

The Doctrine of End Times



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Attila Lovassy

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Rector's welcome

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary the Eschatology is a branch of theology concerned with the final events in the history of the world or of humankind or a belief concerning death, the end of the world, or the ultimate destiny of humankind. Specifically: any of various Christian doctrines concerning the Second Coming, the resurrection of the dead, or the Last Judgment. As for its original meaning in ancient greek: ἔσχατος + -λογία mean thinking or discourse, or observation of something related to the end.

The present collection of papers was born in a theological symposium organized by Apur Vilmos Catholic College in Vác, Hungary in 2024. Although the common approach of different contributors is the catholic theology, the subject matter of the book is very colorful. As we have seen, eschatology is both a specific and well-defined theological discipline and a very broadly interpreted concept. Does it mean the end and judgment of a human life? The end of clergy, or the Church itself as the process of secularization? The end of humanism, human mankind? Or the end of the present reality as the beginning of the eternity either in a personal life (beatification or canonization as a new quality after the natural life), or in our common history (like the Kingdom of God in the Lord's Prayer)? So many aspects of the same expression. Adding to all this the very moment of Jesus Christ's sacrifice which and who is the beginning and the end, the alpha and the omega at the same time... The diversity of the volume is reflected in the genres, methods and style as well.

The aim of the lectures that served as the basis for the studies was to address both the professional audience and the interested public at the same time. I am convinced that every reader can be and will be interested in the written papers as well.

Welcome the thoughts of our speakers, read, reflect, and continue to debate the exciting questions!

Zoltán Gloviczki

rector

Apur Vilmos Catholic College

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“Thy Kingdom Come” - An Eschatological Reading of One of the Petitions of the Lord’s Prayer

1. Introduction

In this study, I analyze one of the ideas of the central prayer of the Christian religion, known as the *Our Father*, namely the petition “Thy kingdom come!” from a grammatical and theological perspective. I seek answers to the following questions: What is the *Our Father*? What is its structure and what are its most important features? What does the second petition mean grammatically and theologically within the text? Finally: what does it call the modern worshiper to?

In order to find answers, I will first present the *Our Father* in general terms, record its basic principles in the light of the Scripture and modern research, and then turn to discussing the second petition. My examination cannot, of course, be exhaustive, which would on the one hand go beyond the framework of this short study, and on the other hand, the almost incomprehensible literature also poses a serious challenge to both the researcher and the reader. In the course of my work, I will strive to present the second petition in a focused and clear manner.

2. General Presentation of the Lord’s Prayer¹

Despite the fact that the text of the prayer is widely known not only among religious people, it seems useful to begin our investigation with a definition. “Our Father, *the Lord’s Prayer*: the opening word of the petitionary prayer that Jesus himself taught his

¹ In this subsection, I primarily used the study by Kocsis, Imre, *A Miatyánk: Jézus és tanítványai imája* in: *Közelítések a Miatyánkhoz: Értelmezések és tanulmányok az ökumenizmus jegyében*, Schöck ArtPrint Kft., [no place] 2022, 69-84, and I used other works as a supplement. I included both the guiding Kocsis study and the other works in footnotes.

disciples, is connected with the understanding that an individual prayer is always a sign of belonging to a religious group (*Luke 11:1*). The Our Father has survived to us in 2 places in the Gospels, in different versions and contexts.”² J. L. Houlden believes that the idea of the *Our Father* can also be discovered in the Gospel of John, primarily in the material of chapter 17, traditionally called Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer.³

Before further details, here is the text of the Lord’s Prayer in Greek (Mt 6:9-13)⁴ and Latin⁵:

Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς·
 ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου,
 ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου·
 γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς
 ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς· τὸν
 ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς
 ἡμῖν σήμερον· καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν
 τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν, ὡς καὶ
 ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις
 ἡμῶν· καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς
 εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς
 ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ.

Pater Noster, qui es in caelis:
 sanctificetur Nomen Tuum;
 adveniat regnum Tuum, fiat
 voluntas tua, sicut in caelo
 et in terra. Panem nostrum
 quotidianum da nobis ho-
 die; et dimitte nobis debita
 nostra, sicut et nos dimitti-
 mus debitoribus nostris; et
 ne nos inducas in tentatio-
 nem; sed libera nos a Malo.

1. table The text of the Lord’s Prayer in Greek and Latin

The Lord’s Prayer is found in two New Testament books, namely the two major synoptic Gospels, in Greek⁶. In the case of Matthew, the first in canonical order, our text (Mt 6:9-

² art. *Miatyánk* in: HAAG, Herbert [ed.] *Bibliai lexikon*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 1989, 1252. I left the highlights as they were in the original, and I removed the abbreviations.

³ HOULDEN, J. L., art. *Lord’s prayer* in: FREEDMAN, David Noel [ed.], *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* 4, Doubleday, New York 1992, 356.

⁴ *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine* [ed. NESTLE, Eberhard - ALAND, Kurt], Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2016²⁸ (hereinafter referred to as: NA28), 14-15 (Greek).

⁵ *A Katolikus Egyház Katekizmusának Kompéndiuma*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2006, 197.

⁶ Jesus’ native language was Aramaic, so several people, such as Joachim Jeremias and John F. Fitzmyer, have translated the biblical text back into this language. KÓCSIS, *A Miatyánk: Jézus és tanítványai imája*, 72, 5. endnote (which can be read on page 82). I am referring to a Hungarian proposal. Reformed pastor Pál Németh translated the Matthew text, along with the doxology, back into Aramaic. See NÉMETH, Pál, *Az arámi nyelvű Miatyánk* in: TIMÁR, Gabriella [ed.], *Isten háza küszöbén*, Dunamelléki Református Egyházkerület Ráday Gyűjteménye, [no place and no date] 134-137. By the way, the original Aramaic text could most likely have been: “Father - Hallowed be your name - Your kingdom come - Give us this day our daily bread - And forgive us our debts - as we have forgiven our debtors - And lead us not into temptation.” For the text of the solution to the original Aramaic text see art. *Miatyánk* in: HAAG, Herbert [ed.] *Bibliai lexikon*, 1254. I left the original punctuation.

13) is part of Jesus' first great discourse⁷, the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). The immediate context of the Lord's Prayer is Jesus' teaching on prayer. Before teaching prayer, Jesus refers to the prayer habits of two groups and warns his disciples not to turn to God in this form. First, he presents a Jewish custom (*"who love to pray in the synagogues and on the street corners before men, to be seen by them"*), which he calls hypocrisy (Mt 6:5-6). He then draws attention to a pagan prayer practice (*"do not talk a lot like the pagans, for they think that they will be heard immediately when they speak"*), which he also condemns (Mt 6:7-8). The Lord's Prayer is then recited, which he introduces with the exhortation: *"This is how you should pray"* (Mt 6:9). In the Gospel of Luke (Lk 11:1-4), the prayer is recited in a different position. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem (Lk 9:51-19:27), and relatively early in the journey a stop occurs, which his disciples probably witness. *"It happened that he was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples asked him, »Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples.« He said to them, »When you pray, say this«"* (Lk 11:1-2). Here, then, the immediate context is related to Jesus' own prayer, but the broader context is also a teaching on prayer. Both texts show the difference and novelty of the prayer taught by Jesus compared to the prayer practices of the time. Matthew emphasizes the first aspect, while Luke emphasizes the second.⁸

In a previous study, Imre Kocsis presents the context of the *Our Father* in both Matthew and Luke in more detail. In Matthew's version, it is part of the section Mt 6:1-18, in connection with which he notes that "in Matthew's Gospel, the Lord's Prayer is found within the Sermon on the Mount in the framework of a prayer catechesis"⁹. In Luke, too, the *Our Father* is found within the framework of a teaching unit on prayer, and also at the beginning of it (Lk 11:1-13).¹⁰ In the case of Matthew, Donald A. Hagner discusses the *Our Father* within the framework of the section Mt 6:7-15, which he gave the following title: "On the Right Way to Pray: »The Lord's Prayer«"¹¹. Within this, he

⁷ There are five major discourse units in the Gospel of Matthew, which are: 1. Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7); 2. Missionary Discourse (Mt 10:1-11:1); 3. Collection of Parables (Mt 13:1-53); 4. Church Discourse (Mt 18:1-19:1); 5. Eschatological Discourse (Mt 24:1-26:1). The closing formulae of the discourses are very similar ("And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished [these sayings/parables]"), which makes the editorial process probable. KOC SIS, Imre, *Bevezetés az Újszövetség könyveibe*, Szent István Kézikönyvek 18, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2019, 261.

⁸ KOC SIS, *A Miatyánk: Jézus és tanítványai imája*, 71.

⁹ KOC SIS, *Az Úr imádsága: Exegetikai megfontolások a Miatyánk két változatához (Mt 6,9-13; Lk 11,2-4)* in: TARJÁNYI, Béla [ed.], *Út, Igazság, Élet: Biblikus tanulmányok*, Szent Jeromos Katolikus Bibliatársulat, Budapest 2009, 97.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 97-99.

¹¹ HAGNER, Donald Alfred, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary 33A, Nelson Thomas Publisher, Dallas 1993, 143, the commentary *ibid.* 143-152.

distinguishes three parts: 1. true prayer (Mt 6:7-8); 2. an example of correct prayer (Mt 6:9-13); 3. speaking about the importance of forgiveness between people (Mt 6:14-15).¹²

Regarding the context, Gerhard Lohfink points out that “the Lord’s Prayer is primarily a disciple’s prayer”¹³. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew’s Gospel begins with these lines: “*Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he opened his mouth to speak. Thus he taught them*” (Mt 5:1-2). In the Lucan context cited above, it is also clear that the disciples are the recipients of the teaching of the Lord’s Prayer. According to Gerhard Lohfink, therefore, for both contextual and substantive reasons, the Lord’s Prayer is the disciples’ prayer.¹⁴ John Nolland refers to Grässer’s opinion, according to which “the prayer, as we presently have it, developed at a time when the delay of the Parousia was no longer a problem”¹⁵.

Two fundamental differences can be identified between the two versions of the Lord’s Prayer after reading the texts. The first is the difference in the address. Matthew uses “Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς” while Luke uses “Πάτερ”. Furthermore, the Matthew text contains seven petitions, while the Luke version contains five, because the third and seventh petitions are not included. In connection with these differences, several theories have emerged in biblical scholarship regarding the origin of the texts. According to one idea, the two versions rely on the same written source. Another approach considers the form of the prayer used in the liturgy as the model for the text, that is, it places the emphasis on the verbal tradition. It is likely that Luke’s version is closer to what Jesus said to the ears of his disciples. If Matthew’s version is the more ancient, then Luke’s abbreviating method would be incomprehensible. Joachim Jeremias points out the following in this regard. “Based on what we know about the laws of liturgical texts, in cases where a shorter version has survived in a longer form, the shorter one must be considered the original. Who would have dared to eliminate 2 petitions from the Lord’s Prayer if it had been part of the oldest tradition? At the same time, the opposite is attested to by many data, that in early times the liturgical texts were modified, expanded, and enriched before they could crystallize.”¹⁶ Imre Kocsis draws the following conclusion in

¹² Ibid. 146.

¹³ LOHFINK, Gerhard, *A Miatyánk új értelmezésben*, Lectio Divina 17, Szent Maurícius Monostor-L’Harmattan, Bakonybél-Budapest, 2017, 26.

¹⁴ Ibid. 25.

¹⁵ NOLLAND, John, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary 35B, Nelson Thomas Publisher, Dallas 1993, 611.

¹⁶ Quoted from art. *Miatyánk* in: HAAG, Herbert [ed.] *Bibliai lexikon*, 1252. I have solved the abbreviation in the article.

another study on this: “in terms of the address and the number of petitions, the Luke version is closer to what Jesus taught, but in terms of the use of words, the Matthew version is closer”¹⁷. The interpolation of the text presumably took place in the context of the liturgy. The two petitions inserted are in line with the person and teaching of Jesus, and according to Heinz Schürmann, Jesus primarily intended to provide a guide for prayer, so the Lord’s Prayer was originally spoken from Jesus’ lips as a flexible text. There is a third, striking difference in the Lord’s Prayer, which is not to be found between the two versions, but between the scriptural text and the liturgical use of the Lord’s Prayer. The oldest codices (e.g. *Codex Sinaiticus*, *Codex Vaticanus*) do not contain the doxology used at the end of the text in the liturgy, meaning that originally it was not part of the prayer, but was transferred to the text from the communal worship. It is worth mentioning in this connection that the *Didache* (8:2-3) from the end of the 1st century AD gives the Matthew version almost verbatim and adds a two-part doxology: “For yours is the power and the glory forever”. The reason for this may be that the glorification of God was an essential part of Jewish prayers and this was missing in the community using the Matthew text. Another liturgical-type of change is indicated by the textual variant in late manuscripts, and also known by Saint Gregory of Nyssa (335/336-394) and Saint Maximus the Confessor (580-662), which stands in place of the second petition and reads: “Come, Your Holy Spirit, and purify us”¹⁸. The text of the *Our Father* was probably modified to this effect during the administration of the sacrament of baptism.¹⁹ In the early Christian Church, the *Our Father* was introduced to catechumens (*traditio orationis*) towards the end of their preparation time. In this liturgical practice, the *Credo* and *Pater noster* were placed on the same level, since both were received from the Church during the catechumen training of those preparing to receive the sacraments of initiation.²⁰ Finally, “it is also important to state that we use the redaction of the Lord’s Prayer according to the Gospel of Matthew in our ceremonies – the text used in our ceremonies and the text found in the Gospel of Matthew are in complete agreement”²¹. In general, these can be stated in relation to the two texts of the Lord’s Prayer.²²

¹⁷ KOCSIS, *Az Úr imádsága*, 102.

¹⁸ KOCSIS, *A Miatyánk: Jézus és tanítványai imája*, 73, 6. endnote (which can be read on page 82).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ LOHFINK, 26.

²¹ KAJTÁR, Edvárd, *Az Úr imádsága a római egyház liturgiájában* in: *Közelítések a Miatyánkhoz: Értelmezések és tanulmányok az ökumenizmus jegyében*, Schöck ArtPrint Kft., [no place] . 2022, 61.

²² KOCSIS, *A Miatyánk: Jézus és tanítványai imája*, 72-73.

Structurally, the first three petitions are about God and are traditionally called *you*-petitions, while petitions 4-7 are about man and are called *we*-petitions.²³ Gerhard Lohfink divides the seven petitions, noting that the first three petitions are in 2SG, while the second group of petitions is in 1PL. He also points out that “when translated back into Hebrew, this division is even more marked by rhythm and rhyme. The first part is characterized by the *-eka* ending, while the second part by the *-enu* ending”²⁴.

Taking these into account, the structural division of the text of the *Our Father* can be given as follows.

address: *Our Father, who art in heaven,*

1st petition *hallowed be thy name;*

2nd petition *thy kingdom come,*

3rd petition *thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

4th petition *Give us this day our daily bread,*

5th petition *and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;*

6th petition *and lead us not into temptation,*

7th petition: *but deliver us from evil.*

closing doxology: *For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.*²⁵

When examining the relationship of the Lord’s Prayer to the Jewish community, biblical scholars usually mention two prayers. One is The Eighteen Blessings²⁶ (*Semone Eszre*), the other is the Kaddish prayer. The Eighteen Blessings took its final form in the first half of the 1st century AD, but behind some elements of the prayer, of course, more ancient usage can be detected. The structure of the prayer is as follows: the text is framed by texts of praise and thanksgiving (1-3; 17-18 blessings). The main text (4-

²³ Ibid. 76-81.

²⁴ LOHFINK, 32. Highlighting in the original.

²⁵ The text of the Lord’s Prayer comes from <https://www.usccb.org/prayers/our-father> (last viewed: 22.12.2024). The text of the closing doxology comes from <https://www.english.op.org/godzdogz/our-father-doxology-for-the-kingdom-the-power-and-the-glory-are-yours-now-and-for-ever-amen/> (last viewed: 22.12.2024).

²⁶ Imre Kocsis provides the text based on the Hungarian Catholic Lexicon. See art. *Semone eszré* in: *Magyar Katolikus Lexikon* <https://lexikon.katolikus.hu/S/Semone%20eszr%C3%A9.html> (last viewed: 20.12.2024).

16 blessings) can be divided into two large parts: requests related to earthly man (4-9 blessings) and eschatological (10-16 blessings). Both content and structural similarities can be demonstrated with the Lord's Prayer, but beyond these there are also striking and serious differences. The other prayer is the Kaddish prayer, which also dates back to the 1st century AD. "May his great Name be glorified and hallowed in the world, which he created according to his will. May his rule be established in your lives in your days, in the lives of the whole house of Israel, soon and in the near future."²⁷ Regarding this prayer, it can be said that the thought of the first two petitions of the Lord's Prayer can be clearly demonstrated in it. The Lord's Prayer therefore has points of connection with the prayer texts of Judaism, but in addition to the undeniably existing points of contact, the differences are also noteworthy. According to Imre Kocsis's assessment, these are the following: 1. The petitions are very short.²⁸ 2. The text has a universal perspective. 3. It is inseparable from the person and outlook of Jesus, so the true worshipper can only correctly recite the Lord's Prayer by looking at Jesus, which is primarily the prayer of the disciples and those who are open to Jesus Christ.²⁹

Gerhard Lohfink³⁰ makes the following five comments on the Lord's Prayer, which in his opinion fundamentally introduce and characterize the text.

1. A completely petitionary prayer. In his opinion, Jesus could have taught his followers other types of prayer, but he chose this type perhaps because he was sensitive to man's fragility and need for security, which are expressed in requests.

2. The prayer is short. Lohfink finds the explanation in the Sermon on the Mount, since Jesus, among other things, wants to counterpoint the verbosity of the pagans.

3. To the point. *The Eighteen Blessings* prayer, already referred to above, approaches the subject from a "further" perspective. It cannot be ruled out that a kind of monarchical etiquette also lurks behind the longer prayer texts, where it "takes" a long "space" and time to get to the ruler. In the case of ancient Eastern prayers, the essential beginning

²⁷ KOC SIS: *A Miatyánk: Jézus és tanítványai imája*, 75, 12. endnote (found on page 82) quotes the text from György Jakubinyi's Matthew commentary: JAKUBINYI, György, *Máté evangéliuma*, Szent István Bibliakommentárok 3, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2007², 81.

²⁸ "The brevity of the prayers is also evident when compared with other Jewish prayers. (...) Of course, short prayers are also known in the Jewish tradition, but these are private prayers of individuals (...). The Our Father, on the other hand, is not a private prayer, although it can be prayed individually." KOC SIS: *A Miatyánk: Jézus és tanítványai imája*, 75, 13. endnote (found on page 82).

²⁹ KOC SIS: *A Miatyánk: Jézus és tanítványai imája*, 73-76.

³⁰ LOHFINK, 27-34.

and address of the Lord's Prayer stand out even more clearly.³¹ According to Lohfink, "this prayer belongs to the new family of disciples. Therefore, it lacks the solemnity and formality of court ceremonies"³².

4. The things of God are more important than the things of men. The first three petitions concern God, the second group of petitions is related to the needs of men. In this, we can recognize Jesus' words: "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Mt 6:33). Thus, "whoever makes God's cares his own, God will take care of him"³³ but God has priority.

5. God's action through men. The grammatical form of the first three petitions allows for two interpretations: either God or man is the one who acts. This ambivalent interpretation option in Jesus' thinking is intended to express the truth that God is the one who takes the first step, but the active cooperation of man is also essential for the successful following of God by the prayerful.³⁴

3. "Thy Kingdom Come." - Analysis of the Second Petition

3.1. Grammatical Notes

I will briefly analyze the text of the second petition in several languages, in which I will not discuss the textual criticism, but will start from the translations included in the main text of the editions. In the case of the Greek text, I will present the material from NA28 and the aforementioned *Didache*, in the case of the Latin one, the translation of St. Jerome and its revised form, and finally I will discuss two English texts.

3.1.1. Greek Texts

According to NA28, the texts of Mt 6:10 and Lk 11:2 are completely identical and read as follows: "ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου"³⁵. In the text of *Didache* 8:2 we find the same literally,

³¹ Lohfink quotes from the beginning of an Akkadian prayer, which reads: "Glorious God, firstborn of Anu, perfect minister, child of Enmesarra, glorious Papsukkal, firstborn of Anu, perfect minister, child of Enmesarra..." LOHFINK, 29.

³² Ibid. 30.

³³ Ibid. 32.

³⁴ Ibid. 27-34.

³⁵ Mt 6:10 *Novum Testamentum Graece et Latine* [ed. NESTLE, Eberhard - ALAND, Kurt], Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 2016²⁸, 14; Lk 11:2 Ibid. 230.

only the first word begins with a capital letter, but the words, word order, and accent marks are identical to the biblical text: “Ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου”³⁶.

The word ἔλθτω is the inflected form of the verb ἔρχομαι and is in the third person singular of the active imperative aorist.³⁷ Zsigmond Varga’s Greek-Hungarian New Testament Dictionary gives the general basic Greek meaning of the verb as follows: ‘goes’, ‘arrives’, ‘comes’, but he further clarifies this with regard to the New Testament, in which he discusses the word ἔρχομαι in six points. When the author of the dictionary refers to the phrase ἔλθτω ἡ βασιλεία σου – in connection with which he refers to the passages in Mt 6:10, Lk 11:2; 17:20; 22:18 as examples –, he clarifies the content of σου, which means τοῦ θεοῦ, or τῶν οὐρανῶν. He translates the sentence itself as “Let the kingdom of God come true”^{38, 39}.

As I indicated above, the verb itself in the sentence is in the imperative aorist. The aorist primarily “in contrast to the imperfect, when narrating past events, denotes events that have occurred once and have actually occurred”⁴⁰. Since “the mode of the predicate of the imperative sentence is imperative for the 2nd and 3rd persons”⁴¹ – which, in the aorist, “concerns a particular case, the one in question”⁴² – we find an interesting teaching expressed in linguistic form in the Greek text of the second request. Béla Hankovszky notes in this regard that “it follows from the expression of what he asks for has not yet been realized. The grammatical structure, the aorist imperative, also gives the petition an eschatological character – one that will be realized in the end times”⁴³. On the one hand, it refers to a punctual, past-tense, already-occurring event, and on the other hand, it makes a request, which is incomprehensible in relation to the past; but based on the context and meaning, the imperative clearly dominates, not the aorist. Zsigmond Varga specifically notes that the general Greek meaning of the word ἔλθτω is: ‘comes’, ‘goes’,

³⁶ <https://ujszov.hu/text?corpus=3&book=301&chapter=8&verse=2> (last viewed: 20.12.2024).

³⁷ <https://ujszov.hu/text?corpus=2&book=201&chapter=6&verse=10#!2010060100000101> (last viewed: 20.12.2024).

³⁸ art. ἔρχομαι in: VARGA, Zsigmond J., *Újszövetségi görög-magyar szótár*, Református Zsinati Iroda Sajtóosztálya, Budapest, 1992, 374.

³⁹ Ibid. 371-375, the fifth point ibid. 374.

⁴⁰ BOLONYAI, Gábor - FORRÓ, Orsolya – KULIN, Veronika, *Bevezetés az ógörög nyelvbe*, Bölcsész Konzorcium, Budapest 2006, 63.

⁴¹ MAYWALD - VAYER - MÉSZÁROS, *Görög nyelvtan*, Antiquitas-Byzantium-Renascentia VIII, ELTE Eötvös József Collegium, Budapest 2014, 233, 139. §. B. 3.

⁴² Ibid. 233, § 139. B. 3. 2. I have resolved the abbreviation in the text.

⁴³ HANKOVSZKY, Béla, *Jézus és a Miatyánk*, L’Harmattan, Budapest 2009, 45. The author uses the verb in this place to mean “let it be evident”.

'returns,' 'will come,' but these also have a future aspect.⁴⁴ According to Béla Hankovszky's extremely insightful remark regarding the explanation of the word in connection with the petition, "the petition is directed at a one-time coming, expected in the future. We must not misinterpret it and think that this coming is some kind of event that will be realized as a slow process, perhaps with human help. God will be the only acting person, he will show his long-awaited kingdom"⁴⁵.

The meaning of the noun ἡ βασιλεία, -ας in the entire Greek language is: 'kingdom,' 'royal power,' 'reign,' 'dominion'. Zsigmond Varga analyzes in two subsections, in particular detail, the theological contents denoted by the word in the corpus of the New Testament, supplemented by abundant reference material. In the first point, he gives the profane meaning of the word appearing in various texts, which is the same as its general meaning (e.g.: Lk 19:12.15; Rev 1:6; Acts 1:6; Heb 1:8). In the second point, we find an analysis of the word, which is of outstanding importance for our topic, in which 'God's royal reign, dominion, »the kingdom of God«' is mentioned.⁴⁶

The word βασιλεία is of course a translation in its present form, behind it lies the Hebrew *malkut*.⁴⁷ The Hebrew מַלְכוּת means 'royal power,' 'rule,' 'royal dignity,' 'reign time,' 'kingdom,' 'empire,' 'royal'.⁴⁸ The Aramaic מַלְכוּת means 'royal rule,' 'royal dignity,' 'kingdom'; in Dan 6:5 'governance,' 'administration'.⁴⁹ According to *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, the basic meaning of מַלְכוּת is 'kingdom,' and it gives the nuances in three points. 1. 'kingdom,' 'realm,' 'kingship,' 'rule'; 2. 'royalty,' 'royal status,' 'royal robes'; 3. '(period of) reign'.⁵⁰ These linguistic solutions, translation and definition attempts overlap greatly, and can be interpreted as practically synonymous words, with some nuanced differences.

The word σου (yours) is the genitive form of the 2SG of the personal pronouns (*pronomina personalia*), which means 'to you,' 'about you'.⁵¹ In the text of the *Our Father*, there is no accent on the word, because it is also one of those words that "if they are not

⁴⁴ art. ἐρχομαι in: VARGA, Zsigmond J., Újszövetségi görög-magyar szótár, 371.

⁴⁵ Quoted by HANKOVSZKY, 45.

⁴⁶ art. βασιλεία, ας, ἡ in: VARGA, Zsigmond J., Újszövetségi görög-magyar szótár, 135-138.

⁴⁷ HANKOVSZKY, 46.

⁴⁸ art. מַלְכוּת in: FOHRER, Georg - ÜRGE Alajos [ed.], *Héber-arám-magyar bibliai szótár*, Opus Mystici Corporis, Vienna 1993, 170 (trans.: Liptay, György).

⁴⁹ art. מַלְכוּת, ibid. 364.

⁵⁰ art. מַלְכוּת in: CLINES, David J.A [ed.], *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew V*, Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 2001, 323-325.

⁵¹ MAYWALD - VAYER - MÉSZÁROS, *Görög nyelvtan*, 103, 67. §.

stressed, they are consonants”⁵². Since the penultimate syllable of the word βασιλεία is the stressed (second syllable), the following rule applies: “after a *second syllable*, a monosyllabic consonant loses its accent”⁵³.

