in the power of the written word, perhaps because I myself became more open to these issues from reading different memoirs, not only theology²⁶¹.

For Musiał the situation of Christian- Jewish dialogue in 2000 was not optimistic: “Today everything indicates that we have gone into hibernation. Worse. It seems to me that anti-Semitism keeps gaining new ground from which it was absent before”²⁶². His diagnosis is severe but realistic:

What is the Polish Church doing in such a situation? What efforts is it making to fight creeping anti-Semitism in the country and to educate the faithful for dialogue with ‘our elder brothers in faith’? It cannot be said that the Church takes no interest in this problem. Indeed it undertakes many efforts, but the efforts of the Church are marked by three deficiencies which I would call structural: 1. There is a lack of planned action. [...] 2. Opportunities created precisely in order to enhance Catholic-Jewish dialogue in Poland are

²⁶⁰ *The Polish Catholic Church and the Struggle Against Anti-Semitism. An Exchange of American and Polish Experiences*, ed. B. W. Oppenheim, Kraków, 2001, p. 37

²⁶¹ *Ibid*, p. 41

²⁶² *Ibid*, p. 52.

wasted. [...] 3. There is a lack of quick reaction to anti-Semitic excesses, reactions on local as well as national levels²⁶³.

Roman Waszkinel-Weksler in his two books dedicated to Jewish-Christian relations, highlights the role of John Paul II in Jewish-Christian dialogue [put those footnotes here if you like]. As far as I can see, the situation as of 2008 is not better, but is even worse. For real Christian-Jewish dialogue, we have to look outside of the institutional Church.

Within the ranks of the third group, the pluralists, are two theologians Waclaw Hryniewicz (1936) and Tomasz Polak. In the book *Hermeneutic in Dialogue* (1998)²⁶⁴, Hryniewicz follows Jewish theology (Heschel, Jonas) by elaborating a concept of God who is close to suffering mankind. For Hryniewicz there is no doubt that the Holocaust was hell on Earth²⁶⁵, and he claims that it is almost impossible for human beings to speak about this experience when God himself was silent²⁶⁶. For Hryniewicz, as a Christian theologian, Christ was present in the horror of the Holocaust.²⁶⁷ This presence is very problematic for Jews. And it seems to me that what this might mean has to be considered very carefully for Jewish victims, and whether we are not witnessing a new form of Christianization of the Holocaust, as we saw it in the teaching of Benedict XVI. Hryniewicz escapes this temptation by stating that in front of death the

²⁶³ Ibid, p. 53-54.

²⁶⁴ W. Hryniewicz, *Hermeneutyka w dialogu*, Opole, 1998, rozdz. III "Niepojęty Bóg w obliczu piekiel świata: ku teologicznej interpretacji Holocaustu", pp. 59-74.

²⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 61, "Doświadczenie Holocaustu ma w sobie coś infernalnego i jedyne w swoim rodzaju. Jak inaczej określić zabijanie Żyda tylko, dlatego, że był Żydem? Jak zrozumieć świadome dążenie do ponizienia ofiar i pozbawienia ich ludzkiej godności, zanim wyda się je na całkowite unicestwienie. Holocaust był piekłem na powierzchni ziemi".

²⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 65, "Jeżeli sam Bóg milczy w obliczu zwycięstwa zła w takiej godzinie, czy można odważyć się mówić?"

²⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 69, "Horror Holocaustu stał się symbolem najgorszego piekła na powierzchni ziemi. Wiara podpowiada mi, że w tym piekle degradacji człowieczeństwa obecny był Chrystus – obecnością uniozoną, kenotyczną, pozwalającą na to by działał człowiek".

differences among religions lose any significance, and that only the human face transformed by grace is a real sign of God's presence²⁶⁸. Hryniewicz's final conclusion is that a person who believes in God should be silent²⁶⁹. I think that it is very honest theology. Some years later, Hryniewicz returned to deal with the Holocaust in an article "In the darkness of Faith: Theology after Auschwitz: Christianity"²⁷⁰ published in the weekly magazine *Tygodnik Powszechny* for the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Again, for him, Christ was present in the Holocaust in a mysterious way²⁷¹, but in the face of this experience, both religions are helpless²⁷². He repeats his previous assertions that in front of death

²⁶⁸ Ibid, "W obliczu śmierci cóż znaczy przynależność religijna czy wyznaniowa? (...) Oblicze człowieka dotkniętego łaską wnosi niezastąpione światło w mroki ludzkiego piekła. Jest świadectwem obecności Boga", p. 72.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, "Im bardziej przybliżamy się do Niego, tym bardziej pogłębia się jednak poczucie Jego niepoznawalności. Taka jest doła ludzkiej wiary i nadziei. Po wielu słowach, Niepojętego Boga trzeba umieć uczyć milczeniem", p. 74.

²⁷⁰ W. Hryniewicz, W mroku wiary. Teologia po Auschwitz: chrześcijaństwo. „Tygodnik Powszechny” nr 5 (2899), 30 stycznia 2005: "Niepojęty Bóg pozostaje milczącym świadkiem ludzkiego cierpienia, współczującym i bliskim człowiekowi – rozumienie to uwalnia od buntu i pokusy oskarżania Boga o to, że nie stanął po stronie cierpiących”.

²⁷¹ Ibid, "Horror Holocaustu stał się symbolem straszliwego piekła na powierzchni ziemi. Tylko wiara podpowiada mi, że i w tym piekle obecny był Chrystus – obecnością unizoną, pozwalającą na to, aby działa się wola człowieka. Wola ta musiała się spełnić do końca w nocy ludzkiego cierpienia, "aby na jaw wyszły zamysły serc wielu" (Łk 2,35). W obozach śmierci ludzie boleśnie odczuwali niemoc i bezradność Boga – Jego milczenie wtedy, gdy wszystko wołało o interwencję”.

²⁷² Ibid, "Chrześcijaństwo i judaizm nie muszą pozostawać w stanie ustawicznej wrogości. W obydwu religiach żyje myśl o Bogu miłującym swoje stworzenia, współczującym ich niedoli i zdolnym do współcierpienia. Taka wizja Boga pogłębia poczucie solidarności i bliskości. Zarówno Żydzi, jak i chrześcijanie wierzą, że nie pozostaje On obojętny na wołania o ocalenie. Nie wiemy, jak potrafi On nadawać sens temu wszystkiemu, co ludziom na ziemi wydaje się jedynie całkowitą Zagładą i absurdalnym unicestwieniem. Nie wiemy, jak ocala On to, co po ludzku mówiąc jest nie do ocalenia. Nie wiemy, jak cierpienie, opuszczenie i rozpacz są przez Niego przyjęte i przeobrażone”.

the differences between religions become less relevant²⁷³, and the final word of the theologian must be silence²⁷⁴.

The theology of Tomasz Polak²⁷⁵ (1953) and his way of dealing with the Holocaust, even if he is not directly involved in Catholic-Jewish dialogue, is also worth noting in the context of this debate. Formulated in a different context, in that it does not concern the Holocaust, Polak raised the question: “how is mutual understanding between the two religions even possible?” According to Polak, dialogue between Christianity and Judaism is not only possible, but also necessary, before God. At the IX Day of Judaism in Poznań during 2006 he presented the paper “Faith Meets Faith: Relation between Christian and Jewish Faith and Reflection”²⁷⁶. The departure point of his reflection is the observation that Jews and Christians are in a similar, challenging situation in view of their previous opinions and beliefs²⁷⁷. The consequence of this challenge is the question of one’s own identity²⁷⁸. According to Polak, both Christians and Jews

²⁷³ Ibid, “W obliczu śmierci cóż znaczy przynależność religijna czy wyznaniowa?”

²⁷⁴ Ibid, “To nie Bóg jest przyczyną strasznego zła, które nazwano Zagładą. To nie z Jego woli poszło na rzeź tak wiele niewinnych ofiar. To człowiek wybrał okrutne szaleństwo. Można tylko pytać ze zdumieniem: czy aż taka jest cena daru wolności? Odpowiedź teologów nie będzie nigdy zadowolająca. Jeżeli sam Bóg milczy w obliczu zła w takiej godzinie, czy można mnożyć słowa?”

²⁷⁵ Till 30.04.08 he published as Tomasz Węclawski.