3.1.2. Latin Texts

In the *Vulgate* (hereinafter: Vg), there is a minimal difference between Mt 6:10 (*veniat regnum tuum*) and Lk 11:2 (*adveniat regnum tuum*).⁵⁴ In the *Nova Vulgata* (hereinafter: NVg), the two passages are completely identical (*adveniat regnum tuum*) to each other and to the text in VgLk 11:2.⁵⁵

There is therefore a slight difference in the verb between Vg and NVg. “The large number of verbs with a preposition is a characteristic of the ecclesiastical Latin language. In many cases, verbs with a preposition are simply more emphatic forms of simple verbs, the difference in their meaning is negligible.”⁵⁶ The meaning of *veniō* 4 is diverse, not all of which I will describe (I give additional grammatical information given in the dictionary in brackets): ‘comes’, ‘goes’, ‘arrives’, ‘marches’, ‘presses against someone or something (*ad*)’, ‘acts against someone (*contra*) in court’; figuratively: ‘approaches’, ‘occurs (time)’; ‘gets into a certain situation or state (*in, ad*)’; ‘reaches a certain distance (in speech)’; ‘originates from somewhere (*de, ex*)’, ‘arises’, ‘happens’, ‘occurs (dative)’; ‘it comes to someone (dative)’.⁵⁷ *Adveniō* 4 means ‘it comes’, ‘it arrives (*ad, in, dativus*)’; ‘it comes’, ‘it approaches (time)’; figuratively: ‘it comes to him’, ‘it contributes’.⁵⁸ Thus, we can see that there is indeed very little difference between the two words, that is, the meaning of the Vg and NVg texts can be considered the same. In the sentence, the verb is in the active conjunctivus praesens imperfectum 3SG, which in this case is *conjunctivus jussivus*, because “the present

⁵² Ibid. 104, 67. §. 1.

⁵³ Ibid. 33, 17. §. 1. b. Highlighting in the original.

⁵⁴ Mt 6:10 *Biblia Sacra: Iuxta Vulgatam Versionem* [FISCHER, Bonifatius editor-in-chief], Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart 1983³, 1533; Lk 11:2 Ibid. 1629.

⁵⁵ NVg Mt6:10 https://www.vatican.va/archive/bible/nova_vulgata/documents/nova-vulgata_nt-evang-matthaeum_lt.html#6 (last viewed: 20.12.2024); NVg Lk 11:2 https://www.vatican.va/archive/bible/nova_vulgata/documents/nova-vulgata_nt-evang-lucam_lt.html#11 (last viewed: 20.12.2024).

⁵⁶ COLLINS, John F., *Az egyházi latin nyelv alapjai*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2022, 63.

⁵⁷ art. *veniō* in: [GYÖRKÖSY, Alajos ed.] *Latin-magyar szótár*, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest 1978, 589. I have resolved the abbreviations in the article.

⁵⁸ art. *adveniō* in: [GYÖRKÖSY, Alajos editor-in-chief] *Latin-magyar szótár*, 18. I have resolved the abbreviations in the article.

tense of the subjunctive can be used in the third person to express an order (...). Its translation into Hungarian is imperative third person”⁵⁹.

The word *rēgnum*, - ī, n. has four meanings in the Latin-Hungarian dictionary by Alajos Györkösy. These are: 1. 'royal rule', 'kingdom', 'royal house', figuratively: 'country', 'kingdom', 'empire', 'throne'; 2. 'rule', 'government'; 3. 'monarchy', 'tyrannical rule', 'despotic rule'; 4. figuratively: 'estate', 'territory'.⁶⁰

The word *tuum* is the inflected form of the possessive pronoun (*pronomem possessivum*) 2SG.⁶¹ The Latin possessive pronoun “is inflected according to the model of the three-ending adjectives belonging to the I-II declensions. (...) If the subject of the sentence is the possessor, we do not usually put the possessive pronoun; we only put it when we want to emphasize the person of the possessor”⁶². In our case, we find an example of the latter.

3.1.3. English Texts

In the *Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition* (hereinafter: RSVC), the Matthew and Luke texts are completely identical (*Thy kingdom come*)⁶³, while the biblical texts on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops are consistent with each other and differ from the RSVC text in only one word (*your kingdom come*)⁶⁴.

The old expression *thy* means: your⁶⁵, that is, the reason for the difference between the two versions is that the archaic expression was replaced with a modern form in the text found on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The content of the prayer has not changed.

⁵⁹ COLLINS, *Az egyházi latin nyelv alapjai*, 199.

⁶⁰ art. *rēgnum* in: [GYÖRKÖSY, Alajos editor-in-chief] *Latin-magyar szótár*, 476. I have unmarked it in the figurative sense.

⁶¹ NAGY – KOVÁTS – PÉTER, *Latin nyelvtan a középiskolák számára*, Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, Budapest 1998²⁹, 45, 34c.

⁶² Ibid. In Greek, the nominative case means emphasis, because “the nominatives of personal pronouns are only emphasized when they are stressed”. MAYWALD – VAYER – MÉSZÁROS, *Görög nyelvtan*, 104, 67. §. 4.

⁶³ Mt 6:10 *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition*, Saint Benedict Press, Charlotte 2009, 8 (numbering restarts at the New Testament section in the edition); Lk 11:2 *ibid.* 83.

⁶⁴ Mt 6:10 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/matthew/6> (last viewed: 20.12.2024); Lk 11:2 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/luke/11> (last viewed: 20.12.2024).

⁶⁵ ÁBRAHÁM, Károlyné,-, EGEY Emese, *Learn from me*, Károli Gáspár University of the Hungarian Reformed Church, Budapest 2001, 10.

3.2. Theological Analysis

Xavier Léon-Dufour, in connection with the preaching of Saint John the Baptist, notes that the concept of the Kingdom of God was not clear in Jesus' time.⁶⁶ Several ideas were associated with the concept, including political-military (the restoration of an independent Israelite national kingdom, which also meant the expulsion of the occupying Romans) and spiritual expectations. "Jesus confirms the imminent coming of the Kingdom, but rejects any calculation"⁶⁷ regarding when it will be realized, "since these are not about the essence, that is, conversion. On the other hand, Jesus does not abolish the expectations. He does not identify the Church to be founded with the Kingdom of God. The Church is only a *temporary moment* in the coming of the Kingdom of God"⁶⁸.⁶⁹ The author indicates in the article 'King, Kingdom, Country' that "it is not always easy to distinguish between the Country and the Kingdom. In the Gospels, it can only be translated as »kingdom« if the context suggests a specific spatial meaning"⁷⁰. In Israelite theology, the ideal of kingship is inseparable from the person of YHWH. In Jesus' time, the national kingdom no longer existed, since in 63 BC Pompey had annexed Palestine to the Roman Empire⁷¹, so "everyone was waiting for Yahweh to finally rule over the entire universe, Israel and the nations. This hope meant, on the one hand, political restoration, liberation from Roman slavery, and, on the other hand, spiritual transformation. The Kingdom of God is not essentially a place, but a specific relationship between God and people, especially the poor. In this sense, Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God is very near: this is the good news"⁷². Furthermore, "His kingdom is not of this world. He was made king by God only by his resurrection"⁷³. Jesus also speaks of the Kingdom of God as a present reality, not merely a future promise, and at the end of his earthly ministry, he does not object to being seen as king, but he does not wish to exercise this office according to human expectations.⁷⁴

⁶⁶ Here I refer to the fact that in the Gospel of Matthew, John the Baptist and Jesus begin their public ministry in Israel with identical sentences, which are completely and literally the same. "Μετανοείτε, ἡγγικεν γὰρ ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν" (Mt 3,2; 4,17).

⁶⁷ LÉON-DUFOUR, Xavier, *Az Újszövetség értelmező kéziszótára*, Új Ember Kiadó, Budapest 2008, 76.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 77. Highlight by me.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 76-77.

⁷⁰ *art.* király, királyság, ország in: LÉON-DUFOUR, *Az Újszövetség értelmező kéziszótára*, 366.

⁷¹ KOCSIS, *Bevezetés az Újszövetség könyveibe*, 40.

⁷² *art.* király, királyság, ország in: LÉON-DUFOUR, *Az Újszövetség értelmező kéziszótára*, 366-367. There is a progression in the text between points 2 and 3, I did not mark this in the quote.

⁷³ Ibid. 367.

⁷⁴ Ibid. 366-367.

According to Imre Kocsis, “it is undeniable that the petition for the Kingdom of God (the 2nd petition in both versions) refers to the end-time fulfillment of God’s reign. (...) But the final, glorious fulfillment of God’s reign is yet to come, and in the Lord’s Prayer we pray for this fulfillment”⁷⁵. The author draws attention to the fact that the exegetical considerations regarding the seven petitions of the Lord’s Prayer are not entirely uniform. He distinguishes two large groups. One group attributes an exclusively eschatological character to the petitions, while the other group considers a slightly more nuanced formulation of this to be probable, namely that only the first three petitions can be clearly identified as pointing to the end-time.⁷⁶ The eschatological character of the text is in any case undeniable, since the Church teaches in this regard: “The full meaning of the *Our Father* is revealed in the eucharist since its petitions are based on the mystery of salvation already accomplished, petitions that will be fully heard at the coming of the Lord”⁷⁷.

“The term »country« is misleading because it refers to a defined territory. The Greek original would be better reflected by the word ’reign, rule.”⁷⁸ This also raises the possibility of a revision of the second petition of the *Our Father* text used in the liturgy. “The reign of God can only be realized by God himself, but the reign of God has already arrived in the person of Jesus (Lk 17:20). The petition therefore seems primarily eschatological (...). At the same time, one must accept the reign of God that has already arrived in Christ, and they must say yes to it (...). Thus, the second petition also has a current meaning that affects our history, insofar as it also applies to the divine reign that is among us.”⁷⁹

Gerhard Lohfink – as I mentioned above – draws attention to the grammatical tension between the first three and the second four petitions. The first three are in the form of the *passivum divinum*, probably in order to express the worshipper’s respect for God, whose name he does not say. In contrast, this kind of politeness aspect does not apply at all in the second series of petitions. According to Lohfink, the *passivum divinum* used

⁷⁵ Kocsis, *Az Úr imádsága*, 107.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 106.

⁷⁷ *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, point 581. https://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html#The%20Lord%C3%82%E2%80%99s%20Prayer:%20%C3%82%E2%80%9COur%20Father%C3%82%E2%80%9D (last viewed: 21.12.2024). Highlighting in the original.

⁷⁸ JAKUBINYI, György, *Máté evangéliuma*, Szent István Bibliakommentárok 3, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2007², 34.

⁷⁹ HANKOVSKY, 46.

in the case of the first three petitions is intended to express that the subject of the sentences appears ambiguous, since it can be God himself or human beings. “The first three petitions of the Lord’s Prayer therefore formulate this fundamental theological insight: God is the initiator. He acts, but he cannot do anything if he does not find people in the world whose will is the same as his, and who give space to his world, since God wants man to be free.”⁸⁰ Thus, we can conclude that even the external form of the Lord’s Prayer carries a teaching.⁸¹ Furthermore, we can generally state that in Jesus’ time “the absolute realization of God’s reign was expected for the end times”⁸².

There is a fundamental cultural difference behind the use of the terms *Kingdom of God* and *Kingdom of Heaven*. Matthew, who uses the latter term, takes into account the Jewish tradition that God’s name was not pronounced or written down, but was instead described. The other two synoptic authors, who write to the Gentiles, do not have to pay attention to this, so they use the more direct term of kingdom of God.⁸³

Finally, I quote the teaching of the Church: “The *Our Father* is the »summary of the whole Gospel« (Tertullian), »the perfect prayer« (Saint Thomas Aquinas). Found in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5-7*), it presents in the form of prayer the essential content of the Gospel”⁸⁴.

4. Conclusion

Based on the above, I can briefly answer the questions posed in the Introduction as follows. The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer taught by Jesus, which is primarily the prayer of His disciples. Its structure is clear and unambiguous, the backbone of which is the seven petitions. Among its characteristics, I will only refer here to the brevity of the text and its possible connections with Jewish prayer texts. The second petition asks for the coming of the reign of God, which is actually already among us in the person and work of

⁸⁰ LOHFINK, 34.

⁸¹ Ibid. 32-34.

⁸² JAKUBINYI, 34.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church*, point 579. https://www.vatican.va/archive/compendium_ccc/documents/archive_2005_compendium-ccc_en.html#The%20Lord%C3%82%E2%80%99s%20Prayer:%20%C3%82%E2%80%9COur%20Father%C3%82%E2%80%9D (last viewed: 21.12.2024). Highlighting in the original.

Jesus Christ. The prayer invites the follower of Christ today to direct his attention, with the help of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit, to the Father, who is already acting, but the fulfillment of his reign is still to come.

I conclude my work with the words of Ruth Burrows. “Jesus teaches his friends a prayer that includes everything he wants to teach them and everything he asks of them.”⁸⁵ Accordingly, if someone wants to follow Jesus, they must pay special attention to this prayer.

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⁸⁵ BURROWS, Ruth, *Az imaélet lényegéről*, A Kármel látóhatára, Sarutlan Kármelita Nővérek, Magyarország 2017³, 29.

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Confession of an Influencer from the 14th Century – Saint Birgitta of Sweden’s Mystical Vision on the Individual Judgement of a Young Girl

Introduction

In her visions, St. Birgitta (Bridget) of Sweden (1303-1373) writes mainly about her fellow contemporaries, and she is typically tackling societal, social, and political topics. Many times, she also gives moral advice to educate people about a way of life which pleases God.

In her eschatological visions, she writes about the souls in general terms without mentioning their names, usually identifying them only by their societal status such as knight, nobleman, bishop etc.

Sometimes, when it was necessary to better understand the vision, Birgitta added some lines or paragraphs as notes. In the vision selected for the present analysis, she also added a short note to give a context. From these additional lines we learn that the vision is about a young girl who made a personal vow to keep virginity, although later she changed her mind, got married, and she died due to delivery complications while giving birth to her most likely first child.¹

The vision the present study focusses on, vision Rev.IV/51² is a relatively short one, around two pages long, although it contains some unusual elements which show us something extraordinary compared to Birgitta’s other visions on individual eschatology.

¹ MORRIS, Bridget – SEARBY, Denis, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, Volume 2., Oxford University Press, 2008., Chapter 51, p 100, point 26.

² MORRIS, Bridget – SEARBY, Denis, *The Revelations of St. Birgitta of Sweden*, Volume 2., Oxford University Press, 2008., 98-100. I have already used this chapter in a study submitted to the 36th National Scientific Student Conference in 2023, titled „*The individual eschatology of Saint Birgitta of Sweden*”; this current study, however, will focus on this chapter more in detail.

Another reason for selecting particularly this one is the fact that even though we are talking of a young woman who died in the 1350s, some of her expressions reach throughout time and space and could be said by a young person today.

I have named this lady as a 14th-century influencer, because a young person today with a similar mindset to hers, who constantly wishes to capture the attention and earn the recognition of her fellows, would probably be found on TikTok. Besides that, I thought an audience composed of college students might find similarities with her and through that fellow-like feeling they might be attracted stronger by the educational message than through the individual judgment story of another person of different societal status or age group.

Birgitta's visions are timeless and call all age groups because in these descriptions she covers very common everyday human sins which were typical not only in her own time, in the 14th century, but which are also committed by people living among us these days. In her stories, we may recognize ourselves or our family members and friends the same way as people living seven hundred years ago understood their own sins better by reading these chapters. In the vision used at the conference we may discover the sins of vanity and pride.

Saint Birgitta of Sweden and the Revelationes

The nearly seven hundred chapters of the *Revelationes celestes*³ were noted down by St. Birgitta of Sweden in the second half of her life, during the thirty years of her widowhood between 1344 and 1373. The *Revelationes* counted as a popular and widespread reading which had nine printed editions issued between 1492 and 1680. 150 copies in Latin language are reserved in European and North-American libraries.⁴

³ KÖRÖSINÉ DR. MERKL HILDA, senior lecturer at ELTE BTK Faculty of Scandinavian Languages and Literature, translated a selection of texts from the *Revelationes celestes* into Hungarian (Kairosz Kiadó, 2016). I will also use the expression “*Mennyei kinyilatkoztatások*” [Heavenly Revelations] when referring to the book in Hungarian. As the word „*revelations*” is usually applied in biblical context, I will use the word *Revelationes* when I will refer to Birgitta's book – this will follow the wording applied by international researchers as well. Rev.IV means the 4th volume of *Revelationes celestes* and 51 means its 51st chapter. The anomalies around the word „*revelations*” were clearly shown at the Council of Basel, where the Bridgetines-Order initiated to give the *Revelationes* the same authority as the Bible. The Council of course rejected the initiative in 1436, and the *Revelationes* was allowed to be published only with commentaries until 1470. (FREDRIKSSON, *Challenging and Championing St Birgitta's Revelations at the Councils of Constance and Basel*, 128., 130.).

⁴ SAHLIN, *Birgitta of Sweden and the Voice of Prophecy* 19.

The visions were arranged in books by bishop *Alfonso Pecha da Vadaterra* who was Birgitta's confessor during her last years of life.⁵

There is no agreement among today's Birgitta-researchers⁶ to what extent Fr. Alfonso changed the texts. The discussion about probable substantial changes is based on the vision *Extravagantes 49*.⁷ This chapter was omitted from the first editorial choices and it became part of the main corpus only later. The highest probability is that Birgitta, even though she was a good daughter of the Church and fully cooperated with her confessors, had an overall control over her text. As she was a knowledgeable lady, she even checked the translation into Latin, so we can safely say, she played an active part in the process.⁸

The story behind chapter *Rev.IV/51* used at the Final Times Conference was on the other way around: it was not part of the main corpus, but it was preserved in the collection of a Norwegian Birgitta-cloister.⁹ This might have happened, because the early distribution of the texts was not a coherent process, and for this reason there might be differences among the different language version collections.

Magister Matthias, a canon of Linköping, who was Birgitta's confessor in Sweden and her first mentor,¹⁰ convened an ecclesiastic board in 1346 to examine whether Birgitta was obsessed.¹¹ This committee in Stockholm cleared her name, and reached a conclusion to find her to be a visionary. Based on this result, Magister Mathias decided the visions should be translated into Latin to be widely distributed.¹²

Birgitta's beatification was a swift process still in 1391 closely following her death in 1373. Even though her beatification was completed, the Council of Constanze (1414-1418) and the Council of Basel (1431-1449) convened further committees to discuss whether the *Revelationes* was heretical or not. Most likely, both processes were politically motivated. In the end, both examinations resulted in a statement claiming the book as orthodox, and, following that, it became possible to get permission for distributing the text in printed copies.¹³

⁵ LUONGO, *God's Words, or Birgitta?*, 26.

⁶ Some well known international researchers of Saint Birgitta of Sweden are Thomas F. LUONGO (*Tulane University*), Maria H. OEN (*Stockholm University*), Anders PILTZ (*Lund University*), Claire L. SAHLIN (*Texas Woman's University*), Bridget MORRIS (*University of Hull*).

⁷ MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol. 4 266-267.

⁸ More details on this topic in: KONDOROSI, *Svéd Szent Brigitta egyéni eszkatológiája*, 5-6.

⁹ MORRIS-SEARBY, op.cit. Vol.2. 98, footnote*.

¹⁰ KŐRÖSINÉ, op. cit.143.

¹¹ OEN, *Sight, Body and Imagery in the Visionary Experiences of Birgitta*, 194.

¹² MORRIS-SEARBY, op.cit .Vol 1. 41.

¹³ More details on this topic in: KONDOROSI, *The individual eschatology of Saint Birgitta of Sweden*, 9-11.

The Status of the Revelaciones

Unavoidably, a doubt may raise whether Birgitta, who was part of the highest society in Sweden, and who had received an education appropriate to her aristocratic rank, which meant she could read, write and express herself also in Latin, had been able to write the Revelaciones on her own, or whether she really had had visions.

To start with: we know her library.¹⁴ Even though besides the Holy Scriptures she owned religious books which could be called spiritual books, these were collections of sermons and meditations. She did not own any systematic theological or dogmatic books. There are only very few of her letters preserved,¹⁵ but the writing style is significantly different from the tone of the vision chapters, which could be seen as an indirect proof that she was not writing the Revelaciones as a literature book or a story.

Another indirect proof of the real nature of the visions is that at least some of them reflect a theological mindset which cannot be derived from scholastic views, and sometimes these elements are so progressive that we can find them again several hundred years later.¹⁶ We can assume she would not have been able to write in such clear and innovative ways unless she had received the information as private revelations, as she and her confessors stated. We will see in Rev.IV/51.examples of such modern sorts of approaches which could not be seen in medieval times.

In the 1700s Pope Benedict XIV classified the Revelaciones of *sententia pia* and *sententia probabilis* which permitted the distribution and the reading of the texts, but the content was not mandatory to believe.¹⁷ Three hundred years later, the classification is still similar: „*The Church, which has recognized Birgitta’s sainthood without giv-*

¹⁴ KÖRÖSINÉ, op.cit. 130.

¹⁵ MORRIS-SEARBY, op.cit. Vol. 4 322-339.

¹⁶ The Book of Questions or Book V. of the Revelaciones is particularly interesting from this angle (MORRIS-SEARBY Vol.2. 271-325), because its last text, called Revelation 13, is fragmented. The way of reviving this vision is among the rare exceptions when Saint Birgitta fell into a rapture and received the whole, multi-part and very complex story on one single occasion. Her servants got frightened because of the length of her seeming unconsciousness, and they started to gently shake her until she got back to her senses. Revelation 13 starts with complex pictures and a lengthy explanation. However, its second part first becomes incoherent and loses its inner logical order. Then it suddenly stops leaving the whole train of thought unfinished and, consequently, the initial images unexplained. Had Birgitta invented her stories herself, she could have finished the text on awakening when being again in her full sensory capacity. But the text was left unfinished and incoherent, suggesting that she was unable to complete it without heavenly inspiration.

¹⁷ FREDRIKSSON *Challenging and Championing St Birgitta’s Revelations at the Councils of Constance and Basel*, 130-131.

ing an opinion on her private revelations accepted the general authenticity of the inner experiences.” – said Pope Benedict XVI during a General Audience in 2010.¹⁸

Moreover, even though Birgitta noted down her visions during a long period of thirty years, one cannot discover any development or substantial changes in her theology. This consistency is unusual in the scientific world, and this can also be some sort of proof that she received these thoughts from the unchanging God.

Individual Judgement of a Young Woman

The vision Rev.IV/51. starts with the description of a judgement scene. Birgitta, like in other similar cases, participates in it as a silent observer. The naked soul of the deceased person arrives at judgement accompanied by a demon called Ethiopian and portrayed as a black figure, and a guardian angel appearing like a knight with weapons. She does not describe them in more details but refers back to other visions: „*whom I had seen earlier*” (Re.IV/51, point 1.) At this point of the story neither the demon, nor the guardian angel touch the soul suggesting her afterlife is not yet decided.

Contrary to other individual eschatological visions, Birgitta does not spend time describing the place either. The only point we learn is that they arrive to see the judge and everything happens in front of a big multitude of creatures.¹⁹

The story begins with the complaint of the guardian angel as if we were already in the middle of a discussion: „*It is not right to bring up as a reproach against this soul the sins for which she has made reparation in confession.*” (Rev.IV/51, point 4)

A frequent motive of the judgement-scenes is a debate over the validity or invalidity of the sacrament of reconciliation, highlighting the importance of the confession in view of the afterlife perspectives of a dying person.

To the attempts of the guardian angel the answer comes from a book: even though the soul made some penance, she only superficially regretted her sins. Even in this early part of the situation the book gives a hint: suffering awaits this soul.

¹⁸ POPE BENEDICT XVI, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedictxvi/en/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20101027.html (Accessed: 22 August 2024).

¹⁹ In Rev.IV/7, points 1-2. she writes, “*It was as though she saw an unfathomably vast palace where there were countless figures dressed in white and shining clothes, each of whom seemed to have his or her own seat.*” (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.2. 36).

Until this point, the girl was calm and waiting: „*She stood there naked and sorrowful, not knowing to what place she would come.*” (Rev.IV/51, point 2) The English translator, Denis Searby, interpreted it in his footnote as: she did not know „*where she would take refuge*”.²⁰ I do not agree with this interpretation. The girl is not seeking refuge; as we need to read the whole text from a theological perspective, we need to see this element also from that angle, and we can understand from the context that this soul is not sure about her salvation, and is anxious about her future in the afterlife.

Referring back to the whole description: even though the demon and the guardian angel accompanied the soul to see the judge, she stood alone and none of them touched her. Again, I refer to other judgement scenes: in other chapters of the Revelations cursed souls are either brought to the judgement more clearly by the devil,²¹ or we may see immediate salvation.²² Any other times in the Revelations when we see both the devil and the angel present in a scene, but not touching the soul, Birgitta’s descriptions always suggests to the reader that the future of the soul has not been decided yet: her sins committed during life are graver than granting her immediate salvation, but she is not sunk in sin to such an extent that she is to be sentenced to hell, which means, there is still room for mercy.

Saint Birgitta received these visions to educate the living in order that they could understand God’s justice and mercy through the individual judgement of others.²³ The particularity of the chapter is, as I have already referred to, that the soul has a conversation with a book. In other judgement scenes the judge is Christ, portrayed by Birgitta in different ways, such as a brilliant Sun sitting on a high throne or a Judge at a courtyard. In those stories, the Lord is represented more explicitly. Christ is present in this vision too, but he talks rarely during the scene. The main character, the girl, has a conversation with this certain book, and for this reason I will write later more on this book-motive.

²⁰ MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.2. 98, footnote 1.

²¹ „*A soul was brought before the judge. Four Ethiopians followed her in, saying: „Behold our prey! We chased her and took note of all her ways, and she has now fallen into our hands.*” (Rev.VI/31, point 51) (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3.).

²² The Prior of the monastery of Skara called Brother Algot immediately gained salvation. In a vision Birgitta saw him raised to Heaven like a shining star: „*And, see, a most beautiful star was rising up to the heights of heaven*” (Rev.VI/31, point 42) (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3, 67).

²³ This is clearly indicated in vision Rev.VII/13 point 77 about Birgitta’s own son, Karl’s individual judgement scene: „*You should know that God has shown you this vision not only for your own consolation but also so that the friends of God might understand how much he is willing to do for the sake of the prayers and tears and work of his friends, when they pray with charity for others and work for them with steadfastness and good will.*” (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3, 233).

Returning to the overview of the chapter: following the words of the book the girl breaks and begins to sob violently. Then the king talks. As one paragraph above the guardian angel starts to talk unexpectedly as if we were already in the middle of a conversation, Christ, who was called so far a judge, is now named a king. This small detail shows again the previously mentioned unedited nature of the text resulting in such inconsistencies. In other chapters, the motives and details follow each other in a more logical order. Based on this text, we may have an idea about the original format of the visions as Birgitta remembered what she had experienced.^{24 25}

The king calls the girl to name her sins based on her conscience for which she has not given yet a remedy. The girl was silently sobbing up to this point, and now she suddenly cries out. The loudly crying soul is a frequent motive in the visions as well as the expression „*Woe is me.*” Birgitta interprets the scene as if the girl cried so loudly that „*could be heard throughout the whole world*” (Rev.IV/51, point 8). I see it as a manifestation of the universal nature of her confession, which cries over time and space and formulates generic human sins. Also, crying out with a force may show the unexpected nature of understanding something important.

„*I did not act according to God’s commands, which I heard and knew!*” (Rev.IV/51, point 8) is another frequent self-blame during the visions.²⁶ The book’s reaction is shocking: „*You must therefore now fear the devil.*” (Rev.IV/51, point 8) This immediate rejection and rigid wording is an unusual tone in the visions. In other chapters conversations are longer, and the soul experiences patience until its sins and good deeds are carefully considered.

²⁴ In the Middle Ages, Birgitta was challenged, because compared to other visionaries, her Heavenly interlocutors were not dictating her word by word what to write. She either drafted herself, or dictated her experiences. She had hearings and visions, and she received them in many different ways (in an extasy, in a dead-looking state, or fully awake, sometimes through a word-by-word dictation, a one-second-long vision which she developed later, and she even had a description of a mystical pregnancy when God turned and moved in her heart as a living child in a mother’s womb (Rev.VI/88 point 1, MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. 74-78). Her education was a disadvantage as well, because she knew how to read and write. Other contemporary visionary women were uneducated, and for this reason it was easier to believe they were presenting true visions to their confessors and not some sort of deceptions (OEN, *The Locus of Truth*, 19). In addition, the text was admittedly an edited text: Birgitta’s visions arrived in details which were to be constructed together. For example, her son Karl’s judgement scenes arrived to Birgitta in details between 27 February and 11 May 1372 (Rev. VII/13. 227-233). This edited nature of her books raised some suspicions.

²⁵ She fell into extasy only on rare occasions, typically, she was fully aware and in full capacity of her senses. A rare example is book Rev.V., also known as the Book of Questions. (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.2.).

²⁶ „*Woe is me, second, because I did not fear God’s justice as I should have.*”- cried loudly the high seneschal of Naples Niccolò Acciaiuoli in Rev.IV/7, 45, following his judgement. More details in KONDOROSI *Történelmi személyek a túlvilágon.*

Following this sentence, the girl starts to have fears and dread. The description presents us an intense emotional curb. At the beginning – as we have seen – the calmly awaiting soul started to sob violently, then cried out loudly, and now it is afraid and full of terror.

We are talking about a short and concise text. It is heartbreaking for a reader to see such an emotional change within a couple of lines. Even though the text is brief, the intense feelings involve the reader: we feel anxious for the girl who has apparently just started to understand her situation. Her self-blaming is not unknown in the visions: Birgitta frequently condemns her contemporaries for the lack of love towards God.²⁷ The book reacts immediately to this sin as well: the soul stands then rightfully closer to the devil than to God.

The girl has a correct but late realization: „*I understand now that everything I did was done on the promptings of the devil.*” (Rev.IV/51, point 10) The book agrees again and speaks about her probable punishments. The deceased girl admits she was vain and proud. Even though she does not say it explicitly, we may add *flirty* as well, because she says: „*I washed my hands and face not only in order to be clean but also to be beautiful by men.*” (Rev.IV/51, point 12) The book gives an immediate judgement: since she listened to the devil, he will give her the wage of her deeds. (same, point 13)

The soul continues: „*My mouth was often open for bawdy talk, because I wanted to please others, and my heart longed for all those things provided it did not result in worldly disgrace or disapproval.*” (same, point 14)²⁸ Bawdy talk is so typical of today that a modern young person could say the above sentence. And, apparently, young people could achieve admiration of their fellows in the mid-1300s as well. The book describes in details the punishment for bawdy talk: her teeth will bite the tongue and everything she liked will be taken away from her. (same, point 15)

„*I enjoyed it immensely when many people took after my example and noticed what I did and copied my manners*” (same, point 16) – this is the phrase why I called her as

²⁷ Again, I will quote from Niccoló Acciaiuoli's scene: „*His first woe was that he had loved God little*” Rev.IV/9, 14).

²⁸ I always feel a bit guilty when the girl complains she never met with disapproval by the world. We are responsible for each other and when a young person behaves badly, we should warn and protect them. I would like to refer to another young girl, a daughter in a three-generation family story where she is blaming her mother to give her a bad example that had excluded her from salvation: “*Listen, scorpion, mother mine! Alas for me, whom you wickedly deceived! You put on a happy face for me, but stabbed me gravely in the heart. You gave me three pieces of advice from your own lips. I learned three things from your deeds. You showed me three paths as you made your way ahead.*” (Rev.VI/52, 77-78. MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3.) We should not be quick to judge these young ladies appearing on the pages of the Revelations, because they might have seen bad examples around them.

a 14th-century influencer in the title of my presentation. The judgement of the book is horrible: she encouraged others to sin, and for this reason she will receive their future punishments atop of hers, and her pains will grow every time someone copies her manners. (same, point 18-20) We learn it at faith courses and know it from spiritual guidance books that it is a sin to attempt or lead someone else to sin, yet the description about the multiplication of the punishment is dreadful.²⁹ It is not unprecedented in Saint Birgitta's visions to picture the consequences of sin coming back on the person who originally showed bad behaviour.

In a family story of three generations we can see a similar example of the multiplication of the punishment in the complaint of a damned grandmother: *“So let me tell you that each time you turn your eyes about with look of pride, as I taught you, you throw boiling poison with an unbearable sting in my eyes. Each time you speak proud words, as you learned from me, I have to swallow the most bitter of drinks.”* (Rev.VI/52, point 37-38)³⁰

The confession of the girl ends here. We immediately jump to the brutal pictorial description of the punishment without further conversation or consideration of alleviating circumstances:³¹ a chain appeared around her skull and deformed it until her eyes fell out of their sockets, her tongue was stretched and her teeth pressed into it, and her bones broke. (Rev.IV/51, point 18-20) Horrible pictures line after line.

In Birgitta's descriptions we frequently see terrible, sometimes disgusting pictures. Even though we are talking about souls, the descriptions and the pain caused by the tortures sound quite physical. Her heavenly interlocutors frequently emphasize in other chapters that because Birgitta still lives in a human body, she would not be able to understand what she sees unless through physical analogies as those appearing in the above description.³²

²⁹ Widening the picture, one may shudder from the thought that while in the 14th century a girl might have had a bad influence only on a handful of others in her immediate environment, today a celebrity, a model, a sportsman or a singer may reach even hundreds of thousands or tens of millions of young people through Instagram, TikTok and other social media tools.

³⁰ MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3.

³¹ Again, I would like to refer to other visions in which the Virgin Mary or saints intervened in favor of the deceased person: *„The second is his abstinence on days of fasting from unpermitted work, from sin and even from carnal pleasure and temptation.”* – says a guardian angel in favor of a man's soul. (Rev.VI/39, 66), and some lines below a saint argues for the salvation of the same soul: *„Praise to you, Lord God, creator and judge of all! This soul served me devoutly in life. He fasted in my honor and praised me and your friends around you with his salutations.”* (Rev.VI/39, 107.) (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol. 3.).

³² *„However, my bride, since you are in a material body, you cannot perceive and comprehend like a spirit. Therefore, for your sake, I will explain to you what has happened.”* (Rev.I/28, 1-2) (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.1).

In fact, we do not know exactly what the judgement, the purgatory or hell look like because our earthly mind could not grasp it. But through the descriptions we may have the understanding that these are some sort of punishment which cause grave pain.^{33 34}

At this point, the devil speaks for the first time during the scenario. He is usually not that passive, but in other chapters he blames, plays tricks, and brings up even the smallest sin the soul has committed.³⁵ Here he awaits to see how the situation evolves. The scene started with the words of the guardian angel, then we heard the book, the king, and a conversation between the soul and the book. Maybe, because of the punishment just seen the devil feels it is his time now: the conversation is over, the girl is a great sinner, and she is damned forever. For this reason, the demon asks the judge to attach the soul to him.

This is a frequently applied element of individual judgement scenes when the damned soul is attached to the devil indicating the punishment will last forever and will never change.³⁶ This is a sign of mercy from the Lord that he is hesitant to do it and continuously examines the soul, and usually the devil needs to ask this act several times, before the attachment is agreed.³⁷

However, the guardian angel still has not given up his protegee. He refers to the last thought the girl had, in which she promised to improve her life and not to hurt God ever again if God lets her live a bit longer. (Rev.IV/51, point 22-23) The angel's request is in line with the Church's teaching: all persons can freely return to the Lord while still alive.³⁸ The angel is continuous arguing with the young age of the girl emphasizing that due to it, she was not fully aware of her wrongdoings. The book reacted immediately as before: „*Last thoughts such as these do not deserve hell.*” (Rev.IV/51, point 25)

³³ The Catholic Church teaches that damnation is more than a psychological regretting, it is a punishment, and it is causing pain to the soul. We do not know how and what it is exactly, but it is a real pain. (FILA, *A kegyelem beteljesedése*, 223-224) Tibor Görföls refers to Hans Urs von Balthasar: „*This is more than a pedagogical frightening*” (GÖRFÖL Tibor, *Isten és a valóság. Teológiai kisesszék*, L'Harmattan Kiadó, Budapest 2016., 52.).

³⁴ Even with picturesque descriptions and analogies, there are cases where Birgitta did not understand what she had seen, such as in Rev.IV/50 (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.2). This proves her faithfulness: she wrote it down as well as she could, even without understanding it properly.

³⁵ For example, in one vision the devil states this: „*I shall now enumerate his sins.*” (Rev.VII/13, 35) (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3).

³⁶ „*Then the demon answered: „So, judge, since this soul followed my will and you have repaid her a hundred times over for everything due from you, sentence us to be joined together!*” (Rev.VI/31, 28) (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3).

³⁷ „*The judge replied: „Let the soul make her intentions known, what she thinks about being joined together with you.*” (Rev.VI/31 30) (MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3).

³⁸ FILA, *A kegyelem beteljesedése*, 213.

Young age alone would not have helped her, we know very young saints³⁹ as well who were fully aware of the importance of their lifestyles. For me, this clearly weak reasoning shows the faithfulness of the guardian angel to his protected one, because he wanted to use no matter how small an argument to save her. The book's reply mirrors this: it accepts the last thought as a saving circumstance and does not even react to the age reference.⁴⁰

We have to consider carefully the interpretation of the angel's words because on superficial reading, these lines may sound as if the girl had not received sufficient time. This understanding is obviously wrong, because God always gives sufficient amount of time for reconciliation, even though this time window is open only until death.⁴¹ The girl's last thought brought her sufficient mercy for salvation – even though through purification. In this way, it is more precise to understand the guardian angel's phrase as the girl had not fully considered the grave nature of her sins due to her young age, and maybe at a more mature stage of life she might have made better lifestyle choices.

The scene is closed by the judge's words: in view of his [Christ] sufferings, the girl is sentenced to a cleansing process in the purgatory, but she is saved from hell. (Rev.IV/51, point 25) That is a frequent twist in Birgitta's descriptions where sinful, worldly souls, who did not think of God during their lives, will be saved from damnation because of their last thoughts, even though they may need to undergo a lengthy purgation process.

Deeper Levels of the Chapter

In the vision we can see a twisty, rich and educational story coming alive in front of our eyes like a video. We can even see with our inner eyes this girl: rich, young, beautiful, full of life, popular, the centre of her societal group, who finds herself suddenly in trouble.

Her psychological reactions seem credible. She was wealthy. She did not have any reason to assume that she may not have a lengthy and happy life. This is the reason why she was unprepared for death. Childbirth was a risky business at that time, but as she was young and

³⁹ For example, a recently deceased young Italian, Carlo Acutis.

⁴⁰ I quote her words: „*Lord, I believe you are my God. Son of the Virgin, have mercy on me for the sake of your bitter passion! I would willingly reform my life now, if I only had the time.*” (Rev.VI/52, 111) – These are the words of last thought of the daughter from the three-generation story. This is beautiful and reassuring to recognize from Birgitta's vision descriptions that the Lord is not only merciful but consistent as well. The two girls (the vain girl and this cited daughter) use nearly the same wording in their last thoughts. The Lord reacts in the same way to the same words: with mercy.

⁴¹ FILA, *A kegyelem beteljesedése*, 213.

healthy, nobody suspected that this happy day might have a disastrous end for her. She left from this earthly life unprepared, with only small regrets, and without proper penance.

Even though the text does not mention specifically, we can safely assume she received the sacrament of anointing of the sick as it befitted the customs of the society at that time, but she had not had time to properly think about her sins and reach an appropriate level of regret over them, not to mention penance.

The time factor is significant in this context because of a reoccurring element in Birgitta's eschatological visions when a dying person meditates over Christ's sufferings. It was the case, for example, of Birgitta's own son, Karl, who had made a vow in good faith to change his life and to arrange a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and later, during his judgement these final thoughts were considered for his favour and saved him from hell.⁴² Similarly, a wicked nobleman was saved due to his honest confession on his deathbed, even though at first he sent away the priest who came to make him confess.⁴³ The young lady in chapter 51 did not have time for all this, her death might have arrived within hours or even minutes.

Because of her proud nature she did not fully recognize her dangerous position at the beginning of the scene. She realized slowly that her situation was disadvantageous, judgement was real and would bring a bad end for her. Sobbing, feeling terrified, trembling with fear are believable psychological reactions of a spoilt child who does not know what to do next.

The judgement scene is unusual. In other cases, the description is more of a court of justice type situation where the readers can closely follow the arguments and counter arguments, the measuring of sins and favourable conditions in front of their eyes.

It is not rare when other characters intervene to protect the soul. This person is mostly the Virgin Mary,⁴⁴ but saints can mediate as well. Or, as it happened in Rev.IV/7-9 during the judgement scenes of a contemporary of St. Birgitta, Niccolo Acciaiuoli, a high seneschal of Queen Joan I of Naples, who deceased in 1365: the prayers of the friends of God for the dying politician were received positively, and he gained sufficient mercy for his last-minute change of heart and for saving his soul.⁴⁵

⁴² Rev.VII/13, MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3.

⁴³ Rev.VI/97. Vol.3, 163-164., MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.3.

⁴⁴ In one scene, for example, the Virgin Mary, who is called here as Mother of Mercy, says: „My Son, I wish to dispute the justice of this demon's case.” (Rev.VI/39, 38) (MORRIS-SEARBY, Vol.3).

⁴⁵ „Then the Virgin herself appeared before the judgment seat and it looked as though she were hiding some large objects beneath her mantle. (...) could be seen a little church, as it were, with monks in it. On the other side appeared men and women, God's friends,..., all of them crying out with one voice and saying: „Have mercy, merciful Lord!” (Rev. IV/7, 25-27).

The Role of the Book

In chapter Rev.IV/51, the book's cold pragmatism and the inhuman nature of the scene is truly shocking. The rejecting replies of the book are highly uncomfortable to read, and the girl's increasing terror is relatable, as she is gradually faced with the hopelessness of her situation.

The translator Denis Searby makes a remark in a footnote saying the book appears in the text as a symbol, and it represents that Birgitta attributed high importance to written texts, either being legal or biblical.⁴⁶ The translator most probably reached this conclusion by the consideration that Birgitta's aristocratic family had a significant influence at the Swedish Royal Court, and not only her father, *Birger Person*, but also her husband, *Ulf Gudmarsson* had important roles as counsellors of the realm and royal judges.⁴⁷ I would challenge this interpretation because the talking book motive is rare, but not a stand-alone mention in the chapters of the Revelations. We can learn a high amount of information about the book itself and its role from other vision descriptions in Book IV, Book VIII and in the additional collection called Extravagant revelations. Let us see some quotes:

„Then I saw on the pulpit a book glittering like the brightest gold but in the shape of a book. The book lay open, and its writing was not written with ink. Rather each word in the book was alive and uttering itself, as though someone were saying ‘Do this or that’ and the thing was done immediately on the utterance of the word. No one was reading the text of the book, but whatever it contained could be seen in the pulpit and in the colors.”⁴⁸ (Rev.VIII/48, point 54-56)⁴⁹

⁴⁶ MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.2. 98, footnote 2.

⁴⁷ KÖRÖSINÉ, op. cit. 142.

⁴⁸ With the word colors Birgitta refers to the Trinity which appeared to her in a unique way. It is really worth quoting entirely: *„As I gazed intently on the pulpit with all my mental concentration, my mind was unable to lay hold of it, nor could my soul grasp its beauty or my tongue express it. The appearance of the pulpit was like a sunbeam of red and white and shining gold colors. The gold shone like the sun, the white gleamed like snow, and the red was like a red rose, each of the colors could be seen in the others. I looked at the gold color, and I beheld the white and the red in it. I looked at the white, and saw in it the remaining two colors, and it was just the same when I looked at the red color: each color could be seen in the others and yet each was distinct from the others and on its own. None was before or after another; none was greater or less than another, but all were everywhere equal. When I gazed up, I was unable to take in the length and width of the pulpit. Gazing down, I was unable to see and grasp its immense depth. All of it exceeded my view.”* (Rev.VIII./48, point 49-53) (MORRIS-SEARBY, Vol.4).

⁴⁹ MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.4.

The description continues some paragraphs later as follows:

„The book that appeared on the pulpit signifies that there is eternal justice and wisdom in the Deity without excess or lack. This is the book of life, which is not written like writing that exists and once was not. No, the writing of this book exists always. It is everlasting in the divine nature. It is also the understanding of all things present, past and future, without change or vicissitude. Nothing is invisible to it, for it sees all things. The word uttered itself. This means that God is the eternal Word from which all words come and by which all things are given life and subsist. The Word itself spoke in a visible manner when the Word was made flesh and lived among men.” (Rev.VIII/48, point 232-235)⁵⁰

We can see from these quotes that the book's role is much more important than Searby's law-book interpretation, and we should not miss to discover its Trinitarian and apocalyptic layers.

I would also like to highlight that even though the book may seem heartless, we may learn from another vision chapter that mercy is also noted on its pages: *„Two pages as it were, lie open before me. Mercy is written on the one, justice on the other.”* (Rev.IV/85, point 1)⁵¹ Proportions are also important. Let me quote a phrase from the same chapter: *„Mercy is written three times on one page, justice on the other.”* (Rev.IV/85, intro lines) Mercy appears here as an overflow befitting the goodness of the Lord.

I also would like to emphasize the apocalyptic elements from the Bible, the Book of Revelation: *„And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they have done.”* (Rev 20,12)⁵² At other places from Daniel's Book: *„...the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened.”* (Dan 7,10) and *„But I will tell you what is inscribed in the book of truth.”* (Dan 10,21)

While reading about the judgement scene, we may recognize some 20th-century theories as well. The soul is not judged by Christ but it condemns itself. The beginning of the scene, when the king calls the girl to list her sins, might show similarities to what

⁵⁰ MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.4.

⁵¹ MORRIS-SEARBY, op. cit. Vol.2.

⁵² The English Bible version used for this quote: <https://mycatholic.life/bible/rsvce/> (Accessed: 1 September 2024).

Hans Urs von Balthasar thought to happen at the judgement: when a person meets with Jesus, they realize the lack of holiness in their personal lives.⁵³ Benedict XVI in *Spe Salvi* continued this thought saying: judgement is the encounter with Christ, the moment when all falsehood and lies disappear, we become our own true selves and have to face our impurity.⁵⁴ Reading the judgement scene from this angle, Birgitta described an incredibly advanced idea already in the 14th century.

Justice and Mercy

In today's religious thinking we sometimes overemphasize God's love and may forget the fact that God punishes sin. Not because of the lack of mercy, but because justice desires consequences over the sin committed. Sin excludes humans from the Kingdom of God. It is not because of the wicked deed itself, but because the person missed the opportunity for reconciliation and remained in the state of sin, i.e. turned away from God.⁵⁵ Sin's wickedness is endless because it offends the endless God.⁵⁶ Remedy requires a true regret and reconciliation because sin caused harm and that should be healed.⁵⁷

I would like to refer once again to the encyclical letter *Spe Salvi* by Pope Benedict XVI: „*The judgement of God is hope, both because it is justice and because it is grace. If it were merely grace, making all earthly things cease to matter, God would still owe us an answer to the question about justice – the crucial question that we ask of history and of God. If it were merely justice, in the end it could bring only fear to us all.*”⁵⁸

This vain girl, however, did not seek to please God, she lived a mondain life. She wanted to please humans, she had disordered wishes („... *and my heart longed for all those things*” Rev.IV/51, point 14), and now she has to face its consequences. She disregarded the warning that unrestrained pleasures are grave sins because these hurt the dignity of being a human.⁵⁹

⁵³ SCHEFFCZYK-ZIEGENAUS, *A teremtés jövője Istenben. Eszkatológia* 143.

⁵⁴ *Spe Salvi* 47.

⁵⁵ FILA, *A kegyelem beteljesedése* 226.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 223-224.

⁵⁷ KEK (Catechism of the catholic church) p. 1451, 1460.

⁵⁸ *Spe Salvi*, 47.

⁵⁹ KEK (Catechism of the catholic church) p. 2351, 2353.

Sin is never accidental because of the contradiction in itself, when a person deliberately does not listen to his or her conscience.⁶⁰ This girl recognized her sins too late. Because she missed the opportunity to be cleansed through regret and confession in a timely manner, her self-blaming meets with rejection and punishment as a reply instead of forgiveness.

This is how our judgement would look without Christ's love if our sinful life stood alone against the cold logic of the law. This is why the words of the Lord are so important when he formulates the judgement: the girl finds forgiveness for no other reason than the merits of the sufferings of Jesus. This is exactly what the Church teaches: we receive salvation because of Christ's merits and only through him, there is no other way of salvation.⁶¹ The sufferings of Christ created a treasury on which sinners may draw.⁶²

It is very important to notice that in this chapter we are not talking about the final decision hypothesis, because the girl turned to God with her final words while she was still alive, and she did not receive this chance following her death at the moment of the separation of soul and body.⁶³

It was her last thought, that is true, but she was still a living person at that moment, so what we can state here with *Joseph Ratzinger* „*The central yes of faith will save.*”⁶⁴ This event might have happened in some sort of hidden ways, maybe not even seen by the family members standing at her deathbed, but it happened nevertheless.

Once again, I would like to quote the encyclical *Spe Salvi*: at the time of death a person makes a whole life decision and this life will stand in front of the Judge.⁶⁵ In this short chapter we see a sinful life full of earthly pleasures. However, the girl still remained open to God and she did not turn entirely wicked.⁶⁶

Another important detail to recognize in the closing phrases is that people still alive can contribute to the alleviation of the girl's purification in the purgatory by their prayers and by offering their good deeds. (Rev.IV/51, point 25) In our current days, many remember their deceased loved ones only as a memory, and for this reason we

⁶⁰ FILA, *Krisztus kegyelme* 216, GÁL 185.

⁶¹ Ibid. 203-204.

⁶² DENZINGER-HÜNERMANN, 1025.

⁶³ SCHEFCZYK-ZIEGENAUS, op. cit. 75-76.

⁶⁴ RATZINGER, *Végidő. A halál és az örök élet kérdése* 237-238.

⁶⁵ *Spe Salvi*, 45.

⁶⁶ „For the great majority of people – we may suppose – there remains in the depths of their being an ultimate interior openness to truth, to love, to God.” (*Spe Salvi*, 46).

have to remind them that besides remembering them with good heart, they should also pray for them: offer a holy mass, fast and offer good deeds. Intercession is a religious form which might not receive sufficient attention these days, but St. Birgitta of Sweden's writings may raise the readers' attention to it and make them realize its importance.

Concluding Remarks

Since its foundation, the Church has been teaching all that is described above about sin, decent lifestyle, divine judgement and mercy, although these are not known well enough or correctly enough today when religious practices are vanishing together with the everyday practical considerations of what it means to be a Christian.

Even though the Vatican frequently issues its guidelines, lay people may not regularly read them. For this reason, the ancient tool of storytelling may be a pastoral key to reintegrating this knowledge into the everyday life of Christian believers. Over the centuries, stories about real people have been the ones that humans have enjoyed listening to, and this form of transmitting moral teaching might work better than a theoretical presentation on the same topic. As a catechist, this is why I see it highly important to make St. Birgitta's books known to the wider public.

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The Process of Beatification and Canonization in the 21st Century

This study aims to present the process of canonization. First of all, we must explain the concepts of canonization and beatification. We also briefly introduce the history of how canonization came about. Furthermore, we discuss the dogma of papal infallibility as it is an essential part of our topic.

Furthermore, our study aims to ask the question whether there were as many procedures in the 20th and 21st centuries as in the earlier periods of church history.

1. The History of Canonization

1.1. The Blessed and the Saints

Firstly, it is important to define who is recognized as Blessed or Saint by the Church in the present age.

According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, the Church can be divided into three states. These 'dimensions' are separated from one other, yet united. The three states of the Church: the Church Militant (also called the Church Pilgrim), which is on pilgrimage, consisting of the earthly community of believers living in unity with the hierarchy. The Church Suffering consists of the people (community) currently in Purgatory to be cleansed before entering heaven. The Church Triumphant, consisting of the Communion of Saints who behold the beatific vision and have partaken of everlasting life.¹

¹ CSERHÁTI, József-FÁBIÁN, Árpád, *A II. Vatikáni Zsinat tanítása. A zsinati döntések magyarázata és okmányai*. Budapest, 1998, p. 253.

In the present age, in the case of beatified persons, the Pope allows the Servant of God to be venerated in local communities and religious orders (Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life). In the case of the Saints, it is a final and infallible decision, a judgement by the Magisterium, the teaching office of the Church.

In both cases, the Church accepts the person concerned to behold the beatific vision of God, i.e. they are members of the Triumphant Church. In short, Saints are venerated by the whole church, since they are admitted to the liturgical calendar of the Catholic Church. However, the Blessed are those who are recognized to have lived a holy life and are allowed to be venerated in a certain country, local church or in a specific area.²

1.2. The Origin of the Term ‘Saint’ in Biblical and Religious Life

The concept of ‘saint’ or ‘holy’ (gr. *hagiosz*, lat. *sanctus*) is designated as a numinous quality in religious philosophy. In the Bible this appears as ‘holy,’ used in the absolute sense of the word. It is a quality that can only describe God who is the uncreated, eternal One³. That is, this designation applies primarily to the Creator.

We can also examine the word ‘saint’ from a cultic point of view, which in this case refers to what has been raised from the ordinary, profane world and is only for God: they have been consecrated⁴, that is, they may be used for sacred acts.