²⁷⁶ T. Węclawski, “Wiara spotyka wiarę. Relacja między wiarą i refleksją chrześcijańską i żydowską”, (Faith Meets Faith. Relation between Christian and Jewish Faith and Reflection) in: *Czerpiąc z korzenia szlachetnej oliwki. Dzień judaizmu w Poznaniu 2004-2007, (Drawing from the Root of the Well-Cultivated Olive Tree. The Day of Judaism in Poznan 2004-2007)* J. Stranz (ed.), Poznań, 2007, pp. 244-253.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, “Są takie sprawy wiary i płynącego z niej odniesienia do nas samych, do innych i do świata, w którym jesteśmy, które zwracają się przeciw uznanemu przez nas dotąd (czasem jedynie siłą przyzwyczajenia) obrazowi własnej religijności i pokazują wielkość wyzwania, przed jakim razem stoimy – wielkość przekraczającą nasze dotychczasowe ograniczone wyobrażenia o sobie samych i o sobie nawzajem”, p. 245.

²⁷⁸ Ibid, “Problemy tożsamości wyznaniowej są problemami prawdziwymi i niełatwymi, ale są one zarazem względne i słabe w stosunku do tego, co otwierają się przed nami – jako wyzwanie zawsze większe od tego, co już udało nam się pojąć

have to be aware that God is greater than their own imagination²⁷⁹. In other words, the Christian picture of Jesus of Nazareth has to be redefined. In his theological development, he renounces the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church, and a return to the historical figure of Jesus as a Jew, one of many messiahs in Jewish history who failed in his messianic mission²⁸⁰. I believe that this can serve as a good place to begin a new dialogue between Christianity and Judaism. I do not think that a critical view of one's own tradition is a sign of weak self-identity; on the contrary, only clear sense of identity allows for an honest and critical confrontation of one's past. Moreover, in my opinion, the pluralists' theology is the best way to overcome the exclusivist and arrogant attitude toward other religions (particularly toward Judaism). The traditional Christian interpretation of the Holocaust clearly shows this.

To conclude: The difference between these three groups is not only theological. The first, the "enthusiasts" (Czajkowski, Musiał, Weksler-Waszkinel) dedicated their intellectual-theological effort to the issue of the Holocaust and therefore they have been marginalized by the Catholic hierarchy, and are perceived as an alien and disturbing element by mainstream Polish bishops. Additionally, the general public does not see them as a legitimate part of the Church ("Musiał in Auschwitz"). The second group, the nationalists and anti-Semites, not only find support amongst many bishops, but they are perceived as the official and orthodox voice of the Polish Catholic Church. It is enough to mention, that *Nasz Dziennik* is the only newspaper to be recognized as the official daily of the Church,

i powiedzieć. (...) [to można] zastosować do sprawy relacji między wiarą i refleksją chrześcijańską a wiarą i refleksją żydowską", p. 246.

²⁷⁹ Ibid, "Jest jednym z najważniejszych doświadczeń wspólnej tradycji Izraela i chrześcijan, że Bóg pokazuje się nie zawsze tam, gdzie go oczekujemy, i niekoniecznie tym, których w naszym ludzkim pojęciu uznajemy za uprawnionych i godnych przyjęcia tego objawienia", p. 250.

²⁸⁰ Tomasz Węclawski, "Zanikająca opowieść", *Tygodnik Powszechny*, 2.3.2008; See also: Irving Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*, Philadelphia, 2004.

and it has a circulation of 200,000 copies. Moreover, many Polish Catholics (about three million), perceive Radio Maria as the only credible medium in Poland. It is also important to underline that the second group has very strong political influence, and is one of the main actors on the political scene. Almost every politician, particularly from the major parties, feels obliged to demonstrate loyalty to that media, while the first and the third groups are not engaged in politics, and, in fact, are supporters of the separation of state and religion.

The third group, the pluralists, is the less visible and has no influence on public opinion, and public debate, and is also totally ignored by the official Church in Poland. In my opinion, only the third group creates the necessary conditions for a real dialogue between Poles and Jews. However, in that case, it will not be a dialogue with the Polish Catholic Church, but with individual thinkers. At the present moment I do not see any possibility for an official Jewish-Catholic dialogue within the Catholic Church or with the Vatican, considering the approach of the present Pope, who is unwilling to recognize the complicity of Catholics, and the ambiguous role played by Pius XII and Catholic theologians during World War II²⁸¹.

²⁸¹ R. P. Ericksen, *Theologians Under Hitler*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985; K. P. Spicer (ed.), *Anti-Semitism, Christian Ambivalence, and the Holocaust*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2007; J. Cornwell, *Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII*, New York, Penguin Books, 1999.

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