In the case of religious morality, we can speak of God, the angels and human beings as those who may be considered holy.⁵ In the book of Genesis, in the chapter about Sodom, God reveals himself to be holy. Yahweh imposes a similar requirement on the chosen people. He does not lower the standard when he declares the following: “For I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy.”⁶ The New Testament often uses the word holy for Jesus Christ, Son of God. He is the foundation and model of sacramental life. His teaching and person are the foundation of Christian morality, the example to follow (Matthew 11:29).⁷

² CSORBAY, András. *A szenttéavatás dogmatikai értékelése*. Stephaneum Nyomda, Budapest, 1942, p. 2.

³ HAAG, Herbert. *Bibliai lexikon*. SzIT, Budapest, 1989, pp. 1660-1661.

⁴ H. HAAG, op.cit. p.1661.

⁵ DIÓS, István and VICZIÁN, János. *Katolikus Lexikon III*. SzIT, Budapest, 1997. p.800.

⁶ H. HAAG, op. cit. p.1661., Leviticus 11, 44.

⁷ JAKUBINYI, György. *Máté evangéliuma*. SzIT, Budapest, 1991, p.144.

The Catholic Church professes and teaches that God has called all people to holiness of life. This means that each of us must be sanctified, become holy according to our own state of life. God has given each of us a personal vocation or calling. Vocation, profession and occupation are terms often used by people to refer to the activity they have chosen to get on in life. We all feel the truth that there is a difference in meaning between the two concepts, especially with regard to the views held by religious and other tendencies.

Everyone agrees that all activities must be carried out as a calling in a professional manner, which is also the duty of a believer in the state. People doing their job primarily work to earn a living, advance or achieve important positions. Of course, jobs can also be done professionally, as long as we do them out of love, with serving love, for the sake of pursuing a moral life, i.e. moral values, and not just to achieve fame, wealth, success or position.⁸ One of the main purposes of our life mission is to promote the common good of humanity and the service of the values of our culture through our activities.⁹

A Christian's vocation in life is to strive for perfection. Jesus Christ, the Son of God invites all of us to make a holy decision. According to Christian teaching, only God can be called perfect. A person can reach sanctity of life only with God's gracious help. For believers the standard is Jesus Christ, whose personality and character are perfect.¹⁰ This may deeply concern believers, for as we have seen before, mortals will never be as perfect as God. Yet, they are still called to conform to His image. Saints can be those individuals who were able to live the virtues of Christ's teaching in their everyday life. As human beings, they are closer to their fellow men, so in a sense we can say that their example may be easier for (mortal) men to follow than that of the perfect Son of God – although the essence of the teaching, the ideal can be traced back to Him –, whom we worship as both the true God and (also) a man. Man is only a weak creature, subject to constant temptation by his tendency to sin, but sin is far from God. It cannot be identified with His essence, i.e., He is holy.

The saints who have gone before us, whom the Catholic Church has raised to the altar and venerates with regard to liturgical and daily life, have won the respect of human-

⁸ NOSZLOPI, László. *Megmentő és felemelő szeretet*. Ecclesia, Budapest, 1975., NOSZLOPI, László. *A szeretet lélektana és bölcselete*. Pantheon Kiadó, Budapest, 1944, pp.132-139., KUMINETZ, Géza. *A boldoggá- és szenttéavatási eljárás kézikönyve*. SzIT, Budapest, 2012, p.19.

⁹ KUMINETZ, Géza. *A boldoggá- és szenttéavatási eljárás kézikönyve*. SzIT, Budapest, 2012, pp.19., 22.

¹⁰ SCHÜTZ, Antal. *Krisztus*. SzIT, Budapest, 1944, p.131., Kuminetz, Géza. *A boldoggá- és szenttéavatási eljárás kézikönyve*, op. cit. p.23.

ity by the practice of virtuous living, by trying to embody Christ, to become his image.¹¹ They managed to achieve this by living a heroic and virtuous life. Plato linked the cardinal virtues to the parts of soul: rational, appetitive, and spirited. He categorized man's courage as a component of the appetitive part. The Greeks believed that the virtues could be learned, i.e., they belonged to the scope of knowledge.¹² In the Catholic moral theology, St. Thomas Aquinas adopted Aristotle's teaching and developed his theory of virtues using the word *habitus* (skill). According to St. Thomas, human nature (*natura humana*) can embrace the moral good (*bonum*) through the development of abilities. Action skills (*habitus*) can be deepened by the constant practice of the abilities we are born with. Virtue is a good skill or an aptitude for good.¹³ Virtues can be acquired by a Christian through the religious practice of good deeds.

In his essay entitled 'Love,' László Noszlopi reveals a classification of virtues, which includes patriotism as a value to be respected. Patriotism is reverence for a nation's past, land, people, culture and ancestors.¹⁴

The virtue of courage reminds us of the confessors. It also means vulnerability, because without it courage has no meaning. This virtue relates to death and, in fact, opposes it. Courage means an aptitude that shows willingness to fall in a battle, to lose our lives. It most often appears in the willingness to act, that is, in martyrdom. Courage, of course, does not mean blind forcefulness, which exposes itself to irresponsible and indiscriminate danger. Instead, it goes together with the virtue of prudence, because only a smart person can be brave; that is, without intelligence, courage cannot be real, true courage. Courage therefore requires a proper assessment of the situation to see what is put in danger, as well as an assessment of what is to be achieved or preserved by taking action. Martyrdom is the highest expression of courage.¹⁵

In the early church, the form of confession practiced by Christians became almost commonplace. Those who were sacrificed for their faith gave their lives in the spirit of Jesus' teaching. Christ did not just talk about self-sacrifice, for he himself gave his life for the redemption of humanity: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's

¹¹ *A II. Vatikáni zsinat tanítása*, LG 50.

¹² DIÓS, István and VICZIÁN, János, op.cit. p.232.

¹³ BODA, László. *A keresztény nagykorúság erkölcszociológiája*. Ecclesia, Budapest, 1986, pp.390-395.

¹⁴ NOSZLOPI, László. *Szeretet. Etikai tanulmány*. Sárkány Nyomda, Budapest, 1932, p.48.

¹⁵ PIEPER, Josef. *A négy sarkalatos erény. Okosság, igazságosság, bátorság, tartás és mérték*. Vigilia, Budapest, 1996, pp. 115-121.

life for one's friends."¹⁶ This is what inspired the martyrs to give their blood for their faith, for others, for a nobler and loftier cause, and for Christ himself.

1.3. The Development of the Veneration of Saints

The apostles and the first Christians faced persecution for their faith from the beginning of the Catholic Church. In the Bible, Saul (later the Apostle Paul) who converted on the road to Damascus, was one of those persecutors who aimed to arrest and bring the disciples of Jesus before the leadership. We know from the Scripture that he was present at the stoning of St. Stephen, the first martyr.¹⁷ After the Ascension of Jesus, his Apostles went out to spread the Good News of Jesus everywhere in the world as a response to the commission he gave them. Saint Peter and Saint Paul preached the Gospel to the open-hearted people in Rome. Christians were persecuted in the territory of the Roman Empire from the very beginning of the Church, then under the reign of Emperor Nero (54-68).¹⁸ Numerous Christians lost their lives during this persecution. Those followers of Christ who remained alive endeavored to pay the last honors to their brothers and sisters who suffered death for their faith by providing their deserved burial. The Acts of the Martyrs give evidence of their deeds, such as in the case of Saint Polycarp of Smyrna. It was the Christian community that buried him, and solemnly commemorated him every year on the day of his death.¹⁹ So Christians regularly visited martyrs' graves in order to remember and pray for them and take care of their graves. Early Christians regarded martyrdom not merely as a tragedy but also as the person's heavenly birthday, for they were now together with Christ in Heaven.²⁰

The history of canonization can be divided into four major periods. The first era lasted from the 2nd to the 6th centuries.²¹ This was the time of popular canonization,

¹⁶ Jn 15,13

¹⁷ ApCsel 7, 54-8,1. especially verse 58.

¹⁸ SZÁNTÓ, Konrád. *A katolikus egyház története I.* Ecclesia, Budapest, 1987, p.80.

¹⁹ PUSKÁS, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai." A klerikusi életszentség bölcseleti, teológiai alapjai és kánonjogi garanciái. Teológiai tanulmányok. Edited by Géza KUMINETZ. *Varia Theologica*. Vol. 1, SzIT, Budapest 2010, p.59., VANYÓ, László. "Vértanúakták és szenvedéstörténetek. Szent Polükárposz vértanúsága." Ókeresztény írók. Vol. 7. SzIT, Budapest, 1984, p.52.

²⁰ PUSKÁS, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai", op.cit. p.59.

²¹ SZUROMI, Szabolcs Anzelm. *Csoda az egyházi szenttéavatási eljárás kikristályosodásának tükrében, 1.Elhangzott a Csoda és tudomány a Pátriárkák korától napjainkig* című konferencián (Országos Rab-biképző-Zsidó Egyetem, Budapest, 2015. november 23-án) és a *Nemzetközi Kánonjogi Kutatóközpont-ban* (Budapest). A kutatást az OTKA K106300 és a KAP-3.6-14/003 program támogatta, pp.1-10. <https://yerushaonline.com/content/?v=qv45dck24> Accessed: 14 May 2024.

known as canonization by acclamation.²² During the first centuries of the church, great respect was given to the martyrs. They were divided into three classes: 1) professors (*professores*): those who voluntarily chose martyrdom; 2) confessors (*confessores*): those who suffered, but survived the trials; 3) martyrs (*martyres*): people who suffered for their faith and died as a result, or who survived torture and died in peace.²³ Visits to the tombs of the martyrs were accompanied by the Christians' decorating them, building shrines or churches over them, making them a pilgrimage destination. On the anniversary of the martyr's death, a Mass was said, where hymns were sung in praise of the martyr and their heavenly intercession was requested.²⁴ The miracles performed during the life of the venerable person, as well as those attributed to them after their death, were collected and recorded under the supervision of the clergy. This book was later called '*Liber miraculorum*.'²⁵ The clergy also arranged for the production of a list of martyrs, and for beatification the voice of people was initially sufficient, then approved by their own pastor, since the fact of the martyrdom was public knowledge; in other words, the bishop did not need to conduct a formal procedure or declare the martyr a Saint by an official act. The only condition was that the martyr had died for Christ. At first, the veneration of the martyrs was localized, but later it spread to other particular churches through pilgrimages and episcopal circulars.²⁶ From the 4th century onwards, it was not only martyrs who were venerated as Saints, but also all those who endured the trials and attacks related to the heroic practice of virtues, or who confessed their faith by keeping the evangelical counsels by asceticism, and through these confessed their faith in Jesus. The public cult of a holy person in this era, as we have introduced earlier, was initiated by the people (*vox populi*) and took place with the participation and approval of the clergy. Many confessors were treated with sacred reverence even during their lifetime.²⁷

²² Here it is necessary to note that in the antiquity and in the Middle Ages, that is, for a long time, no distinction was made between the terms blessed (beatus) and saint (sanctus), i.e. they meant the same. (PUSKÁS, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai", op.cit. p.63., VEREJA, Fabijan. *La beatificazione. Storia, problemi, prospettive*. Roma, 1983. pp. 27-29.)

²³ KUMINETZ, Géza. "Az egyház megszentelő feladata IV. A megszentelés egyéb eszközei." Bibliotheca Instituti Postgradualis Iuris Canonici, Institutiones 6/1. SzIT, Budapest, 2005, p.50.

²⁴ TÖRÖK, József. "Az ereklyetisztelet története." Magyar egyházzene. Vol.9, 2003-2004, pp. 256-257., PUSKÁS, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai", op.cit. p.59.

²⁵ Szuromi, Szabolcs Anzelm. *Csoda az egyházi szenttéavatási eljárás kikristályosodásának tükrében, 1.*, op.cit. p.5.

²⁶ KUMINETZ, Géza. "Az egyház megszentelő feladata IV. A megszentelés egyéb eszközei. op.cit. p.50., MISZTRAL, Henryk. "Le cause di canonizzazione. Storia e procedura." Congregazione delle cause dei Santi Susedi per lo studio delle cause dei santi. Vatican, 2005, p.127., PUSKÁS, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai", op.cit. p.59.

²⁷ GUTIÉRREZ, José Luis. "La cause di beatificazione e di canonizzazione." Quaderni della mendola. 1998. pp.269-309. https://www.unigre.it/unigre/sito/PUG_HG_030820150936/uv_papers/732/Gutierrez%20-%20

The second major phase lasted from the 6th century to 993. This period can be characterized as the age of canonization by a bishop. The act of declaring a person to be a Saint had a procedure. First, the remains of the Saint were located (*inventio*), his corpse was exhumed (*elevatio*), and then transferred to one of the most important churches of the diocese (*translatio*), typically a cathedral. Here the faithful could pray for the Saint's intercession in a quiet place with no distractions.²⁸ The rules of the early church forbade burials under the altar, since the most holy body and the blood of Christ was presented there. However, from the 4th century on, when the relics of the Saint were transferred, they were placed under the altar. In his 22nd letter, Saint Ambrose, Bishop of Milan describes this widespread phenomenon as follows: "Let these triumphant victims be brought to the place where Christ is the victim. But He upon the altar, who suffered for all, they beneath the altar, who were redeemed by His Passion."²⁹ As the body of the Saint was already laid to rest in one of the most significant churches of the diocese, it was merely exalted by the relocation. And if they relocated it from a cemetery (*translatio*), then they did this in a ceremonial way, with a procession. The relics were either placed under the altar or in the altar itself, and the bishop celebrated a holy mass in honor of the Saint (*dispositio* or *canonisatio corporis*). During this period of time, it was still the voice of the people that played a decisive role in canonization. In order to carry out this procedure, it was also considered necessary to learn about the Saint's life and to make a brief record about it. The bishop sometimes had to intervene in the process to correct and amend the development of improper forms and practices of cult.³⁰ The decree of canonization and transfer was approved and proclaimed by the bishop in the presence of the clergy of the diocesan synod and in the presence of bishops participating in the provincial synod. In this way, the diocesan could introduce his decision, that is, the veneration of the person concerned. Later we see that the veneration of such a Saint was adopted by other dioceses as well.³¹

Le%20cause%20di%20beatificazione.pdf Accessed: 14 May 2024., Puskás, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai.", op.cit. p.60.

²⁸ SZUROMI, Szabolcs Anzelm. "Egyházi intézménytörténet." Bibliotheca Instituti-Postgradualis Iuris Canonici, Institutiones 5. SzIT, Budapest, 2003, p.73., Puskás, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai.", op.cit. p.60.

²⁹ TÖRÖK, József. "Az ereklyetisztelet története.", op.cit. p.74. Ambrose of Milan: Letter 22: The Finding of SS. Gervasius and Protasius. Letter XXII. 13. <https://origin-rh.web.fordham.edu/Halsall/source/ambrose-letter22.asp> (Downloaded 5 December 2024)

³⁰ GANSWEIN, Georg. "Questa è la volontà di dio la vostra santificazione. Considerazioni sul processo di beatificazione e canonizzazione." *Ius Ecclesia*. Vol. 16, 2004, pp.415-416., Puskás, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai.", op.cit. p.61.

³¹ PUSKÁS, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai.", op.cit. p.61.

The third period of the history of canonization lasted from 993 to 1181, where we see both papal and episcopal glorification. Consequently, canonization through the practice of translation was maintained, while requests for the supreme glorification were made to the Pope with increasing frequency. According to Gutiérrez, “the reason why the bishops concerned turned to the Pope for the canonization does not seem to be a doubt about their own authority, but simply a desire for greater solemnity and a wider scope of veneration.”³² In 993, it was Pope John XV (985-996) himself, who acted in the case of canonization of Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg. This procedure shows that the process of canonization became evermore a papal task, and became institutionalized in the 11th-12th centuries.³³

Puskás notes that in fourteen cases the bishops appealed to the Pope for approval of their local cult, but of these fourteen cases only four bulls are known to have granted papal approval for the veneration of the person in the universal church.³⁴

Pope Alexander III was the first to reserve the determination of canonization to himself and the Holy See. In his decretal ‘*Audivimus*,’ Alexander III (1159-1181) declares that no one should be venerated as a Saint without the permission of the Pope.³⁵

Canon 62 of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 on the veneration of relics also confirms that the Pope is competent to approve the veneration of a holy person. The Council says: “*Inventas autem de novo nemo publice venerari praesumat, nisi prius auctoritate Romani pontificis fuerint approbatae...*”³⁶ Therefore, the present chapter prescribes that no one dares to venerate newly discovered relics in public, unless they were approved by the authority of the Roman Pope.

³² “Il motivo per il quale i Vescovi interessati si rivolsero al Papa per la canonizzazione non sembra essere un dubbio sulla propria competenza, ma solo un desiderio di maggiore solennità e di culto più esteso” (GUTIÉRREZ, José Luis. “*La proclamazione della santità nella chiesa.*” *Ius Ecclesia*. Vol. 12, 2000. p.269.), KUMINETZ, Géza. “*Az egyház megszentelő feladata IV. A megszentelés egyéb eszközei.*”, p. 51., PUSKÁS, Attila. “*A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai.*”, op.cit. p.61.

³³ CSORBAY, András. *A szenttéavatás dogmatikai értékelése.*, op.cit. p.25., SZUROMI, Szabolcs Anzelm. *Csoda az egyházi szenttéavatási eljárás kikristályosodásának tükrében, 1.*, op.cit. p.4.

³⁴ PUSKÁS, Attila. “*A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai.*”, op.cit. p.62.

³⁵ “*Illum ergo non praesumatis cetero colere, cum etiam sit per eum miracula fierent, non liceret vobis ipem pro sancto absque auctoritate Romanae Ecclesiae venerari.*” (Firedberg, Ae [ed.], *Corpus iuris canonici*, Libsiae 1879-1881. II. p. 650.) CSORBAY p. 25. (footnote), ERDŐ, Péter. “*A szenttéavatási eljárás a XIII. században, Árpád-házi Szent Erzsébet ügye a kor eljárásjogának összefüggésében.*” *Kánonjog*. Vol. 10, 2008, p.14.

³⁶ *Conciliarum oecumenicorum generaliumque decreta*, Bologna, 1973, p.263., Szuromi, Szabolcs Anzelm. *Csoda az egyházi szenttéavatási eljárás kikristályosodásának tükrében, 1.*, op.cit. pp.4-5., Török, József. “*Az ereklyetisztelet története.*” op.cit. p.264.

Here it is also important to mention Henricus de Segusio, also known as Cardinal Hostiensis, who, around 1268, described the process of canonization in twelve steps. In this work, we encounter the idea that, on the one hand, the Pope's approval is required for canonization, and on the other hand, the request for canonization must be sent to the Holy Father several times.³⁷

A significant point in the development of canonization procedures is the '*Decretalis Gregorii IX*', in which Pope Gregory IX commissioned the Dominican friar St. Raymond of Penafort to edit. The decretal was promulgated by Pope Gregory IX on September 5, 1234 in the bull '*Rex pacificus*,' and sent with papal authority to the universities of Bologna and Paris. As a result, in the 13th century, the procedure of canonization was clarified³⁸, thereby confirming the earlier case law, that the canonization process was under the authority of the Pope.

With the bull, '*Immensa Aeterni Dei*,' Pope Sixtus V (1585-1590) entrusted the Sacred Congregation of Rites to conduct the process of canonization.³⁹

In 1634, Pope Urban VIII (1623-1644) issued an apostolic constitution: '*Caelestis Hierusalem*,' in which he ordered an investigation into whether the person in question was being venerated in a manner only worthy of Saints. In his decree of September 27, 1659, Pope Alexander VII (1655-1667), in relation to the reverence of those who had already been beatified but not yet canonized, stated that they could only be venerated by acts expressly authorized by a papal breviary.⁴⁰

Pope Benedict XIV (1740-1758) laid down detailed rules concerning the process of beatification and canonization in '*Opus De servorum Dei beatificatione et beatorum canonizatione*.'⁴¹ Accordingly, two miracles were required before the Servant of God could be declared a Saint. The ceremony took place in St. Peter's Basilica and the bull was issued by the Pope. In the Eastern Churches, canonization was carried out by the Provincial Council on the proposal of the Synod of Bishops.⁴²

³⁷ ERDŐ, Péter. "A szenttéavatási eljárás a XIII. században, Árpád-házi Szent Erzsébet ügye a kor eljárásjogának összefüggésében." op.cit. p.14., Erdő, Péter. "Il processo di canonizzazione di Santa Elisabetta d'Ungheria: un caso speciale nel contesto dello sviluppo generale della procedura." *Institia et iudicium* Studi di diritto matrimoniale e processuale canonico in onore di Antoni Stankiewicz. Edited by Kowal, J. and Llobell, J. Citta del Vaticano, 2010, pp.1449-1475.

³⁸ SZUROMI, Szabolcs Anzelm. "Egyházi intézménytörténet." op.cit.p.149.

³⁹ DIÓS, István and János Viczián. *Magyar Katolikus Lexikon XIII.* SzIT, Budapest, 2008, p.131.

⁴⁰ From this point onwards, there is a sharp distinction between beatification and canonization. (CSORBAY, András. *A szenttéavatás dogmatikai értékelése.* op.cit. p.13.)

⁴¹ KUMINETZ, Géza. "Az egyház megszentelő feladata IV. A megszentelés egyéb eszközei." op.cit. p.51.

⁴² *Magyar Katolikus Lexikon XIII.* op.cit. p.131.

The canons of the CIC 1917, which covered and regulated the process of canonization in detail, strengthened the aforementioned ecclesiastical discipline standards. Under the reign of Pope Paul VI (1963-1978), it remained valid and unchanged after the issuance of the apostolic '*Sacra Rituum Congregatio*'.⁴³

Saint Pope John Paul II (1978-2005) promulgated a new procedure for the cases of beatification and canonization with the apostolic constitution '*Divinus perfectiionis magister*' of February 7, 1983. He repealed the earlier provisions while maintaining the following: 1. More deeply involve the diocesan bishops in these procedures 2. The critical standard related to the study of cases must be raised, complemented by the establishment of a college of relators, and 3. Powers must be better distributed with regard to the members of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints, and the process must be simplified.⁴⁴

Canon 1403 Art. 1 of the current Code of Canon Law states that the 1983 CIC has no intention of regulating the process of beatification and canonization. Further guidance is given in Art. 2 as follows: "The prescripts of this Code, however, apply to these causes whenever the special pontifical law refers to the universal law, or norms are involved which also affect these causes by the very nature of the matter."

The following is a brief look at the most recent rules in force, with concrete examples.

1.4. The Current Procedure for Beatification and Canonization

The Holy See has released new rules regarding the process of canonization in the present era, which thoroughly examine the person concerned to see whether they are truly worthy for the public veneration as a Saint by the Universal Church. A significant document must be mentioned here, which was approved by Pope Benedict XVI and issued by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints on May 17, 2007, and is still in effect. His Holiness addressed a letter to the Congregation on April 24, 2006, which led to the issuance of the instruction '*Sanctorum Mater*'.⁴⁵ The norms of the document are the same for the diocesan bishops and eparchs, as well as for those who have the same powers in law according to Can. 381 Art. 2 CIC.⁴⁶

⁴³ KUMINETZ, Géza. "Az egyház megszentelő feladata IV. A megszentelés egyéb eszközei." op.cit. p.51.

⁴⁴ KUMINETZ, Géza. "Az egyház megszentelő feladata IV. A megszentelés egyéb eszközei." op.cit. p.52., *Magyar Katolikus Lexikon XIII.* op.cit. p.131-146.

⁴⁵ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 99 (2007), pp. 465-517.

⁴⁶ https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/csaints/documents/rc_con_csaints_doc_20070517_sanctorum-mater_en.html Accessed: May 12, 2024. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 99 (2007), pp.465-517., *Communicationes* Vol.39, Nr.2, 2007, pp.221-268.

In order to initiate a case, it is essential, even in our time, that the person concerned has a reputation of a holy life that “has spread among the faithful about the purity and integrity of life of the Servant of God and about the virtues practiced by him to a heroic degree.”⁴⁷ This reminds us of the previous requirements that were a condition of the earlier canonizations. The process has two major phases: the diocesan phase and the Roman phase. The process of the first phase is initiated by the diocesan bishop. The canonization procedure follows the course of regular judicial proceedings.

During the course of the case, a petitioner may be the following legal and natural person or persons: “The petitioner of the cause may be the diocesan or eparchial Bishop ex officio, juridic persons, such as dioceses or eparchies, equivalent structures that have jurisdiction, parishes, Institutes of Consecrated Life or Societies of Apostolic Life, or clerical and/or lay associations of the faithful recognized by ecclesiastical authority” (SM Art. 10 §1)

The petitioner nominates the postulator and vice-postulator on the basis of Art. 12 of the Instruction. “The diocesan or eparchial postulator may be substituted by others who are called vice-postulators.”⁴⁸ According to Art. 12 §2 the petitioner is to nominate the postulator who plays a very important role during the procession, for he is the legal representative of the whole case, the handler of the case and the driver of progress. Published in 2021, Regulation of the Postulators defines who else can be the actor of the cause: “The Actor of the Cause can be a diocese, an Episcopal Conference, Parish, an Institute of Consecrated Life, a Society of Apostolic Life, clerical and/or lay Association, single member of the faithful or several Co-Actors who act in solidum.” (2b)⁴⁹ The competent bishop must approve the person of the postulator (Art. 13).

As the preliminary phase of the cause, the Libellus is presented to the bishop.⁵⁰ This request ordinarily includes the biography of the life of the Servant of God, the reputation of holiness and discusses the usefulness of initiating the cause of the Servant of God from a pastoral perspective. Before accepting the petition of the postulator, the bishop must hear the opinion of the regional conference of bishops as to whether it is

⁴⁷ *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, op.cit. p.468.

⁴⁸ In the following, I will refer to the head of the particular diocese as the bishop of the diocese, by which term I mean the diocesan bishops and the persons in can. 381 § 2.

⁴⁹ In English: <https://www.causesanti.va/it/documenti/normae-servandae-english.html> Accessed: 14 May 2024.

⁵⁰ In this essay, we can only briefly discuss and outline the canonization process, as it involves a number of detailed rules that cannot be fully covered here.

recommended to initiate the cause (Art. 41 §1).⁵¹ The bishop approves the written request by means of an edict, and makes it public by publishing in the diocesan newspaper or displaying in the Cathedral Church to spread as widely as possible. (Art. 43 §1) The Libellus can be published in the neighboring dioceses as well, with the agreement of the respective bishop (§2), in order to make others aware of the intention to initiate the process. The bishop has a grave responsibility in whether to commence the procedure or not,⁵² for he must verify if a reverence and a reputation of holiness and martyrdom of the Servant of God has developed among the faithful. (Art. 25)

From my perspective, even in this phase, all the proofs can be presented that will affect the bishop's positive decision regarding the proceedings. It may therefore be useful to give the bishop, together with the written request, the writings of the Servant of God (if any), publications about him, records of miracles, signs and wonders performed through their intercession (Art. 6, Art. 36), that is, any documentation that may have evidential value in the case⁵³, and it is also the duty of the postulator to give the bishop anything that may help the candidate's case.

The bishop is obliged to notify the Holy See if he has decided to introduce the cause. The Congregation for the Cause of Saints grants "nihil obstat" to open the case (Art. 45 §1). After permission has been given, a three-member court, the Officials of the Inquiry, is set up by the bishop who appoints a priest as a judge by decree - that is, he delegates his authority, a promoter of justice (*promotor iustitiae*) who acts for the universal interests of the church during the diocesan phase of the cause, and a notary who transcribes each document. Those who have been appointed to an office, must swear an oath to fulfil their task faithfully and to maintain the secret of office (Art. 51 §1).

The second part of this phase is about the gathering of written proofs and documents⁵⁴, which is the actual process of the procedure. In this process, various commis-

⁵¹ The current provision also requests the same regarding the Eastern Churches: "In the case of Eastern Churches, the Bishop must seek the opinion of the Synod of Bishops of Churches who are headed by a Patriarch or a Major Archbishop, or else of the Council of Hierarchs of Metropolitan Churches sui iuris as to whether it is advisable to initiate the cause."

⁵² VERAJA, Fabijan. *Le cause di canonizzazione dei santi. Commento alla legislazione e guida pratica*. Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Roma, 1992, pp.27-29., Kovács, Gergely. *Vég nélkül. Szentavatás régen és ma*. SzIT, Budapest, 2014, p.68.

⁵³ According to the Instruction 'Sanctorum Mater', this would be the second stage of the cause, which involves the collection of written evidence and documentation, but in our humble opinion it may be useful to provide these documents at the outset.

⁵⁴ Kovács, Gergely. *Vég nélkül. Szentavatás régen és ma*. op.cit. p.71.

sions are appointed by the bishop. The Theological Censors inspect the public writings of the Servant of God to ensure that they are not contrary to Catholic Faith and morals, and to examine their personality and spirituality. Finally, a comprehensive spiritual characterization is made. The task of the Theological Censors is to collect the works of the Servant of God and to review them. (Art. 62 §1, 64 §1) The collection also includes works written not only by the person but written about them: speeches, letters, diaries, autobiographies.⁵⁵

The Historical Commission is required to consist of at least three experts. One of the experts must be experienced in the period, another must be an archivist, and the third must be a historian with a background in theology (Art. 68 §1).

On several occasions, a biography of the Servant of God is gradually extended as part of the tasks of historians. This also helps the bishop's duty of spreading veneration of the person as widely as possible.

This is followed by the collection of documentary proofs and interrogation of the witnesses. In the case of recent causes (Art. 29 §1), which means that there are no longer any eyewitnesses who can provide authentic testimony of the sanctity of life or martyrdom of the Servant of God, witnesses are heard to prove the reputation of holiness, as well as available documents are used in the cause.

In the case of a recent cause, the same occurs through the oral depositions of eyewitnesses (Art.30). Witnesses can be grouped as follows on the basis of Art.98:

1. Those who were eyewitnesses (*de visu*) e.g. to a martyrdom, or who had immediate knowledge of the person in question. (§1)
2. Second-rate witnesses, i.e. ear-witnesses (*de auditu a videntibus*), who have received information about the heroic virtues or martyrdom of the Servant of God from credible witnesses. (§2)
3. Third-party witnesses, who have heard about the person concerned from ear-witnesses, cannot be called to testify. (§3)⁵⁶

All witnesses must be credible and reliable. Once the witnesses have been questioned, their records will also assist the work of the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints in Rome.

⁵⁵ CIC 1917 2042.can., Kovács, Gergely. *Vég nélkül. Szentavatás régen és ma.* op.cit. p.132.

⁵⁶ <https://www.causesanti.va/it/documenti/normae-servandae-english.html> Accessed: May 14th, 2024., *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, op.cit. 75 (1983) pp.396-403., NS 17-18, Kovács, Gergely. *Vég nélkül. Szentavatás régen és ma.* op.cit. pp.73, 140.

In the case of a miracle, that is, if a person regains health, the attending physician may, after taking an oath, make a written report of an illness and its course, which is referred to as the ‘Testimony of Attending Physicians’ in Article 107 of the Instructions. If the physician who treated the patient refuses to give a written report about the course of the illness, a person, preferably an expert in medical matters, may be appointed by the bishop to record the physician’s testimony. (Art. 108 §1)

Art. 109 §1 also speaks of two ‘medical experts’ (*ab inspectione*) who are entrusted by the bishop with the task of separately visiting the recovered person if he is still alive.

The purpose of the visit is to verify whether the person has undergone a miracle or whether it is just a spontaneous recovery, therefore, they must assess the current state of health of the person and the permanence of the recovery. (Art. 73 §1) The expert’s opinion must be presented in writing to the bishop. (Art. 73 §2)⁵⁷ The number of the witnesses is not defined. If the experts consider that there is an obstacle to the case, they must indicate it to the bishop or his delegate. (Art. 73 §3) This also applies to those who may have a “legitimate” objection to the cause of beatification or canonization.

The closing of the inquiry is concluded with the publication and translation of the acts, the presentation and transcription of comments and further proposals, and the last session.

The original acts of the diocesan investigation are called the Archetype. (Art. 128) The bishop must order a copy of the original acts to be made (*Transumptum*). The photocopied, so-called reproduction Public Copy (*Exemplar Publicum*) of which it is sufficient to affix the notary’s seal and signature. (Art. 129, 137) Two copies of the original acts translated into a foreign language must be sent to the Congregation⁵⁸. (Art. 126 §2) The acts can be submitted to Rome in Latin, French, English, Italian, Portuguese and Spanish. (Art. 127)

The original acts and the copies are closed at the last session. At the end of the investigation, the bishop or his delegate prepares a document stating that the Servant of God has not yet been an object of public ecclesiastical cult (*declartio de non cultu*).⁵⁹ The original acts and one copy is deposited in the secret archive of the diocese, while the necessary documents (one act in the original language and two copies, the published writings of the Servant of God, photocopies of historical documents) are sent to Rome.

⁵⁷ NS 22 b. 34 b., Kovács, Gergely. *Vég nélkül. Szentavatás régen és ma.* op.cit. p.142.

⁵⁸ NS 36 b.

⁵⁹ *Magyar Katolikus Lexikon XIII.* op.cit. p.143.

The second phase, known as the Roman phase, has considerable similarities with the first one.

The steps of the Roman phase of the process are as follows:

1. Preliminary phase: reception of the acts, appointment of a new postulator living in Rome, appointment of a relator with the significant role of driving the whole process, as well as tasks relating to the formal examination of the diocesan process.
2. Examination and supplementation of the content of the acts, summary of the documentation of the cause, and compilation of the so-called *positio*.
3. Evaluation of the documentation: historical, theological and congregational decisions.
4. Decisions of the Pope, which are the most significant and beautiful acts of the cause of canonization, and in which the act of papal infallibility (*infallibilitas*) is also represented, when the Holy Father proclaims the beatification breviary or the canonization bull.⁶⁰

1.5. Is It Possible to Become a Saint in This Century?

The vocation of a Christian is to become a Saint, as it has been noted earlier. Studying the lives of the Saints and considering the above process, we may wonder whether it is possible to become a Saint in today's world.

It seems that even in past centuries there have been people who have reached a high degree of sanctity of life.

In the earlier centuries, the number of Saints canonized by bishops in the 6th-10th centuries was about 750; between the 10th century and 1234, about 600, and from 1234 to 1588, the number of cults authorized by the bishop is estimated at around 600. Before 1234, about 73 Saints were canonized by the popes.⁶¹

Since then, the process of elevation to the ranks of the Blessed and the Saints has been ongoing. Many people have been canonized by Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis, and there are canonization processes underway around the world that are currently still in the diocesan phase.

⁶⁰ Kovács, Gergely. *Vég nélkül. Szentavatás régen és ma.* op.cit. pp.76-80. (The Roman Phase is only briefly described, as it is also a very long and detailed process, so it is not possible to go into its details in this short article.)

⁶¹ PUSKÁS, Attila. "A szenttéavatás dogmatikai alapjai." op.cit. p.64.

Today's generation, especially the younger generation, also needs role models to look up to. The patron saint of Hungarian youth, the first-born son of King Saint Stephen, Prince Imre, who is the embodiment of purity, or Blessed Carlo Acutis, lying in Nike shoes, jeans and holding a rosary, whose intercession in 2022 led to the recovery of Valeria Valverde, a Costa Rican-born woman who recovered from a serious head injury caused by a cycling accident, which Pope Francis recognized as his second miracle on May 23, 2024.

Both Carlo Acutis and the Venerable István Kaszap (1916-1935),⁶² of Hungarian descent, who died in the fame of holiness at the age of nineteen, may also hold important significance as role models in the life of Hungarian youth. The validity of his diocesan procedure was recognized by Rome on November 18, 1994, and the Holy Father approved his heroic virtues on December 16, 2006. However, the papal recognition of his intercession has not yet taken place.⁶³

As for miracles, in the case of a person who suffered martyrdom, it is not necessary for beatification, but canonization requires a miracle of healing, while in the case of a confessor, a miracle must occur for both beatification and canonization.⁶⁴

⁶² His beatification is also in progress. We know about him, as about Blessed Carlo Acutis, that he was a regular participant in the sacraments: he received Holy Communion and made confessions, he venerated the Holy Virgin as a member of the Rosary Society. He was an outstanding student of the Cistercian Grammar School of Székesfehérvár, and an active member of the Scout Movement and an excellent sportsman. He would have liked to become a Jesuit monk, but his illness prevented him from fulfilling this wish. He endured and offered up his sufferings with great patience, hope and trust in God. At the time of his death, he encouraged his loved ones: "God be with you. See you up there. Do not cry, it is a heavenly birthday. May the good Lord bless you." He was laid to rest in Sóstó Cemetery in Székesfehérvár. Many people made pilgrimages to his tomb, and later his remains were transferred to the Good Shepherd Church of Vasútvidék in Székesfehérvár. <https://www.mindszentyalapitvany.hu/szentte-avatas/magyar-jeloltek/tiszteletremelto-kaszap-istvan> Accessed: May 16, 2024.

⁶³ Many people visited the grave of the said person and many prayers were answered. A sad event to mention is the year 1949, when the State Protection Authority seized the building of the secretariat of the Kaszap cause and burned most of the collected documents, including more than 20,000 prayer requests. <https://www.mindszentyalapitvany.hu/szentte-avatas/magyar-jeloltek/tiszteletremelto-kaszap-istvan> Accessed: May 16, 2024.

⁶⁴ Kovács, Gergely. *Vég nélkül. Szentavatás régen és ma.* op.cit. p.85.

1.6. Conclusion

In the present work we have seen how the process of canonization has evolved over the centuries. In the initiation of canonization, the people's prior veneration of martyrs or those who faithfully practiced the virtues in everyday life, has always played a significant role. In the light of these significant facts, I have sought to explore the history of the development of the canonization process (in the present work), as well as the process of canonization itself. The present work has been able to cover only the first, diocesan phase, because of the size and scope of the subject, since the second phase itself could be the subject of a separate article.

The main question, whether it is possible to become a Saint in the circumstances of the present age, can be answered in the affirmative, since in our time, in the recent past, there have lived and live among us persons who seek to consecrate their lives to God and strive to be sanctified by virtuous living, as the Creator asks us to do: "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" (Leviticus 11:44).

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The Supper of the Lamb

The Sacrifice of Jesus as the Beginning of the End Times

Introduction

There are many Old Testament prefigurations of Jesus' eucharistic supper, each revealing an essential dimension of the reality of the Eucharist. The sacrifice of the lamb can thus be associated with Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the high priest Melchizedek, who offered his bloodless sacrifice in the form of bread and wine.¹ These otherwise enthralling connections and relevant points will not be discussed here in detail due to the limitations of the framework. What I want to explore instead is the connection between the Old Testament sacrifice and the New Testament sacrifice of the Lamb of God on the cross, which opened the gates of the underworld on Holy Saturday, turned into life on Easter Sunday, is revealed and made available through joining to the Last Supper in every Holy Mass, and which reaches its final purpose at the great eschatological Heavenly Banquet.

Out of the associations listed above, after discussing the ancient Jewish concept of sacrifice, two Old Testament feasts will be highlighted: *Yom Kippur* and *Pesach*. Both are especially significant among sacrifices from our point of view, shedding light on this sacred unity in a special way, and finding their final fulfilment in the Eucharistic Feast of the Lamb, in eternal salvation. My aim is to show the continuity between, and interconnectedness of, these events, and by doing so, I hope to be of help in the process of seeing God's redemptive work in unity within the mystery of the Holy Three Days.

¹ HAHN, Scott, *The Lamb's Supper. The Mass as Heaven on Earth*, Doubleday, New York 1999, 16–17.

Sacrifice of the Lamb

From the very beginning, the lamb appeared as a sacrificial animal offered to the Lord by man.² The offering is an acknowledgement of God's authority over the world, and, at the same time, the believer simply returns to God what is His. In doing so, we humans also express our gratitude to God for the goods He has created, as well as our free offering of ourselves to Him. We also admit that our sins have brought about death and require life that we want to redeem by another life offered in our own name—that is, we give the life of animals to God in our stead. By sacrifice, therefore, we repent and atone for our lives, but it may also mean a vow or covenant between an individual and the Lord, or between man and the Lord.³

Abel sacrifices a lamb, which the Lord accepts, and Noah does likewise. As regards the patriarchs, the sacrifice of lamb is similarly important, with the sacrifice of Isaac standing out from among them. At the request of the angel of the Lord, Abraham did not sacrifice his son, but a ram was given in Isaac's place. On their way up to the mountain, when Isaac asked his father about the sacrifice, Abraham told his son that the Lord would provide the offering. And provide He did, not only in the form of a ram, for what prevented Abraham from sacrificing his son was that God sacrificed *His* Son for him (for us), thereby providing the Lamb.⁴

After the First Temple was built in the 10th century BC, an offering was made there twice a day to atone for the sins of Israel: one lamb in the morning and one in the evening. Additionally, the Holy City saw the sacrifice of bulls, rams, and doves as personal offerings, on the altar of the Temple's inner courtyard. Only once a year, on Yom Kippur, was the High Priest allowed to enter the Holy of Holies and offer a sacrifice.⁵

² HAHN, *The Lamb's Supper* 15.

³ HAHN, *The Lamb's Supper* 19.

⁴ Cf. HAHN, *The Lamb's Supper* 16–18, 21–22. The story has prophetic parallels with the sacrifice of Christ in several other aspects. Isaac is the son of Abraham, and so is Jesus according to the genealogy of Matt 1. Both Abraham and the Lord sacrificed their only beloved son. Furthermore, Isaac and Jesus alike carried the wood for their own respective sacrifices, which, besides the sacrifice of Melchizedek, the “king of righteousness”, king of Jerusalem, were located at the same place. All this gives a special significance to the site of the Temple, which is also the site of Abel's sacrifice, and next to which Christ offered his one and final sacrifice.

⁵ HAHN, *The Lamb's Supper* 21.

The Day of Atonement

Yom Kippur (יוֹם כִּיפּוּר, *Yôm Kippûr*) on the 10th day of the month Tishri (תִּשְׂרִי, *Tīšrī*) is one of the three major feasts of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and the most important festival of the Temple Cult, when God's people turn to the Lord to beg forgiveness for their sins. The High Priest himself performed the sacrificial service—as did Jesus at the Last Supper—, and lots were drawn over a ram and a bull to decide which one would be for the Lord, to be sacrificed in the sanctuary, and which one would be for Azazel, to be cast out into the desolate wilderness.

Before slaughtering the first goat, the High Priest offered the blood of a bull as atonement for himself and his family, and only then he entered the sanctuary to prepare at length for the sacrifice. He remained there with no contact with his family for days, praying, reading the Scripture, fasting, and keeping vigil on the eve of the feast. On the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies where he pronounced God's name, while the people prostrated themselves. This is the only day on which the High Priest was allowed to say the name יהוה aloud, audible for the people. The congregation responded: "Blessed be the Name! [...]"⁶ After incense was offered, he put the blood of the sacrificial animals on the horns of the altar behind the curtain, and sprinkled some of it on and before the Ark of Covenant as an atonement for the sins of the people.

He confessed the sins of the entire people of Israel to the Lord over the other goat at the altar of burnt-offering. This "scapegoat" was then sent away to the wilderness, the dwelling place of (Azazel and) evil spirits, where it died. After some time, it was thrown from a high place so that the sin-ridden sacrificial animal was unable to find its way back even accidentally.⁷ This ritual, practiced in the Temple liturgy until AD 70, is described in Lev 16:15.17.20–22 as follows:

He shall slaughter the goat of the sin-offering that is for the people and bring its blood inside the curtain [...], sprinkling it upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat. No one shall be in the tent of meeting from the time he enters [...]. [He] shall take some of the blood of the bull and of the blood of the goat, and put it on each of the horns of the altar. He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, and cleanse

⁶ Cf. Lev 16:1–34; Heb 9–10.

⁷ "Engesztelés napja" in DÍÓs, István [ed.], *Magyar Katolikus Lexikon*, cf. VÁRNAGY, Antal, *Liturgika*, Lámpás, Abaliget 1999, 470, 472.

it and hallow it from the uncleannesses of the people of Israel. [...] he shall present the live goat. Then Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and sending it away into the wilderness by means of someone designated for the task. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a barren region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness.

Even at today's synagogue service, the congregation prostrates itself and, in a spirit of completeness, lists 40 communal sins that have offended the Eternal One. Following the prayers and readings, the shofar is blown, symbolising that the time of repentance and fasting is over, and that the Lord has forgiven.⁸

In the New Testament, passages parallel to the Yom Kippur ritual of atonement may be found not only in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but also in the image of Jesus as depicted in the Gospels. Just as the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to sprinkle the Ark of the Covenant with the blood of the sacrifice to atone for the sins of the people, and to pronounce the name of the Lord, so Jesus went to Calvary to sprinkle the altar of the cross with his blood, and to proclaim the name of God. His mockers pointed out as a prophecy, that He was the Son of God and that He would rebuild the temple in the third day.⁹ As the new High Priest, Jesus has raised the new and eternal Temple—the Church, in which his sacrifice is made present. The animal sacrifices in the old Temple of Jerusalem are therefore no longer needed, making its rebuilding on Mount Zion after its destruction in AD 70 pointless once and for all.¹⁰ The tearing of the curtain in two signifies the same thing, i.e. that the old temple is unnecessary. Moreover, Jesus made God's true face visible—the face of love covered with blood—, and, as the High Priest, he proclaimed God's new name and that He is love, revealed in the sacrifice and to which he invites us.¹¹

⁸ HAAG, Herbert, *Bibliai Lexikon*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 1989, 361–363, FREEDMAN, David Noel, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vo. 2., Doubleday, New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Auckland 1992, 72–76.

⁹ Matt 27:40, cf. John 2:19–21, Matt 26:61, Mark 14:58, Mark 15:29.

¹⁰ According to Matt 24:15 (cf. Dan 9:27) and 2 Thess 2:4, the Temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt in the end times. It is true, however, that there is no consensus on the interpretation of the signs preceding the second coming of Christ. K. Rahner calls for critical caution, while J. Ratzinger emphasises that the specificities of the apocalyptic genre must not be overlooked. NITROLA, Antonio, *Trattato di escatologia 2. Pensare la venuta del Signore*, Milano, San Paolo, 2010, 48–54.

¹¹ SZÉKELY, János, *Az Újszövetség teológiája*, Szent Jeromos Katolikus Bibliatársulat, Budapest 2003, 63–64.

The Feast of the Passover

Passover, or the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (פסח, *pesah*) is tied to the liberation of Israel from Egypt,¹² annually commemorating, retelling, and reliving (זָכַר, *zākar*)—indeed, in a way, reenacting—God’s deliverance. It is thanksgiving to the Lord, who establishes a kind of kinship with His people, with those who participate in the Passover meal in which the Jews renew their covenant with God. On the other days of Pesach, only unleavened bread was to be eaten as a sign of haste.

The Seder is conducted on the first day of Pesach, starting just before sunset, and shall be attended by at least ten people. The dinner represents communion, the blessing from the head of the family, as well as forgiveness—much like how Jesus forgives Peter’s denial and the disciples’ betrayal at the meal shared on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The lamb was baked whole and in the shape of a cross, pierced with two wooden skewers, as if foreshadowing Jesus on the cross. In the 1st century BC, the internal organs of the sacrificial animal were baked together with it, wrapped around its head, resembling Christ’s crown of thorns, which not only formed a wreath around his head, but also covered and tortured it like a helmet.¹³

The evening of Seder can be divided into four, clearly distinguishable parts.¹⁴ The first is the cup of sanctification, *kiddush* (קידוש, *qydws*)—blessing the feast, eating the appetisers (bitter herbs, salad, fruit relish), and drinking the first cup of wine, always mixed with water as per the customs of that time.¹⁵ The following blessing was said over the wine: “*Blessed are You, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.*”¹⁶ Cakes of unleavened bread were laid on the table, in front of the head of the family, and also the Passover lamb, to be eaten later and also referred to as “the body of the Paschal lamb” in the Mishnah.¹⁷

¹² Cf. PITRE, Brant, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist. Unlocking the Secrets of the Last Supper*, Doubleday, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland 2018, 57–59, 188–189.

¹³ HAHN, Scott, *The Fourth Cup. Unveiling the Mystery of the Last Supper and the Cross*, Image, New York 2018, 30, 34–35, 77–80, as well as PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 63–64. S. Hahn and Pitre quote SAINT JUSTIN, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew* 40.3, describing the contemporary Jewish practice in which the apologist sees a clear parallel.

¹⁴ SZÉKELY, *Az Újszövetség teológiája* 54–55.

¹⁵ PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 151–152.

¹⁶ PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 152. A clear parallel to the offering of wine in the Mass, this blessing will be discussed later.

¹⁷ MISHNAH, Pesachim 10:3. PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 152.

In the second part of the feast, the head of the family told the story of the Passover deliverance, the participants recited Psalms 113–114, also called the “Small Hallel”, and then the second cup of wine was consumed. Retelling the events of the Passover (פסח, *Haggādāh*) forms the core of Seder, without it the feast would be invalid. According to the Mishnah,¹⁸ the father replies to questions from four types of children. The wise child asks the right question: “*Why is this night different from all other nights?*”. The wicked words it as an outsider to the feast, using 2nd person plural pronouns; and the answer is in kind. The simple one puts it simply: “*What’s this?*” And for that one who does not know how to ask, the meaning of the feast is explained in a fashion so that he can understand. It is at this stage that the events of the Exodus are relived and turn into reality for whoever partakes in the Seder, bestowing upon them God’s deliverance.¹⁹

In the third part, the father said a blessing over the unleavened bread: “*Blessed are you, Lord God, who brings forth bread from the earth.*” It started with eating a morsel of bread dipped into the fruit relish. This is the piece of bread that Jesus probably dipped and offered to Judas, before the latter left the upper room of the Last Supper. At the Pesach meal, the Passover lamb would be eaten as a main course with side dishes, followed by the emptying of the third cup. On Holy Thursday, Jesus called this unleavened bread his own Body, and the wine his Blood.²⁰

Then came the concluding rites, “The Great Hallel”²¹ which were of a thanksgiving (eucharistic) nature—the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The Hallel Psalms were sung in alternation, and was the hymn that Jesus and his disciples sang at the end of the Last Supper and that would be heard at every Pesach, on the occasion of slaughtering the lambs in the Jerusalem Temple, and at every Seder.²² Next, the fourth cup was drunk,²³ marking the conclusion of the Passover meal, an episode particularly associated with waiting for the Messiah. The arrival of the Expected One was traditionally linked to Passover, therefore awaiting the Messiah intensified at this time.²⁴

¹⁸ MISHNAH, Pesachim 10:4. PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 152–155.

¹⁹ PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 155.

²⁰ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 55–58. According to Gamaliel, for the feast to be valid, the following words must also be uttered: *sacrifice, unleavened bread, bitter herbs*. (MISHNAH, Pesachim 10:5) PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 153–154.

²¹ According to S. Hahn, B. Pitre and J. Székely the Psalms 115–118 were sung in the Last Supper (HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 56), while Pope Benedict XVI named the Psalm 136 in the 19th October 2011 audience. (https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20111019.html)

²² PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 156–158.

²³ According to Székely J., the existence of this at the time of Jesus cannot be confirmed.

²⁴ SZÉKELY, *Az Újszövetség teológiája* 55. Creation, the sacrifice of Isaac, and the exodus from Egypt also happened on Easter night.

The Old Testament Pesach Lamb as Sacrifice

The sacrificial offering, the bloody carcass of the lamb was offered by the priests (the head of the family was allowed to slaughter it at Easter only),²⁵ with the blood and fat put on the altar. According to *Flavius Josephus*, at the feast of Passover in 70 (or possibly 66 or 67), 255,600 lambs were killed for the Seder to the pilgrims gathered in Jerusalem.²⁶ Knowing the regulations and the conditions of the time, the estimated population of nearly 3,000,000 seems exaggerated, even allowing for the possibility that the increase in the population due to the holiday made Jerusalem the largest city in the world for those few days. Sacrifices by the Jews continued until the destruction of the Temple in AD 70,²⁷ but the cultic sacrifice of animals was not alien to other peoples of the time, such as the Greeks, Romans, Mayans, etc.²⁸ However, according to the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, the symbolism of the lamb is not that of the daily sacrifice, but of the Easter sacrifice. Jesus is not like *any lamb*, or even *a lamb*, but is *the Lamb*. He is the *Easter Lamb*, who fulfils the Passover in a way that surpasses it.²⁹

It is also worth exploring why the lamb was sacrificed. Every sin committed in the presence of God requires a life (*cf.* sin bringing forth death). When one sins, one's life

²⁵ SZÉKELY, *Az Újszövetség teológiája* 55.

²⁶ FLAVIUS Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Heinemann, London – Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 1961, 6.422–428, 497–99: “The total number of prisoners taken throughout the entire war amounted to ninety-seven thousand, and of those who perished during the siege, from first to last, to one million one hundred thousand. Of these the greater number were of Jewish blood, but not natives of the place; for, having assembled from every part of the country for the feast of unleavened bread, they found themselves suddenly enveloped in the war, with the result that this overcrowding produced first pestilence, and later the added and more rapid scourge of famine. That the city could contain so many is clear from the count taken under Cestius. For he, being anxious to convince Nero, who held the nation in contempt, of the city's strength, instructed the chief priests, if by any means possible, to take a census of the population. Accordingly, on the occasion of the feast called Passover, at which they sacrifice from the ninth to the eleventh hour, and a little fraternity, as it were, gathers round each sacrifice, of not fewer than ten persons (feasting alone not being permitted), while the companies often include as many as twenty, the victims were counted and amounted to two hundred and fifty-five thousand six hundred; allowing an average of ten diners to each victim, we obtain a total of two million seven hundred thousand, all pure and holy. For those afflicted with leprosy or gonorrhoea, or menstruous women, or persons otherwise defiled were not permitted to partake of this sacrifice, nor yet any foreigners present for worship, and a large number of these assemble from abroad.”

²⁷ At the time of the martyrdom of the apostles Saint Peter and Saint Paul in Rome, the slaughter of sacrificial animals was still in practice in the Jerusalem Temple. Thus, it was not foreign to Saint Paul to compare Christ's sacrifice to the Temple sacrifices. “For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed.” (1 Cor 5:7) *Cf.* HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 39. This is not merely an analogy, but a fulfilling identification between Christ and the Passover lamb.

²⁸ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 41–42.

²⁹ CARSON, Thomas—CERRITO, Joann [eds.], *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Thomson-Gale, Washington D.C. 2003, 8/299–302.

should be given for it, but it can be redeemed by giving another life in its stead. In this way, Jews redeemed their life with that of the lamb.³⁰ This is the logic that is reflected in the night of Passover, when the Destroyer struck all the firstborns in Egypt, except whose houses' lintel and doorposts were smeared with the blood of the lamb, and the lamb eaten. It was this lamb that the Israelites redeemed their firstborns with, so that the angel of death would not harm them.³¹ This is a substitutionary sacrifice, as justice dictates that since sin brings forth death, life must be given for life as atonement. Indeed, it will be given in a *satisfactory* way in Christ's redemptive work.³² If the people sin, they offer sacrifice to restore their relationship with God. At the same time, their sacrifice is an acknowledgment of the fact that all things belong to the Lord and are His rightful possession. Man is only returning to Him what is His, together with expressing gratefulness.³³ Those offering the sacrifice eat from the sacrificial meat, become one with it, thereby being immersed in its effect, while the offering also creates communion with the others.³⁴ The lamb, with which they redeem themselves, was offered in their place—it is a *symbol* of them, a declaration that they want to give themselves to the Lord, to offer their lives to Him. That is, on the one hand, they fully commit themselves to God; on the other hand, they do not want to sin any more as they shall die because of their sins. For this reason, the lamb—the animal taking their place—is also a warning sign: sin shall be redeemed by life.³⁵

The Relationship between Easters—of the Old and of the New Testaments

Can a typology between the Old and the New Testaments be right?³⁶ Many have used such a typology in Early Christianity, such as *Origen*, but also *Saint Paul* himself, even

³⁰ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 44–47, HAHN, *The Lamb's Supper* 22.

³¹ Just like how, in regard to the New Testament, we anoint our own 'lintel' with the Blood of the Lamb, the Eucharist, so that the angel of death may not prevail over us. We also consume the sacrificed and broken Lamb in the Holy Mass for our having (in Him, eternal) life. Christ delivers us from death.

³² Cf. the *satisfactio* theory of ANSELM OF CANTERBURY, *Why God Became Man*, GLH Publishing, Columbia, MD 2020.

³³ The Greek word εὐχαριστία, *eucharistia* means 'thanksgiving,' which we also actively do in reliving the New Testament sacrifice in the Holy Mass, where we return and offer the sacrificed Son to the Father, who sent him to us and from whom we received him.

³⁴ Likewise, the Eucharist preserves us for eternal life. Taking it together with the other partakers in the Holy Mass creates communion.

³⁵ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 43–49.

³⁶ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 38–40.

in the case of Easter: “*our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed.*”³⁷ Both Saint Paul and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews see Christ the Lamb as a sacrifice—a *unique and perfect one*.³⁸ In the Book of Revelation, the Lamb is mentioned 28 times in reference to Jesus, and clearly corresponds to the image of the sacrificial Lamb in Isaiah 52.³⁹

This leads to the fundamental issue of *whether the Last Supper was a Seder*.⁴⁰ The question was already posed in Early Christianity (2nd–4th centuries), in connection with the Easter controversy that lent it both a theoretical and a practical importance.⁴¹ The churches in Asia Minor celebrated the Christian Easter on the 14th of Nisan, while the churches of Rome and Alexandria had already moved it to the following Sunday by AD 170, yet the date of the Christian Easter was aligned with that of the Old Testament Passover meal because of their internal connection.⁴² Mark the Evangelist identifies the Last Supper as a Seder, since this is what Jesus asks about the evening when the Last Supper is prepared: “*The Teacher asks, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?*”⁴³ The Gospel of Luke also affirms this,⁴⁴ as those present are talking about the exodus of Jesus (*ἐλεγον τὴν ἔξοδον*), which means both Jesus’ departure from this world (his death) and the Old Testament feast commemorating the departure of the Israelites from Egypt in a symbolic way (Pesach).⁴⁵ What is more, Luke also echoes Jesus’ question found in the Gospel of Mark: “*Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?*”⁴⁶

In debating whether the Last Supper was a Seder, it must also be considered whether the Last Supper contains the elements that make a Seder valid. This, and the reasons for any possible differences are discussed in the next chapter.

³⁷ 1 Cor 5:7.

³⁸ Cf. Heb 10:10: “*And it is by God’s will that we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*”

³⁹ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 80.

⁴⁰ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 62–73.

⁴¹ VANYÓ, László, *Az ókeresztény egyház irodalma I.*, Jel, Budapest 2020, 314–318.

⁴² Cf. SAINT IRENAEUS, *Adversus haereses* 3.11.9.

⁴³ Mark 14:14 cf. 14:12.

⁴⁴ Luke 9:31ff.

⁴⁵ FILIPPI, Alfio [ed.], *Commentario del Nuovo Testamento, Testo integrale*, Centro editoriale dehoniano, Bologna 2014, 338.

⁴⁶ Luke 22:11, cf. Luke 22:8.

The Last Supper

The Last Supper is the first Holy Mass, in which Christ makes a covenant with his disciples, thus they become the new people of God. According to Saint Augustine, the phrase “*this is my body*”⁴⁷ under the species of the bread refers to both Christ’s body and the community.⁴⁸ The more we receive the Body of Christ in the Church, the more we become Christ’s, members of His Body, through which He manifests himself, exerts his influence, and through which we can enter a relationship with Christ.⁴⁹ “*Do this in remembrance of me*”⁵⁰—these words throw light on the fact all the more that this passage is not just the Jewish way of retelling and reviving the feast (זִכְרוֹן), as mentioned earlier, not just a recollection, but the living presentation of the past in the present. The new covenant made by the Messiah is to be made present again between God and His people.

Mark the Evangelist states that Jesus was executed on Friday, the 15th of Nisan, and they had to hurry to take Jesus’ body down from the cross and bury it lest the Sabbath begin with the rising of the evening star. It follows that the crucifixion, that is, Good Friday fell on 7 April 30, possibly 27 April 31 or 3 April 33. John the Evangelist sets the day of Jesus’ execution on the 14th of Nisan, the preparation day, for theological reasons.⁵¹ When Jesus was condemned (between 3 p.m. and 5 p.m.), the sacrificial lambs were being slaughtered—the message, the same as that of Saint John the Baptist at the beginning of the Gospel of John, is clear: “*Behold the Lamb of God!*” *I.e. Jesus is the True Lamb.*⁵² Whereas Saint Mark’s account is historical, Saint John’s is theological, a tension already evident to the early Christians. Consequently, different particular churches celebrated Easter on various days in the 1st century.⁵³ This discrepancy culminated in the Easter controversy of the 2nd century.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Mark 14:22, Matt 26:26, Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24. Cf. John 6:51.55–56, Mark 14:8.

⁴⁸ SZÉKELY, *Az Újszövetség teológiája* 55.

⁴⁹ KERESZTY, Rókus, *Isten Egyháza Jézus Krisztusban. Katolikus ekkológiája*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2022, 41–43.

⁵⁰ Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24–25.

⁵¹ TARJÁNYI, Béla, *Jézus Örömhíre. Az Ósegyház tanítása*, Szent Jeromos Bibliatársulat, Budapest 1999, 13; SZÉKELY, *Az Újszövetség teológiája* 49–50.

⁵² SZÉKELY, *Az Újszövetség teológiája* 50.

⁵³ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 65–68. In the Apostolic Age, the New Testament Pesach meal was held on Tuesday.

⁵⁴ HAMMAN, Adalbert, *Így éltek az első keresztények*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2016, 198.

Concerning the Last Supper as a valid Passover meal, no required element is lacking to count it as one. However, something is missing to make it truly a Seder—for nowhere is there any sign of Jesus and his disciples having eaten the Passover Lamb.⁵⁵ But there is no need for that, for Jesus is the Lamb, the slaughtered sacrifice⁵⁶ anticipated with the Bread from Good Friday. The disciples received the Good Friday Lamb sacrifice in advance, for it is Jesus' Body and Blood. Jesus shared Himself as the sacrificial feast of the next day, i.e. Good Friday's offering. In the third cup (of blessing), the disciples had the blood of Jesus, the sacrifice of the Lamb.

There is one more thing left for it to be a Passover meal:⁵⁷ the fourth cup. The following questions may be raised: Is this the cup of suffering?⁵⁸ Or will Jesus receive it only at the heavenly banquet?⁵⁹ If this is the case, the last cup will wait until salvation, the consummation of all things.⁶⁰ Saint Mark relates that Jesus has not accepted the wine mixed with myrrh⁶¹—is this supposed to be the fourth cup, consciously refused by Jesus till the reunion with the Father? Or perhaps could one of Jesus' final words, "*I am thirsty*,"⁶² be a reference to the last cup?⁶³ Was the Passover fulfilled by the sacrifice, when the Lord Jesus breathed his last, because the fourth cup was of suffering?⁶⁴ If he emptied the fourth cup by drinking the sour wine at the time of fulfilment,⁶⁵ and thus

⁵⁵ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 74–75.

⁵⁶ John 1:29: "*Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*" Not only is it significant that Saint John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, but he reinforced the sacrificial nature of the Lamb by emphasising the taking away of sins.

⁵⁷ Cf. HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 113–120.

⁵⁸ For it is written: "*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.*" (Matt 26:39)

⁵⁹ The fourth cup is emptied only after the hymns of the Psalms have already been sung. Moreover, after the third cup, Jesus says: "*Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.*" (Mark 14:25) Cf. Isa 25:6–9.

⁶⁰ Since Jesus had spoken of the fourth cup before, it could not have been coincidence that He did not drink it, nor could it have been the case that his fear of death distracted him from doing so. It must have been a conscious decision on the part of the Lord Jesus.

⁶¹ Mark 15:23: "*And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it.*"

⁶² John 19:28.

⁶³ For afterwards a sponge was fixed on a bunch of hyssop, which was used to sprinkle the blood of the Lamb. Cf. Exod 12:21–22: "*Go, select lambs for your families, and slaughter the Passover lamb. Take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood in the basin.*" The hyssop was dipped in vinegar, that is, sour wine. (FREEDMAN, David Noel, *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* Vo. 2., Doubleday, New York, London, Toronto, Sidney, Auckland 1992, 812. Cf. HAAG, *Bibliai Lexikon* 770.) Jesus received it and said: "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30)

⁶⁴ "*Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?*" (John 18:11)

⁶⁵ The Gospel of John speaks in several places of the coming of the hour, which is the destiny of Jesus, his sacrifice. This hour, according to Saint Augustine, is synonymous with the chalice. When Jesus said, "*My hour has not yet come*", Mary replied: "*Do whatever he tells you.*" Then the Lord Christ turned the water into wine. (John 2:4–5) (HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 120–124.)

entered the Kingdom of His Father, can it be claimed that the emptying of the fourth cup brought about the beginning of God's Reign here on earth?

*B. Pitre*⁶⁶ offers a very consistent interpretation of the fourth cup that is in line with the tradition. There are clues of the emptying of the first three cups.⁶⁷ However, in the fourth part of the evening, after Jesus and his disciples had sung the hymn, they left the upstairs room without having consumed the last cup of wine, which they were to do afterwards according to the ritual of the Passover meal. This is confirmed by the words of Jesus: "*I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*"⁶⁸ Yet in the garden of Gethsemane, three times Christ prayed, falling to the ground, that "*Father, [...] remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.*"⁶⁹ This prayer is therefore about his life, his destiny, and his drinking the last cup. It means that the liturgy of the Last Supper is still going on and will end, together with his life, when he empties the fourth cup of wine.⁷⁰ When it was offered to him during his suffering to alleviate his pain, he did not accept it for his hour had not yet come.⁷¹ According to John the Evangelist, at the end of Jesus' passion, he said: "*I am thirsty.*" This was to express his desire to consume the fourth cup when he dies, and when he was offered a sponge dipped in (sour) wine on a branch of hyssop (used to sprinkle the blood of the Lamb), Jesus accepted it and said, "*It is finished.*" Then Jesus died.⁷² Not only his life, his messianic and redemptive mission were fulfilled at the moment of his death on the cross, but, through the fourth cup, also the Seder and the Last Supper.⁷³ He thus united Holy Thursday with Good Friday, as the liturgy of the Last Supper was brought to completion on the cross with his life. What he said to be his body and blood on Holy Thursday was shed on Good Friday in the same real ritual. Although

⁶⁶ PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 158–170.

⁶⁷ Luke 22:14–20 and 1 Cor 11:16. (The latter is the earliest account of Jesus' words at the Last Supper.) PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 158–163.

⁶⁸ Matt 26:29, cf. Mark 14:25.

⁶⁹ Mark 14:36.

⁷⁰ PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 163–165.

⁷¹ Mark 15:23: "*And they offered him wine mixed with myrrh; but he did not take it.*" Cf. Matt 27:34: "*they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall; but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.*" Cf. Psalm 69:21 (22): "*They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.*"

⁷² John 19:28–30: "*After this, when Jesus knew that all was now finished, he said (in order to fulfil the scripture), 'I am thirsty.' A jar full of sour wine was standing there. So they put a sponge full of the wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the wine, he said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*" Cf. Matt 27:48: "*At once one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink.*" Cf. Mark 15:36: "*And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink [...].*"

⁷³ PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 165–168.

on the Feast of Pesach, the shedding of the blood of the Lamb precedes the eating of the Sacrifice Lamb, here the sacrificial flesh is received first, then comes the shedding of Jesus' blood. In this way, Christ turned his sacrifice on the cross into Passover, and the Last Supper (with his death and suffering) into a sacrifice—according to the ancient Jewish understanding, a true sacrifice required a *priest*, an *offering*, and the *liturgy*, and each one was there from the Last Supper to the crucifixion. In other words, the Last Supper, his passion, the offering and giving his Body and Blood on the cross were united in Jesus' sacrifice. Jesus thereby included all events and actions happening between the Last Supper and his death in the liturgy and in his sacrifice. He joined these to the Easter of the New Testament, and commanded the Apostles and disciples to celebrate these in memory of him.⁷⁴ The community of disciples, the Church is therefore tasked to make present the Last Supper⁷⁵ united with his sacrifice on the cross and his resurrection.

The All-Encompassing Sacrifice of the Holy Mass

If, by elaborating on it, we say that Christ will empty the fourth cup in salvation, then this liturgy that has begun on Holy Thursday covers and unites even more: not only Holy Thursday and Good Friday, but also his descent into Hell on Holy Saturday, as well as Easter Sunday. The Last Supper essentially encompasses the Christ who has given his life for us and is risen—it was Christ who gave and shared it with the disciples on Holy Thursday, hence he is present, as the High Priest, in every commemoration thereof, that is, in the Holy Mass.

It is worth pondering upon the time of emptying the last cup. If Christ receives the last cup not earlier, but only in the Kingdom of his Father, then he unites heavens and earth in the liturgy, since it begins here on earth and ends there in heavens. Making present the Last Supper is there in every Holy Mass, essentially encompassing the Easter Triduum, the descent into hell, and the resurrection. In other words, the liturgy of heaven and the liturgy of earth are intrinsically intertwined, giving an even more explicit meaning to the conviction, especially held in the East but also in the West, that we join to the liturgy of heaven by our Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. It is all the more so in light of the fact that it was Christ who gave and shared himself with the disciples at the Last

⁷⁴ PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 168–170.

⁷⁵ Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:24.

Supper, hence he is present, as the High Priest, in every commemoration thereof, that is, in the Holy Mass.

With the Passion of Christ also being part of the Last Supper, the Holy Mass, in which the sacrifice of Christ is made present, includes his salvific way of sorrows, suffering, crucifixion, and death. Its seeds are already present in the Jewish Passover, insofar as emphasis is laid on the dimension of suffering.⁷⁶ The Lord shares in the misery of Israel. He appears in the burning bush because He has seen the torment of His people languishing in slavery. God knows the nature of pain, and He is compassionate—though not burning *away*, He *is* burning together with His people.

Given the similarity between the words *pesah* and the Greek πάσχω (*páskhō*) ‘to suffer’, these two concepts were associated with each other.⁷⁷ Judaism attributed an atoning power to the blood of the lamb, with the atonement undertaken for many, where this “many” can mean any number of people or even everyone.⁷⁸ God makes sacrifices for His people as an agent: whereas it is usually the servant who watches over his Lord and washes his Lord’s feet, at Passover *it is God who serves man, washes his feet, and cleanses His people from sin.*⁷⁹

The meaning of this suffering and sacrifice is conveyed in Isaiah 53:5: “*But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.*” Jesus, the new Moses also views the lifting up of the bronze serpent as the foreshadowing of his redemptive work.⁸⁰ From the very beginning, God has intended to deliver His people not only from the slavery in Egypt, but also from the world of sin, so that Israel would give her life to Him.⁸¹

Jesus, anticipating his Good Friday sacrifice where he is the offering on the altar of the cross, shared his own sacrificial flesh at his own sacrificial feast as the High Priest during the Last Supper. Thus has the liturgy that encompasses the Old (Seder) and the

⁷⁶ Cf. HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 37.

⁷⁷ SZÉKELY, *Az Újszövetség teológiája* 55–56. This is reflected in the offering of Jesus’ body and blood.

⁷⁸ SZÉKELY, *Az Újszövetség teológiája* 56–57. Cf. *Roman Missal* (For Use in the Dioceses of the United States of America), Third Typical Edition, 2011, Offertory Prayer 8, Weekday Mass I, Tuesday, Offertory Prayer, Weekday Mass IV, Wednesday, Offertory Prayer, Collect 22, Weekday Preface I, III. *Liturgy of the Hours Divine. Office Liturgy Hours Roman Rite*, Collins, London 2006. Tuesday, Week III, Mid-afternoon Prayer. (BALTHASAR, Hans Urs von, *Dare We Hope “That All Men Be Saved”?*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2014, 23–24.)

⁷⁹ SZÉKELY, *Az Újszövetség teológiája* 55–56.

⁸⁰ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 72.

⁸¹ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 49.

New (self-offering at the Last Supper) Testaments begun. Afterwards, provided that the fourth cup has not yet been drunk, he prevails against the underworld, *Sheol*, the abode of the Old Testament Patriarchs, unbaptised infants, those Jews who awaited the Messiah but died before His coming, and the dead who did not know the Lord Jesus. He descended for the dead and true (Holy Saturday), and rose for the living (Easter Sunday), to give life to everyone.⁸² Subsequently, the sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple, the Jewish High Priest became surpassed in the work of Christ, and the Jews who did not accept Jesus were left behind from the point of view of salvation history. The Passover meal of the Old Testament and the Last Supper of the New Testament were united by Jesus. Furthermore, in the Last Supper, the Holy Triduum is in a full union with any Holy Mass, which brings us, and makes ours, the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. In the words of the Lord: “*Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life.*”⁸³

The Ultimate Sacrifice of Christ till the End of the World

Because as the supreme High Priest has offered his unsurpassable sacrifice, Jesus’ sacrifice is perfect and unrepeatable once and for all, for “*It is finished.*”⁸⁴ No other sacrifice is necessary, that is why the curtain of the Temple was torn, the practice of sacrifice in the Temple discontinued, and the presence of the Lord there gone.⁸⁵ We receive this one, perfect, and unrepeatable sacrifice of Christ in the Holy Mass. Jesus is the true Easter Lamb, who takes away the sins of the world once and for all by sacrificing his life for the world, for us. Through the Eucharist, we too become blood relatives, brothers and

⁸² Cf. Tropanion for Easter in the Byzantine Liturgy, as cited by the CCC 638.

⁸³ John 6:54. That is, “*the paschal sacrifice belongs to His very being, and the faithful are saved by communion with this Lamb immolated.*” (DURRWELL, F. X., in CARSON, Thomas–CERRITO, Joann [eds.], *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, Thomson-Gale, Washington D.C. 2003, 8/302.

⁸⁴ John 19:30, cf. Luke 1:1, Mark 4:21, Luke 4:21, John 19:28, Matt 8:17, Acts 13:29.

⁸⁵ Cf. PITRE, Brant, *The Case for Jesus. The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ*, Image, New York 2016, 168–172. For this reason, it is unnecessary to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem, which was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans, as the Lord Jesus had predicted. Thereafter those Jews who did not accept Jesus as the Messiah ceased to offer sacrifices, and they observed their feasts and the Sabbath only in synagogue services. (PITRE, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* 62–63.) In these services, practices from the Temple blended with the elements of prior synagogue services. (DE ROSA, Giuseppe, *Vallások szekták és a kereszténység*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 1991, 31.) Some Jews desire to rebuild the Temple, but this is impossible at present as two Islamic shrines were built on its former site, honouring the Night Journey of Muhammad: *Al-Aqsa* and *the Dome of the Rock*. Jerusalem is thus considered the third holiest place in the world by Muslims, after *Mecca* and *Medina*. (SZÉKELY, János, *Az ötödik evangélium*, Misszió tours, Debrecen 2024, 26, 355–356.) Some also see difficulties such as the red heifer being unavailable for the ritual purification of the Temple to be built.

sisters, for we have the same Blood: that of the Lamb.⁸⁶ The Last Supper is both the last Old Testament Seder as per the Mosaic Law and the first Holy Mass. The Eucharist signifies the covenant: shall we keep to it, it is a blessing, but shall we not, then a curse. Not only is this the logic of the Old Testament, but it is also spoken of by the Apostle Paul.⁸⁷

The temple built on the one and only eternal sacrifice of Jesus was completed in three days.⁸⁸ In Christ, then, the new Temple stands among us. While the Old Testament offering was of the law, and really a sacrifice, that of Christ transcends and supersedes all other sacrifices, including the Old Testament one. Jesus has brought the presence of God in its completeness; and it is *re-presented* on the altar during the Holy Mass—not in a new sacrifice, but in the re-presentation, extension of Christ’s sacrifice,⁸⁹ making it available for the man of today till the end of the world.⁹⁰ Christ is manifested on the altar, and is infinitely more precious than all the burnt-offerings in the Temple of Jerusalem. With Jesus Christ and his new church, the end times have begun.

The Last Supper is available to all⁹¹ in the Holy Mass, the representation of Christ’s one and only sacrifice. In the Eucharist, we return to the centre of history, the cross, where the sacrifice was completed. In it, we receive the Christ of Holy Thursday who shared himself, of Good Friday with its fruits, of Holy Saturday with his descent into hell, and the Risen who gives life and has shared himself beforehand. For “*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever*”;⁹² as one is the temple, the altar, Jesus Christ, and the Father,⁹³ and therefore one is the sacrifice. That is, in the one sacrifice of Christ we are united around the one altar. This is what gives meaning to the life sacrifice of martyrs and to our daily sacrifice.

Since the Last Supper, the Holy Mass has been celebrated without interruption in the Church. It can already be witnessed on the road to Emmaus.⁹⁴ First, Old Testament

⁸⁶ Cf. SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Phil, intr. and 4.1* in PERENDY, László [ed.], *Apostoli atyák*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2018 (ÓKÍ 1), 199, 201.

⁸⁷ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 110–113. Cf. Isa 51:17, Psalm 23:5, Deut 30:19, 1 Cor 11:28–30.

⁸⁸ John 2:19, cf. Matt 26:61, Matt 27:40, Mark 14:58, Mark 15:29. The church of his body was built in the Holy Triduum, lasting from the death on the cross to the resurrection.

⁸⁹ Cf. SCHNEIDER, Athanasius, *A katolikus szentmise*, Jel, Budapest 2023, 70–76.

⁹⁰ When Saint Pio of Pietrelcina was asked when the world would end, he answered: “*When the daily sacrificing ceases*.”

⁹¹ Cf. ST. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica III*, 73–83, cf. II/II, 85–86.

⁹² Heb 13:8.

⁹³ SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Magn. 7.2* in PERENDY, ÓKÍ 1, 187. Cf. SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Phil, intr. and 6.2* in PERENDY, ÓKÍ 1, 199–200, 201–202.

⁹⁴ Luke 24:13–35.

passages and prophecies are quoted, ensued by Jesus' interpreting words, and finally the disciples recognise Him in the breaking of the bread. In *Didache*,⁹⁵ an Early Christian work from the end of the 1st century,⁹⁶ the Sunday Eucharistic communion is already mentioned in chapter 14,⁹⁷ whereas chapters 9–10 are about the prayer and thanksgiving over the cup.⁹⁸ *Saint Clement of Rome*, also at the end of the 1st century, writes about the sacrifice of Christ and his intercession as the High Priest,⁹⁹ while *Saint Ignatius of Antioch* reminds Christians of the importance of the *one sacrificial altar*.¹⁰⁰ In the *First Apology* (c. 150) of *Saint Justin*, the Eucharist is a real sacrifice of flesh and blood.¹⁰¹ The Early Christian author recounts the liturgy of the contemporary Holy Mass: Christians would gather on Sundays,¹⁰² read from the Gospel, the Apostles' writings or the prophets, then a sermon was preached to elaborate on what had been read. After the holy kiss, offerings were brought before the presider (bishop) of the liturgy. He would sing the words of consecration over the offerings: the body and blood of Jesus are present.¹⁰³ The *Apostolic Tradition* from the 2nd or 3rd century is the most important early liturgical document, containing a number of Trinitarian prayers. Some of its elements are still found in the present-day canon, and these have a sacrificial character.¹⁰⁴ There is also evidence that the chalice of the sacred liturgy was venerated from the very beginning, as recorded in the first four centuries by *Saint Ignatius of Antioch*, *Saint Justin*, *Tertullian*, *Saint Athanasius*, *Saint Ambrose*, *Saint Jerome*, *Saint John Chrysostom*, among others.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁵ *Didache (The Lord's Teaching Through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations)* 10:9–10.14 in PERENDY, ÓKÍ 1, 93–107.

⁹⁶ VANYÓ, *Az ókeresztény egyház irodalma I.* 102.

⁹⁷ BILLY, Dennis, *The Beauty of the Eucharist. Voices from the Church Fathers*, New City Press, Hyde Park, New York 2010, 49–52. "On every Lord's Day—his special day—come together and break bread and give thanks, first confessing your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure. Anyone at variance with his neighbor must not join you, until they are reconciled, lest your sacrifice be defiled. For it was of this sacrifice that the Lord said, »always and everywhere offer me a pure sacrifice; for I am a great King, says the Lord, and my name is marvelled at by the nations.«" [cf. Mal 1:11–14] This shows that the Eucharistic community is said to be a sacrifice as early as the 1st century, which is consistent with B. Pitre's vision of the New Testament.

⁹⁸ BILLY, *The Beauty of the Eucharist* 49–50.

⁹⁹ SAINT CLEMENT OF ROME, *First Epistle to the Corinthians* 36:1–2. BILLY, *The Beauty of the Eucharist* 19–20.

¹⁰⁰ SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH, *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 4.1. BILLY, *The Beauty of the Eucharist* 29–30.

¹⁰¹ SAINT JUSTIN, *First Apology* 65–67 in BOROS István-PERENDY László-TAKÁCS László [ed.], *második századi görög apologeták* (ÓKÍ 7), Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2024, 172–174.

¹⁰² HAMMAN, Így éltek az első keresztények 190–192. Christians usually assembled in private houses, and the foundations of private dwellings have been found in excavations of several ancient Roman churches. Cf. HAMMAN, Így éltek az első keresztények 192–194.

¹⁰³ PERENDY, László, *Az ókeresztény egyház irodalma*, Budapest n.d., 16. Cf. HAMMAN, Így éltek az első keresztények 194–198.

¹⁰⁴ BILLY, *The Beauty of the Eucharist* 98–102.

¹⁰⁵ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 131–136.

It is not my aim to write a treatise on the history of liturgy—what I wanted to highlight even more is that the disciples have been presenting the reality of the Last Supper from the beginning onwards. Parallels between the Passover meal and the Holy Mass can also be found in today’s liturgy. The Holy Mass reflects the Jewish Easter liturgy *in the way of being essentially fulfilled and sacrificial*. The parallel between them manifests itself in several instances, even after the Second Vatican Council reform of the Holy Mass.

<i>Haggadah, 2nd part</i>	Readings
3 rd cup	Liturgy of the Eucharist
Great Hallel	Alleluia
Blessing over the unleavened bread and the wine	Offertory
<i>“Blessed are you, Lord God, who brings forth bread from the earth.”</i>	<i>“Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you: fruit of the earth and work of human hands, it will become for us the bread of life.”</i>
<i>“Blessed are You, O Lord Our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.”</i>	<i>“Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation, for through your goodness we have received the wine we offer you: fruit of the vine and work of human hands, it will become our spiritual drink.”¹⁰⁶</i>

This similarity is also evident in the scriptural basis of the two covenants. While baptism and circumcision are akin to making a covenant, the Eucharist is the renewal of the covenant (though the New Testament uses the term ‘covenant’ only for the Eucharist, not for baptism).

¹⁰⁶ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 150–151.

Exod 24:8	Luke 22:20
Moses took the blood and dashed it on the people, and said, 'See the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.'	And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'
Exod 12:14	1 Cor 11:25
This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.	In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' ¹⁰⁷

The Heavenly Banquet of the Lamb

"*It is finished*"¹⁰⁸—with these words, the end times have begun. We await Christ's return with the regular reception of the Holy Communion. As Saint Paul writes in 1 Cor 11:26: "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*" The death of Christ who is to come is proclaimed with the bread and the cup. But which ones? It is revealed in the previous verse (1 Cor 11:25): "*In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'*" This means that we proclaim and await the Lord with the Eucharistic sacrifice.¹⁰⁹ We receive the Blessed Sacrament, the sacrifice of Christ appearing among us, for the end times, so that death may not hold us in its power. "Until he comes again" not only indicates a specific time, but also that it is the Divine Economy that will be fulfilled by the coming of Christ.¹¹⁰ It is yet to happen, we are awaiting it, but with the Eucharist left to us.

¹⁰⁷ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 54.

¹⁰⁸ John 19:30, cf. Luke 1:1, Mark 1:15, Luke 4:21, John 19:28, Matt 8:17, Acts 13:29.

¹⁰⁹ The text of the Holy Mass was formulated accordingly: "*We proclaim your Death, [O Lord, and profess your Resurrection] until you come again.*"

¹¹⁰ Kocsis Imre, *Az üdvösség igéje. Újszövetségi tanulmányok*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest 2013, 152.

If it is claimed that the fourth cup is yet to be emptied,¹¹¹ then it will be nothing but the fulfilment, even though all Holy Masses are eschatological in this way, and we await the table of eternal salvation, the Supper of the Lamb, which

*the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death for ever. Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the Lord has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*¹¹²

This can refer to the Last Supper, to the Holy Masses and Divine Liturgies celebrated subsequently, which are the Eucharistic Banquet, or to the final, fulfilled, eternal Heavenly Banquet in salvation.¹¹³

A passage in the Talmud says¹¹⁴ that in the Garden of Eden, the first man and woman ate the food of angels served by the angels themselves. After being expelled from Eden, they sought it in vain. However, with his obedience, Christ overcame temptation on behalf of mankind, angels waited on him,¹¹⁵ and he reclaimed this angelic food for us. Man now may take, in overcoming temptations, the food of the Garden of Eden, that of the angels, for *Jesus has brought the new Eden*. His resisting Satan on behalf of all mankind has restored the Paradise, even if we are still awaiting its fulfilling realisation.¹¹⁶

The Eucharist also prepares us for the end times: this is what has served as food for martyrs, strengthening the faithful for martyrdom. *Saint Cyprian* is of the opinion

¹¹¹ Matt 26:29: "I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Cf. Mark 14:25.

¹¹² Isa 25:6–9.

¹¹³ In the Book of Revelation, Jesus is most often depicted as the Lamb sacrificed (Hahn, *The Fourth Cup* 80), the One we regularly put on, whose supper we partake in, whose sacrifice we receive, and with whom we will have eternal communion.

¹¹⁴ Sanhedrin.59b.13-14: „Rabbi Yehuda ben Teima would say: Adam, the first man, would dine in the Garden of Eden, and the ministering angels would roast meat for him and strain wine for him.”

¹¹⁵ Mark 1:12–13.

¹¹⁶ TARJÁNYI, Béla, *Az Örömhír Márk evangélista szerint*, PPRKHE, Budapest 1993, 79–80.

that “*they drink the cup of Christ’s blood daily, for the reason that they themselves also may be able to shed their blood for Christ*”, also that Christians are made “*fit for the cup of martyrdom*” by the cup of communion.¹¹⁷ The quotation presses the daily taking of the Holy Communion, probably at a time of persecution. It is by communion in Jesus’ sacrifice that we are cleansed for salvation: “*Blessed are those who wash their robes [in the blood of the Lamb]*.”¹¹⁸ The *Mishnah*¹¹⁹ states that the seats at the Messiah’s table have already been assigned.¹²⁰ With the Eucharistic (life) sacrifice of the Lamb, we are welcomed in heaven, where He Himself awaits us.

¹¹⁷ CYPRIAN, Ep. 58.1 and 57.2, cited by HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 137–138.

¹¹⁸ Rev 22:14, *cf.* Rev 7:14.

¹¹⁹ Pirkei Avot 3:16: “*seeing that the judgment is a righteous judgment, and everything is prepared for the banquet*”.

¹²⁰ HAHN, *The Fourth Cup* 85–86. The names of those who are saved are “*written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered from the foundation of the world*”, because the Lamb had been chosen from creation, sacrificed once and for all, while the work of creation became completed. *Cf.* Rev 9:26 and 13:8.

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The Culture of Optimization and Transhumanism

The fundamental question that arises in relation to the alteration of our natural endowments and capabilities is which biotechnological developments are feasible in the near future and are likely to benefit humanity in the long term, and therefore be morally acceptable. What are the scope and limits of developments that could improve human capabilities and thus make us better able to meet the challenges of life? Can man transcend his hitherto taken-for-granted biological endowments by modifying his physical and mental characteristics? “Overstep” is transcendence. Is it likely that transhumanism, which seeks to enhance man’s physical and mental capacities to an unprecedented degree, or perhaps artificial intelligence, will become the new idol of humanity, the ‘golden calf’, the rival of traditional images of God? Although the possibility for humanity to shape itself and the environment has been given to it since there has been culture, the moral nature of the question is no different: a dialectic of possibility and responsibility. We can recall Leonardo da Vinci’s structures, inspired by living nature, which he copied and designed with the aim of surpassing man’s biological capacities through technology, of enabling man to transcend the limits of his possibilities, of giving wings to those who wish to fly, of allowing those who have hitherto only briefly and timidly dived beneath the surface covered by the waves to explore the depths of the sea.

The difference between the Christian Middle Ages and the Modern Age’s conception of the future is nicely illustrated by a comparison between Luca Signorelli’s *The Resurrection* (1499) and Lucas Cranach’s *The Fountain of Youth* (1546). While in Signorelli’s work the Resurrection is vertical, and is therefore painted as a departure from the worldly world into the afterlife, in Cranach’s work the transition takes place in this world, a horizontal movement. Cranach’s painting is a diagnosis of the times that could be a premonitory vision of later ages: everyone who is sick, ugly or dissatisfied with themselves wishes to dip into the ‘waters of medicine’ to become beautiful, healthy and young, not in the seemingly uncertain afterlife, but now, when everything really matters.

The possibilities of medicine, the bath of rebirth, cannot at present provide this desired and imagined opportunity. However, the transhumanist¹ movement, which advocates and considers feasible the fundamental improvement of the human condition, the effective application of technologies to prevent ageing, and the ‘leapfrogging’ of human intellectual, physical and psychological capacities, is striving to do just that. Corby Paschal defines a transhuman as a human being “whose physical, intellectual and psychological capacities are enhanced over those of current humans, but not to the extent of creating a new species. The idea of the ‘transitional human’ stems from the belief that the human condition is not permanent but constantly evolving: adaptable, potential and capable of change. Humanity as we have it is but a step in the process of evolution.”²

The Ideal of Transhumanism

This increased interest in the body is particularly striking in the context of ethnicization and virtualization. Vilém Flusser, in the context of imagery and technology, has pointed out that images are not merely representations, artistic expressions or captures of reality, but that reality is created in images³ and that images serve as models of reality.⁴ In the world of technical images, the idea of transhumanism, the practice and vision of the optimization of the human being, plays a particularly important role. Many of our ideas about transhumanism are expressed in images, visible not only in scientific journals but also in newspapers, on television and the Internet. The ‘spectators’, the recipients and consumers of this particular visual world, appropriates, imitates, copies or even criticises the ‘images’ that later shape their individual desires.

Human development efforts are carried out through technology and science, so what is true in the Christian dialogue with the natural sciences can also be true of human development efforts. If the comprehensive and all-encompassing nature of Christianity’s

¹ The concept was first defined in Julian Huxley’s 1957 book, “Man remaining man, but transcending himself, by realizing new possibilities of and for his human nature.” “man remaining man, but transcending himself, while realizing new possibilities for and of his human nature.”

„See HUXLEY 1957.

² Corby, Paschal. *The Hope and Despair of Human Bioenhancement*. 2019. [Edition unavailable], Pickwick Publications, 2019, Introduction

³ As early as the 8th century, icon worshippers argued that to reject the icon was to reject the incarnation. “The icon confirms the authenticity of the incarnation, the icon proves it.” L. A. *USPENSKY, THE THEOLOGY OF THE ICON*, Budapest: Kairos, 2003. p. 76.

⁴ FLUSSER 1992, p. 53.

interpretation of reality is taken into account, then theology needs to engage in dialogue with other interpretations of reality.⁵ Brent Waters sees transhumanism, the form of human development that has become an ideology, whose prominent representatives include Max More, Nick Bostrom, and David Pearce, among others, as a religion not in terms of formal criteria⁶ but rather in what Paul Tillich called the ultimate determination, or as Martin Luther put it, "...that in which your heart dwells and trusts is in reality your God."⁷ In his view, transhumanism is the answer to questions about man's imperfection, finitude and mortality that have arisen with the development of technology. This is why transhumanism has many similarities with Christianity, but also with other religions.⁸

The redemption of mortal man is central to both transhumanism and Christianity. While the former hopes for redemption through exponentially evolving technology, in Christianity redemption by the will of God has already begun with the death and resurrection of Christ.⁹ They share, however, the view that in both cases the abolition of death is expected in the future¹⁰. Waters also lists reasons for caution against "sharp and sceptical contrasts" between transhumanism and Christianity. The perspectives and issues raised by transhumanist endeavours provide a particular horizon that is relevant not only to anthropological but also to theological reflections of our days. It is therefore worth briefly outlining the ideas represented by transhumanism.

1. In transhumanism, physicality is the greatest "obstacle", because not only does it limit one's will (not everyone can be an excellent athlete or scientist), but the body also causes pain and suffering.¹¹ The representatives of this movement believe that all this can be overcome with the help of biotechnology, nanotechnology, computer technology and immunology: the human body can be transformed, improved or even designed in a completely new way.

⁵ Cf. POLKINGHORNE 1988, p. 2.

⁶ Cf. WATERS 2011, p. 164.

⁷ A survey in 2005 showed that religious people are less positive about transhumanist possibilities. The conclusion, however, cited fear, not commitment to faith, as the reason: "In a positive feedback loop that vastly accelerates evolution, humans could become like gods, and in so doing may put conventional religion out of business. Thus, it is in the vital interests of Christianity and the other great world faiths to prevent human technological transformation." Bainbridge, William Sims. "The Transhuman Heresy," *Journal of Evolution and Technology* 14 (2), 2005. p. 91.

⁸ "But the vast majority of transhumanists do not identify with any religion." *The Transhumanist Reader: Classical and Contemporary Essays on the Science, Technology, and Philosophy of the Human Future*, First Edition. Edited by Max MORE and Natasha VITA-MORE. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2013. p. 8.

⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

¹⁰ Rev 21, 1-4

¹¹ Cf. WATERS 2011, p. 165.

2. If the properties of the human body can be modified - and not only in terms of technical possibilities - then the question rightly arises: into what? The mere availability of technology does not in itself imply correct and adequate knowledge of the purpose, form, mode or direction, nor are the short- and long-term consequences of change known. From the modification of one's physical and mental qualities according to one's own ideas, there is also an increase in the autonomy of the individual, which can prevail over the 'old' order, biological necessity, political will and ideologies, religious explanations considered outdated. If one wishes to 'remake' oneself in one's own image (imagination), how far does this new pattern differ from the generally accepted one? No single answer can be given to this question, because, on the one hand, autonomous choices are formulated at the individual level and are unique, and, on the other hand, they are undoubtedly influenced by social expectations and ideologies¹². The image of the "ideal person" is socially constructed, since it is not enough for someone to try to shape himself or herself into "his or her own ideal image", this image must also be accepted by others as ideal in order for the "ideal" to be valid in a general sense.

3. transhumanism holds that man's mortality is not part of his humanity, but a tragedy that *must be and can be* overcome by biotechnology. The highest goal is to achieve immortality through genetic or technological achievements, to transcend the ultimate limit of human existence, to "become a god"¹³.

4. The ideas in transhumanism are similar to the teaching of Manichaeism that the soul must be liberated from the body. According to transhumanism, liberation is not achieved by death, but by overcoming impermanence. Man's purpose is beyond himself. Self-development is not only a possibility but also a moral duty. And the enhancement and perfection of cognitive faculties entails the consequence of finding new procedures or cures to make life easier.

5. "Christian theology cannot be either bioconservative or transhumanist in its essence."¹⁴ The acceptance of man's creatureliness presupposes his cooperation with his Creator and the orientation of his future, since for Christians

¹² Cf. WATERS 2011, p. 167.

¹³ Cf. WATERS 2011, p. 168.

¹⁴ SCHAEDE 2010, p. 36.

*“the central images of hope emphasize in different ways that God’s eschatological action is relational to the whole of our being here, in all its dimensions, and not just one of them. The social metaphor of the kingdom of God and the physical metaphor of the resurrection of the dead make this clear. Therefore, eschatological conceptions that emphasize only one dimension or only one aspect of our relational being here - that expropriate it over others - are incomplete.”*¹⁵

Based on this quote, Christoph Schwöbel sees the task of Christian eschatology as becoming a relational eschatology. Another, perhaps the most important question concerning eschatology is the continuity or discontinuity of our experience of being here. Schwöbel points out that, if our hope were to appear as a continuation of our present existence, or as a “further development of our present condition”, this process “would ultimately be indistinguishable from the project of the self-realization of man”, i.e. from the ideology of transhumanism, which he calls “the error of false continuity and discontinuity”.¹⁶ In theology, the key to the correct understanding of continuity and discontinuity is the death and resurrection of Jesus. The real death of Jesus is the discontinuity by which all the active aspects in which human life can be lived are broken.¹⁷ The continuity is provided by the faithfulness of God, the God who raised Jesus from the dead and restored our relationship with him.¹⁸ Therefore, it is only by the discontinuity expressed in death that the continuity of God’s grace can be made real.¹⁹ Contrary to transhumanism, in Christian theology biological death is a condition of eternal life²⁰, *the continuity of life implies the discontinuity that occurs with death*. A significant task of Christian eschatology is therefore to raise awareness of this importance of continuity and discontinuity in the face of any attempt to make false claims about medical science.

¹⁵ SCHWÖBEL 2002, pp. 465-466.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.* p. 466.

¹⁷ See PEACOCKE 2011, p. 393.

¹⁸ See SCHWÖBEL 2002, p. 466.

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰ Theology makes a distinction between “bios” and “dzoe”, transhumanism seeks to displace, to eliminate the loss of biological life, to transcend material bios.

Life Project

It is not only the conception of the life path as a project, but also the image of the self-made man in Christian theology that is confronted with the figure of Jesus Christ, who is the new man. This confrontation does not mean that man does not have the task of shaping, developing and improving his life and himself, but it does mean that, according to Christian conviction, *the purpose and limits of everything can be recognised in the figure of Christ.*

The concept of *enhancement* refers to interventions that use biomedicine to improve a person's physical and intellectual abilities and to prevent the development of disease. The link between enhancement and authenticity (self-identity)²¹ can also be understood as the *dreaming of oneself as one would like to be*, as a praise of the autonomous human being. This bears a partial resemblance to the ideas of transhumanists, who strive for perfection because they want to live a fuller, more perfect, happier life through the technical possibilities that can be used. They envision transforming themselves through the use of the biotechnological means necessary to achieve this goal, so that they experience perfection and optimisation of their potential in the experience of the goal achieved, which will fill the 'improved' person with an experience of authenticity.²²

So-called *converging technologies* (nanotechnology, biotechnology, informatics and cognitive sciences)²³ not only analyse human ability and interpret the results, but are also capable of actively changing human ability, thus confronting anthropology with new questions.²⁴ It is no longer only man's reconstruction, but his construction that is at stake, since previous statements about him are accompanied by scientific "projects and projections"²⁵ of his changeable nature. The need to improve the world and oneself has always been part of the essence of man,²⁶ and is now increasingly made possible by our technical design. The will to improve man is determined by the ideal images of man that have emerged in

²¹ "In a milieu imbued with existentialism, 'authenticity' became the main criterion for evaluating individual behaviour, but it also permeated social theory that was clearly not a proponent of modernisation - such as Erving Goffman's micro-sociology, which identifies freedom with distance from the role, and contrasts foreground and background of the stage, and David Riesman's praise of the man from within." ALEXANDER 2001.

²² Cf. RUNKEL 2010, p. 165.

²³ ROCO-BAINBRIDGE 2003.

²⁴ Cf. KÖRTNER 2010, pp. 116-122.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 116.

²⁶ CAPLAN 2009, p. 167.

the course of scientific and technological progress, which can be considered not only as a simple image, but also as a specific ‘blueprint’ of man, containing the purpose, direction and form of change. However, there is ambivalence about the goal and the means to achieve it.

As Christian Lenk puts it bluntly in his work *“Is improvement a goal in itself?”*: “...the culture of optimisation no longer knows its own purpose. Improvement as such has become an end in itself.”²⁷ In a society significantly defined by aesthetic values, the “image of enhancement” seems to transform the image of man, one of the constitutive parts of which is his mortality and the moral and religious considerations that go with it. We are increasingly witnessing individuals defining themselves and others aesthetically. As we have seen earlier, the basic images and symbols that provide an understanding of reality can fall prey to immanent aesthetics, thereby ‘misdirecting’ one’s transcendent aspects and desires towards their mundane realisation. While medieval asceticism suggested that the body must be tamed in order to achieve and embrace higher spiritual and divine goals, the optimization of man and the image of man that it has created, on the other hand, suggests that man can achieve fulfillment through the improvement of physical qualities, higher goals through genetic engineering or cosmetic surgery, and enhanced mental capacities through psychopharmacology. The great utopian aspirations of mankind have also been individualised, and man seeks their fulfilment less in the great social systems, forms and structures, but in the shaping of himself, as Jean Pierre Wils puts it: ‘...the body is the substitute for the great hopes of utopia.’²⁸ But can the fragile, vulnerable, disease-ridden human body really replace these hopes? Is it not rather the case that, having conquered nature, man wants to optimise his own physical qualities and adapt them optimally to his social environment? Can the fragility of man ever be resolved?²⁹ The desire to acquire knowledge, the desire to improve and shape the body, and even the obligation to do so are not new in the history of mankind, but the technology required to do so is. By the beginning of the 21st century, both are much more available and not only to a narrow group of people, but also to an increasing number of people. On the other hand, if we interpret the questions we have just asked in terms of a lifestyle in which the aesthetic feeling and perception described above are both present, the key role of aesthetic perception in anticipating ethical dilemmas is undoubted.

²⁷ LENK 2006, p. 66.

²⁸ WILS 1990, p. 17.

²⁹ The body has become so valorised that one does not seek to free oneself from the bondage of the fragile physical carrier, but to repair it, to replace it with wires and wires, hardware and software.

“The original purpose of medicine is first and foremost to cure the sick, not to turn healthy people into gods”³⁰ - writes Francis Fukuyama. This begs the question: are we not already in a post-human state, with man’s ability to detect the micro- and macrocosm, organ transplantation, space travel, artificial insemination. All this has been post-human for decades, if we compare the results with man’s original potential and capabilities.³¹

The change in human identity and mindset is presented in the Bible as an opportunity and is morally motivated. In theological thought, the image of the last judgement expresses all that will not be part of a community made complete in God. The sacramental relationship between the permanent and the ephemeral gives hope and certainty of man’s healing in the evangelical sense, which will be the renewal and perpetuation of man’s unity in body and soul in eternal life.

The Ethics of Hope

Jürgen Moltmann, in his book *The Ethics of Hope*, sees the task of Christian ethics neither in adapting to the world, nor in isolating oneself from it, but in guiding the transformation of the world, which is why ethics can have transformative power.³² But for this to be possible, the condition must prevail in relation to the individual, which is expressed precisely in the change and primacy of identity: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2Cor 5,17) The change of identity involves enrichment in the knowledge of the Creator, which is part of the putting on of the new self: “... and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” (Col 3,10), that is, their being is renewed in Christ.³³ This new identity is also a condition of a change of circumstances, and the “ethos of change” is linked to “the pathos of new times”, because the ethic of hope sees the future in the light of Christ’s resurrection.³⁴ With the change of identity comes a change of reason, which “guides transformative action”.³⁵

³⁰ FUKUYAMA 2000.

³¹ Cf. NAGEL-ACHIM 2009, p. 43.

³² MOLTSMANN 2010, p. 59.

³³ See CANAVAN 2012, p. 25.

³⁴ MOLTSMANN 2010, pp. 59-60.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 60.

But besides the Christian understanding of the change of identity, the question is: what is it that preserves one's identity, how does one remain self-identical, what ensures one's authentic existence in the world? In the context of organ transplantation, the question often arises: how long can a person identify with his or her body? How does identification with the new organ, or lack of it, affect the identity of the individual? Böhme takes a rather pessimistic view of this question: "The boundary between reality and design, between necessity and freedom, has not only shifted, it has become blurred. It can never be resolved."³⁶ This includes the question of human autonomy on the borderline between what is technically possible and what is morally permissible, but this question has become moral precisely because of the lack of a generally accepted vision of man.³⁷ We cannot speak of a general image of man, but an ideal has been discussed in every age. While the motto of pietism was "To change the world by changing man",³⁸ the renowned German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk wrote more than 300 years later, "It is not a question of improving the world, but of improving ourselves."³⁹ Sloterdijk's book encourages individual and collective "self-optimisation". Biopolitics is no longer just about healthy living, but also about aesthetic practices. Beauty is not only presented as natural human beauty, but also as a sign of health.⁴⁰ A paradigm shift can be observed, which is gaining ground alongside the evolutionary pattern. Whereas in evolutionary theory survival was based on physical fitness and the ability to adapt to the environment, the new paradigm is increasingly based on aesthetic-ethical selection, mimicking the internal logic of evolutionary social development.⁴¹ In addition to political and ethical values, aesthetic values are becoming increasingly important and, together with the previous two, form a matrix of values in which the techniques for achieving beauty are not only visible but also compelling.

One of the most difficult tasks in enhancing human capabilities can be to draw the line between therapy and optimisation. This is because the concept is not sufficiently clear. Improvement can therefore be defined in terms of the techniques required and the purpose for which they are used, i.e. to distinguish it from therapy.⁴² Consideration

³⁶ BÖHME 1990, p. 55.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ WALLMANN 2000, p. 18.

³⁹ SLOTERDIJK 2009.

⁴⁰ ELBERFELD-OTTO 2009, p. 7.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 8.

⁴² Cf. WOYKE 2010, p. 22.

should be given to the view of John Harris, who argues that the purpose of enhancement can be called good if it is for the benefit of the person. Accordingly, it can be rejected if it can be justified that the enhancement of one's intelligence, physical strength and health by new techniques and pharmacological possibilities is harmful or detrimental to the individual as opposed to the enhancement of one's intelligence, physical strength and health by education and exercise.⁴³ Harris takes for granted the socially accepted enhancement of abilities through education and upbringing (cultivation, exercise, a diet rich in vegetables), which serves as a 'problem-free reference point' against which only the methods and means of optimisation vary. If these goals are legitimate, why should the path to them be condemned? Educated human beings, instead of "educated people"...

This is a legitimate question, since the creation of the human technology needed for development and optimisation was a prerequisite for education in the traditional sense. It was the acquisition of scientific knowledge that made it possible to make man less vulnerable to disease, pain, premature death, physical and mental infirmity, depression. This seems to be part of the process of human evolution. The difference between what has hitherto been regarded as traditional or natural progress and technical progress *lies in the way in which the goal is achieved*, whereas the achievement of the goal is a 'positive moral duty'.⁴⁴ Harris's approach is clearly 'enhancementist'. In a position paper by Fritz Allhoff and colleagues, published in 2009⁴⁵, the concept of 'human enhancement' is defined as the raising of human qualities above the species-specific and statistically normal range, as opposed to the traditional and morally unproblematic education and training Harris refers to as a reference point. The document cites spectacles as a means of improving vision and night-vision binoculars as illustrative examples. The latter provides the user with a property, the ability to see at night, which is not species-specific. The first can be described as a device for correcting visual defects, the second, by giving a person a new ability, is already an enhancement of his or her abilities.⁴⁶ The need to distinguish between therapeutic objectives and interventions aimed at enhancing abilities is proposed by James Sabin and Daniel Norman, with a view primarily to economic considerations:

⁴³ HARRIS 2007, p. 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 3.

⁴⁵ ALLHOF 2009.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 8.

“Treating disease and improving human capabilities can be desirable social goals, but the two should not be interchanged. The model of normal functioning is that health insurance should cover only those disadvantages caused by illness or disability.”⁴⁷

Today, the artificial enhancement of skills can hardly be judged by ethical criteria. Andreas Woyke lists four positions: the transhumanist, the liberal ethicist, the conservative ethicist and the sceptic.⁴⁸ In relation to the conservative and the liberal approaches, he argues in a forward-looking way that the conservative position emphasises and defends the cultural and historical embeddedness of man and the resulting view of man through the notions of “normality” and “authenticity”⁴⁹. The liberal underscores the freedom of the individual and the timeliness and legitimacy of technically enabled interventions; it emphasises *individual autonomy* - within the bounds of reason, of course. Woyke asks the question, “does the dichotomous juxtaposition of liberalism and paternalism lead us any further?”⁵⁰

In contrast to the dichotomous divide, Eric T. Juengst interprets enhancement as a boundary concept that can clarify the definition of the social role of the medical profession, distinguish biomedical research from it, and provide an appropriate framework for health care financing.⁵¹ The need for this is all the more important because, in the current of technological progress, it is not easy to define the legal and moral limits of plans that are difficult or seemingly impossible to implement. The definition of enhancement is therefore normative and descriptive.

In the volume *Transhumanism and Transcendence*, published in the United States by Ronald Cole-Turner⁵², prominent theologians address the question of “provolution” - man’s activity influencing evolution - and transhumanism in relation to the Christian interpretation of sin. Sin is presented as a fallibility of human life (disease, disability), the overcoming of which leads to a posthuman condition. One direction is to improve and preserve the physical and bodily health of man through genomics, genetic engineering and personalised medicine. The cybernetic approach, however, assumes the ‘transcendent’ survival of the human body and thus the eternity of the human spir-

⁴⁷ SABIN-NORMAN 1994, p. 10.

⁴⁸ WOYKE 2010, p. 24.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 27.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ JUENGST 2009, p. 26.

⁵² COLE-TURNER 2011.

it. In this approach, the individual exists as a set of information. A further possibility envisaged is the preservation of the human brain and consciousness by developing a technique to upload the information, memories and dreams stored in it, as well as the consciousness itself, to a computer.

A criterion for determining the futility of a treatment (futility, Sinnlosigkeit) may be⁵³ when a certain intervention can be called enhancement. If the intervention no longer helps, it is pointless and therefore not necessary. Juengst adds, however, that while futile treatment does not lead to good, it is precisely through optimization and enhancement that the greater good is presumably achieved.⁵⁴ Definitions of illness and criteria of social acceptance vary from age to age and community to community, and therefore cannot serve as a stable point of reference. From all this, we can conclude, in agreement with Juengst, that the limits of enhancement are normatively beyond the boundaries of medicine⁵⁵. Juengst's assertion is confirmed by the fact that all the ideas he examined sought to draw the boundary of enhancement 'merely' at a moral level.

Outlook

The one-sided absolutisation of technique has also "technicised" the image of man. The diagnosis of illness and health is not only a diagnosis, but also an assessment. In culture, however, this evaluation can be interpreted not only as stigmatisation but also as the opening up of new possibilities. In illness, not only the Christian tradition but even Ayurveda sees the possibility of healing. Fragmentation presupposes completeness. This is already pointed out in the Old Testament in the statement: "we are healed because of his wounds" (Is 53,5), but the idea of *cum passio*, which has become significant and personal in the Christian lifestyle, is also opposed to false perfectionism. This is why the cross can be a sobering paradox in contrast to the illusion of perfectionism, the fulfillment of which would be transhumanism.

⁵³ See SZEBIK 2014, pp. 151-158.

⁵⁴ JUENGST 2009, p. 26.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

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The Eschatology of Secularization. Secularization and De-Secularization in the Wake of Vatican II

1. Varieties of Rejoicing in the Church on a Sunny October Day

When the synodal fathers started pouring into the nave of the Saint Peter's Basilica on October 11, 1962 (on the feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, established by Pope XI on the sesquimillennial anniversary of another decisive ecumenical council);¹ the European heartland was still almost entirely Christian. This situation is epitomized by the widely reverberating opening address delivered by Pope St John XXIII who convened the council 1360 days before. His speech, entitled *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, was often praised by subsequent historians for setting the tone for the upcoming council that "should not be afraid to make changes in the church wherever appropriate" and that the council should be "pastoral," rather than "doctrinal," a code word for producing further specifications of Church teachings.²

His words indeed reverberated within the audience. Hans Küng (1928-2021) – the (in)famous star theologian who attended the council as one of its official experts (*periti*)

¹ The Feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*Maternitas B.M.V.*) was established by the encyclical *Lux veritatis* of Pope XI, issued on Dec 25, 1931, on the occasion of the sesquimillennial anniversary of the Council of Ephesus (AAS 23 [1931], 403-517, see 516-517 [not included in *DH*]). Celebrated on October 11, this second-class feast was still included in the General Roman Calendar of 1960 (see AAS 52 [1960], 696; concerning its history, see, e.g., the post-conciliar ¹*NCE* vol. IX, 212, which still antedated the liturgical reform of 1969). – Concerning the weather conditions on Oct 11, 1962 (which improved miraculously vis-à-vis the previous afternoon), see Marie-Dominique CHENU, *Vatican II Notebook. A Council Journal 1962-1963*, ATE, Hindmarsh (SA), 2015 (ed. Alberto MELLONI, trans. Paul PHILIBERT OP), 17 ff, es33ff. – All translations are by the present author (partly aided by AI technologies), unless noted otherwise. Trivia and basic biographical data including dates of birth and death (provided chiefly for the purposes of name disambiguation), which are available from common general online or offline lexicographical sources, are not referenced individually, except for disputed cases or of data not accessible in a straightforward way.

² John W. O'MALLEY, *What Happened at Vatican II*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA), 2010, 96.

but later drifted towards an ultra-progressivist collision course with the magisterium, and, in the second year of St John Paul II's pontificate, lost his *missio canonica* (though not his professorship at the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the state University of Tübingen) – recalled in his autobiography to have heard Alfredo Cardinal Ottaviani (1890-1979), the protagonist of the conciliar conservatives and current head of the powerful Holy Office – the inheritor of the famed Roman Inquisition, it long bore the epithet “Supreme Congregation,” renamed in the post-conciliar age to the more modest Congregation (since 2022: Dicastery) for the Doctrine of Faith –, as well as, *inter alia*, Ottaviani's secretary Sebastia(a)n Tromp SJ, incidentally Küng's former jovial teacher of fundamental theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, audibly “grinding their teeth” as Pope St John XXIII spoke, to which Küng triumphantly remarked: “truly, this Pope is aligned with us.”³

The historical value of Küng's above remark is certainly overshadowed by the hermeneutical circumstance that it was written after Küng's aforementioned confrontation with and alienation from the Catholic Church (although still before the election of Joseph Ratzinger [1927-2022], Küng's contemporary and colleague in Tübingen, whom Küng regarded as, first, his frenemy and later his nemesis).⁴ It is also worth highlighting that, even though Tromp's recently published council diaries are conspicuously silent about the opening ceremony itself, they testify the spirit of true conciliarism on the part of the Holy Office (or, in today's parlance, perhaps of true Curial synodality), insofar as Tromp spent the better part of the day with “continuing the work on the submissions by the bishops [*Observationes Episcoporum*].”⁵

Yet, this is not to imply that the alternative between the council becoming doctrinal or pastoral was not real. Indeed, with regard to the aforementioned submissions which Tromp was processing even on the very day of the opening ceremonies, several bishops, *inter alia* the Hungarian Ludovicus (Lajos) Shoy (1879-1968) – whose letter was the only one from the Hungarian episcopate to be smuggled out to Rome, escaping the dragnet of the communist secret police⁶ –, asked for the council to pronounce

³ Hans KÜNG, *Erkämpfte Freiheit. Erinnerungen*, Piper, München, 2002, 547. (concerning his relationship to Tromp, see 151 ff.).

⁴ See especially the subsequent volume written upon the perceived shock of Ratzinger's election: Hans KÜNG, *Umstrittene Wahrheit. Erinnerungen*, Piper, München, 2007, 11 ff.

⁵ Sebastian S.J. TROMP, *Konzilstagebuch mit Erläuterungen und Akten aus der Arbeit der Theologischen Kommission. Band I/1 (1960-1962)*, Editrice pontificia università gregoriana, Rom, 2006 (ed. Alexandra von TEUFFENBACH, trans. Bruno WEGENER), 493.

⁶ See FEJÉRDY András, *Magyarország és a II. vatikáni zsinat [Hungary and Vatican II]*, MTA Történettudományi Intézete, Budapest, 2011, 59-65 *es*64, n. 186.

the dogma of “the Blessed Virgin Mary being the mediator [*Mediatrix*] of all grace,” which was considered a probable doctrine (*sententia probabilis*), if not a generally shared common doctrine (*sententia communis*) during the pre-conciliar decades.⁷ In fact, according to the official summary of responses to the survey sent out by the Vatican in June 1959, almost three hundred bishops from all over the world, including superiors of major orders, asked for the *Mediatrix* dogma to be pronounced at the council, rendering it the single most popular doctrinal wish list item, followed only by the call for the “damnation of the error of communism.”⁸ Only Friedrich Maria Rintelen (1899-1988), then auxiliary bishop of Magdeburg in the socialist East Germany, opined that such Marian titles should be avoided, because they could “give rise to false ideas for heretics.”⁹ It was against such background that Pope St John XXIII programmatic declaration in favor of a pastoral approach, rather than further doctrinal solidifications (not to mention doctrinal condemnations), must be appreciated. The present-day observer might even be inclined to remark that

⁷ ADA vol II/2, 522 It is certainly no coincidence that a well-informed presentation of the pre-conciliar case for the *Mediatrix* thesis is found in the influential dogmatic manual of the Hungarian Antal Schütz SchP (1880-1953), professor of dogmatics at the University of Budapest from 1916 until 1946 (SCHÜTZ Antal, *Dogmatika. A katolikus hitigazságok rendszere [Dogmatics. The System of Catholic Articles of Faith]*, Szent István-Társulat, Budapest, 1937, II, 89-95.). Encouraged by the grassroots movement initiated by the Belgian Désiré-Joseph Cardinal Mercier (1851-1926) in favor of the *Mediatrix* thesis, especially Mercier’s inquiry mailed to bishops worldwide in April 1921 (see Gloria Falcão DODD, *The Virgin Mary, Mediatrix of All Grace. History and Theology of the Movement for a Dogmatic Definition from 1896 to 1964*, Academy of the Immaculate, New Bedford (MA), 2012, 110 ff.), Schütz even published the corresponding chapter of his manual as an offprint (SCHÜTZ Antal, *Szűz Mária egyetemes kegyelemközvetítése [The Universal Mediation of Grace by the Virgin Mary]* in: *Theologia (Hittudományi Folyóirat)* 4 (1937), 97-107., cf. n. 1 on his connection with Cardinal Mercier). – Concerning the pre-conciliar system of classifying the so-called grades of theological certainties, cf., e.g., Bernhard BARTMANN, *Grundriss der Dogmatik*, Herder, Freiburg, 1923, 21. (at the same time, this excellent contemporaneous dogmatic manual exemplifies the lack of universal consensus for the *Mediatrix* thesis, which is completely ignored here [cf. 254 ff.]; even though its Mariology is far from being critical, e.g., it is fully compatible with the upcoming dogma of the Assumption that would be pronounced only in 1950; cf. 273-274). – It is worth emphasizing that – notwithstanding the sporadic invocation of the term itself by the modern magisterium, e.g., *LG* 62 and Pope St. John Paul II’s encyclical *Redemptoris Mater*, issued on March 25, 1987 (AAS 79 [1987], 415 [c. 40.]; also missing from *DH*) – the *Mediatrix* thesis has still *not* (yet) been pronounced as a dogma. For an overview of the contemporary Roman Catholic position on the *Mediatrix* thesis, including its interpretation in terms of “analogous participation” (modelled upon the understanding of priesthood), i.e., “so that the interpersonal mediations are not an addition to the mediation of Christ, but rather its effects on the level of the personal co-existence of the members of the Christ’s Body,” see Gerhard Ludwig MÜLLER, *Mittlerin der Gnade (mediatrix)*. *I. Kath[olische] Theol[ogie]* in: Remigius BÄUMER and Leo SCHEFFCZYK [eds.], *Marienlexikon. Band IV (Lajtha-Orangerbaum)*, EOS, St. Ottilien, 1992, 487-491, 489.

⁸ ADA vol. II Appendix/1 pp 135-136, n. 1; cf. 199-200, n. 1 (quotation: 199). The former count excludes Shovy, whose proposal is categorized under the more permissive “pronounce [...], if deemed appropriate” item heading (136, cf. 136-137, n. 2).

⁹ ADA vol. II Appendix/1, 132; cf. n. 9.

synodality – or, as the related idea was called back then: conciliarity – is not merely a matter of democratic mechanisms, let alone the numerical majorities of votes casted.

From the vantage point of today, however, what strikes the present reader of *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* is its unbounded and unapologetic optimism, particularly with respect to the challenge of *secularization*. Not only did Pope St John XXIII rhetorically condemn the “prophets of gloom [*rerum adversarium vaticinator*], who are always forecasting disaster,” (GME 169 / 26) and, in marked contrast to them, envisaged a Church that “will look to the future without fear” (168 / 26). On top of that, his position – at least in some parts of his speech – seems to have been underpinned by a *conspicuous dichotomy of almost eschatological proportions* between, on the one hand, an entirely negatively connoted past and, on the other hand, a future described in exclusively positive terms: while the alarmist position of the »prophets of gloom« is, according to the Saint Pope, undermined by their fictitious, ideological construction of past eras, “as though at the time of former councils everything was a full triumph for the Christian idea [*doctrina*] and life [*mores*]” (*ibid.*); the supreme pontiff seems to have been convinced that, in the historical era just about to dawn upon us, “Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by men’s own efforts and even beyond their very expectations, are directed toward the fulfilment of God’s superior and inscrutable designs.” Hence, he concludes immediately, “everything, even human differences, leads to the greater good of the Church” (*ibid.*). This juxtaposition of past and present by the Saint Pope is perhaps as bold as it is difficult to grasp, not least because of philological difficulties. Let us focus first on the philological circumstances in order to cast more light on the interpretative challenge itself!

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In analyzing the text of *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, we have so far followed the two most definite – and, simultaneously, probably most influential – sources, namely the official Latin edition of the council proceedings (AS) and its contemporaneous English translation and exposition, the so-called *Council Daybook* (CDB). However, at the present point a textual difference emerges. To begin with, according to the widespread English translation we quoted above, Pope St John XXIII speaks simply of “human differences” which themselves manifest a hidden teleological tendency towards the providential aim

of the Catholic Church, while the Latin version – both the one published simultaneously in the official journal of the Vatican (see AAS 52 [1962], 788) as well as that in the council proceedings (see AS I/1, 169) – employ a more complex and, importantly, more negative noun phrase: “*adversos etiam humanos casus*,” i.e., “including the adverse human circumstances.” As if that were not enough, there is a subtle, although significant grammatical difference as well, insofar as the Latin noun phrase unmistakably serves as an object in accusative form, rather than being the subject of the clause (more precisely, as an appositive to its proper subject “everything”), as implied by the English translation. Hence, there is, according to the Latin version, an inseverable link between this clause and the subject of the preceding main clause, namely “Divine Providence,” which is also presented by the Latin version in a more indirect way: it is not “Divine Providence” itself, but rather its “hidden plans [*arcana ... consilia*].” Accordingly, the Latin verb (“*disponunt*”) appears in plural form as well. What is at stake in these seemingly subtle philological-linguistic differences is the crucial question whether the Saint Pope optimistically praised *human diversity* – so frequently invoked in secular circles *du jour* – that would *per se* be beneficial to the Church or, rather, his claim was merely a manifestation of the idea that Divine Providence would, *despite* (!) adverse human actions, *nolens-volens* prevail by virtue of a hidden mechanism akin to G. W. F. Hegel’s famous *List der Vernunft* principle?

In his aforementioned memoirs, Hans Küng speculated that, “for the key passages, the Italian text is undoubtedly the original one, while the Latin text bears several orthodox adjustments [*Glättungen*].”¹⁰ The philological situation of the text is indeed notoriously difficult, even though Küng’s suggestion of an orthodox censure of Pope St John XXIII by the Roman Curia is oversimplifying at most; and it probably has more to do with Küng’s vivid imagination, particularly his subliminal theological-ideological commitments. According to the testimony by Loris Francesco Cardinal Capovilla (1915-2016), the personal secretary of the Saint Pope, the Latin text was namely “calculated word for word with his [the Pope’s] direct collaborators and the Latin translator,”¹¹ rather than translated behind the Pope’s back in an allegedly deceptive way. That being

¹⁰ Hans KÜNG, *Erkämpfte Freiheit. Erinnerungen*, 546–547.

¹¹ Alberto MELLONI, *Papa Giovanni. Un cristiano e il suo concilio*, Einaudi, Torino, 2009, 530. (*nota bene*, the testimony is based on Cardinal Capovilla’s piece of writing in the Italian magazine »*Jesus*,« as well as his interlocution during the discussion at a scholarly conference, rather than constituting a direct scholarly source, cf. *loc. cit.*, n. 2.).

said, there are, according to a biographer of the Saint Pope,¹² not fewer than five versions of the Latin text itself that differ in minor ways; and it may come as no surprise that already one of these discrepancies between the Latin texts affects the passage in question, most notably, the Latin verb “*disponunt*,” analyzed above appears in singular form in the original version of the speech as it was delivered by Pope St John XXIII, as witnessed by both the philological reconstruction of the original typescript¹³ and the original television footage, which we are fortunate enough to have about this modern-day historical event.¹⁴

This shift of grammatical form – resulting in a mildly ungrammatical sentence in Latin – might have been a slip of the tongue on the part of Pope St John XXIII, since the very original Italian version of the speech that he first prepared on his own and most probably also had in mind during delivering the Latin speech, indeed diverges significantly from the Latin at the passage in question: “In the present order of things, good Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations, which, by the work of men and for the most part beyond their own expectations, are directed toward the fulfillment of its higher and unforeseen designs; and everything, even human diversity [*diversità*], disposes [*dispone*] for the greater good of the Church.”¹⁵

What may come as a real surprise is that this arch-original textual version virtually coincides – barring some English archaisms – with that of the least serious, yet simultaneously most influential sources, namely the *Council Daybook* (CDB), which was also echoed by contemporary newspaper sources from the major international to minor regional and from Catholic to secular ones (not to mention its reverberating influence up to today).¹⁶ It turns out that an official English translation was prepared by the Vatican – more precisely, by the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, headed by Augustin Cardinal Bea SJ (1881-1968), former rector of the progressive-leaning Pontifical Biblical Institute, whom Küng, rightly or by illusion, considered a reformist

¹²Alberto MELLONI, *Papa Giovanni. Un cristiano e il suo concilio*, 530 ff.

¹³Cf. Alberto MELLONI, *Papa Giovanni. Un cristiano e il suo concilio*, 553.

¹⁴The unabridged television broadcast footage from the *Rai Tre* channel is available, e.g., at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OU1gurfHc2M> (timestamp for the passage in question: 3:30:10; last accessed: July 5, 2024).

¹⁵Original Italian at: Alberto MELLONI, *Papa Giovanni. Un cristiano e il suo concilio*, 575.

¹⁶Cf., e.g., *Pittsburgh Catholic* vol. 114, no. 32 (Oct 18, 1962), 5; *The Catholic Advocate* vol. 11, no. 43 (Oct 18, 1962), 15. As representative evidence for its continued use: *The St. Louis Review* vol. 29, no. 13 (Apr 4, 1969), 10 (Editorial: “Easter Sign: One of Hope”), *Our Sunday Visitor* vol. 101, no. 17 (Aug 26, 2012), 11.

brother-in-arms¹⁷ of him – and distributed to world-wide press organs which – in the age of a less-interconnected world lacking real-time information flow – was eager to reproduce it.¹⁸ The seemingly innocent philological minutiae indicates that, instead of a purported conservative curial conspiracy behind the back of Pope St John XXIII, the reception of the speech was already the result of an interpretative act, from which even the Vatican secretariats were not exempt. The only question is what the hermeneutical horizons of these interpretations are, not to mention the corresponding intellectual and ecclesiastical stakes.

2. Present and Future Trends of Secularization in Europe

The European heartland indeed remained Christian – or Catholic, respectively – during the Council itself; however, shortly thereafter, statistical data began to indicate a decreasing trend in public religiosity. This is particularly manifest in the case of (West) Germany, where religious and confessional affiliation was not merely a matter of fleeting personal self-identification decisions, but – due to the existence of Church tax collected by the state tax administration – were official acts that had a tangible immediate financial effect as well (not to mention the symbolic role of German prelates and theologians at the Council, as epitomized by the [in]famous book title *The Rhine Flows Into the Tiber*, published shortly thereafter).¹⁹ According to cumulated German statistical data,²⁰ the percentage of Catholics in the German Federal Republic was even increasing slightly – yearly within ca. some tenths of a percentage point – during the pre-conciliar and conciliar era. However, it occurred in the cultural watershed moment of 1968 that this promising trend became reversed, and a steady, yet apparently inexorable decline commenced (together with the growing number of people voluntarily leaving the Church via disaffiliation [*Kirchenaustritt*]; their yearly number tragically surpassed the

¹⁷ See especially Hans KÜNG, *Erkämpfte Freiheit. Erinnerungen*, Piper, München, 2002, 492 ff, cf. Hans KÜNG, *Umstrittene Wahrheit. Erinnerungen*, 137, 195–195.

¹⁸ Cf. the transcript of the speech by the Catholic press wire service (on the very day of the opening celebrations): *N[ational] C[atholic] W[elfare] C[onference] News Service*, Special Service (Oct 11, 1962), see especially 3.

¹⁹ See Ralph M. WILTGEN, *The Rhine Flows Into the Tiber. The Unknown Council*, Hawthorn, New York, 1967.

²⁰ See, e.g., <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/zahlen-und-fakten/soziale-situation-in-deutschland/61565/katholische-und-evangelische-kirche/> (last accessed: Sept 18, 2024; data manually aggregated). It is worth noting that, although this institutional source is generally considered politically left-leaning, it is not affiliated with either of the major Christian Churches in Germany.

100,000 mark after the political transition [*Wende*] and the unification of Germany). This trend is, sadly, far from being an ephemeral statistical phenomenon, as demonstrated by the symbolic milestone reached in the year 2021, when the combined number of German Catholics and federated mainline Protestants (i.e., members of the Evangelical Church in Germany [*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*, EKD]) first fell below the fateful threshold of 50 percent of German population, in stark contrast to its peak of 95.4 percent during the Council.²¹

Even though it is methodologically challenging to obtain reliable comparative statistical data (the task of which is beyond the confines of the present paper), a generally available scholarly comparative global data source²² also seems to corroborate that this decreasing trend is not confined to Germany alone: all original member countries of the Treaty of Rome – to cite another consequential event that occurred in the Eternal City during the early post-war decades – exhibit a continuously decreasing tendency, with possible signs of recovery in the second half of the 1990s in the case of Italy and the small nation of Luxembourg, to be followed upon by an even sharper decline in the second half of the subsequent decade. It is particularly insightful to highlight the case of Belgium, whose “impact” on the Council was, according to modern scholarly evaluations, so “extraordinary” that “[s]ome commentators joked [... that] the Council should be called Louvain I instead of Vatican II:”²³ Belgium, still almost fully Catholic (92.8 percent) at the end of the Council, sadly fell to 62.5 percent in 2010 (it was a sociologist of the university at the aforementioned city of Leuven who estimated that the threshold of 50 percent was reached ca. a decade later).²⁴

²¹ See, e.g., *Katholische Kirche in Deutschland. Statistische Daten 2021* (https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/presse_2022/2022-101a-Kirchenstatistik-2021_Flyer.pdf; last accessed: Sept 18, 2024; with manual calculations), 1 [unnumbered]. Even though the combined number of Christians in 2021 probably still constituted the majority, due to evangelical Protestant and Eastern Churches not being included in the German Church tax system (and, therefore, not recorded statistically), their combined number is not estimated to exceed a few percentage points. Therefore, German Christians likely became a minority in the meantime, as the most recent combined count of the two main Churches is sadly only 45.94 percent (*Katholische Kirche in Deutschland. Statistische Daten 2023*; https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/presse_2024/2024-110a-Kirchenstatistik-2023.pdf; last accessed: Sept 18, 2024; with manual calculations).

²² Zeev MAOZ and Errol A. HENDERSON, *The World Religion Dataset, 1945–2010: Logic, Estimates, and Trends in: International Interactions* 39 (2013/3), 265–291. Data accessed from: <https://correlatesofwar.org/data-sets/world-religion-data/> (last accessed: Sept 19, 2024; data manually postprocessed).

²³ John W. O'MALLEY, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 121.

²⁴ *L'Église Catholique en Belgique 2023* (<https://newsletter.cathobel.be/rapport-annuel-eglise/rapport-annuel-eglise-2023-digital.pdf>; last accessed: Sept 19, 2024), 25.

As if that were not enough, there exists a reliable scientific forecast of future Catholic and mainline Protestant affiliation rates in Germany (a calculation based on data from 2017 and widely discussed in the subsequent years),²⁵ according to which by 2060 both Churches will lose approximately half of their current members *in addition* to their losses so far.²⁶ It is also worth underscoring that the forecasted loss rate is far beyond the loss caused by demographic factors alone (e.g., increasing mortality and decreasing fertility). In other words, Christianity is unavoidably going to become a comparatively small – in the eastern German federal states even a numerically negligible – minority in Germany within our lifetimes.

What statistical figures alone fail to capture, furthermore, is the *inexorably widening cultural gap* between the mainstream society and the religious communities that are, *nolens volens*, increasingly relegated to a *counter-cultural diaspora*, often on a collision course with broader societal values emerging from the process of accelerating secularization. On top of that, one might wonder whether – rather than being a linear development – there are certain inflection points in the process of societal secularization, i.e., thresholds at which novel secularization effects suddenly emerge, and *whether these inflection points lie directly ahead of us*, when Catholics (Christians) will become a pronounced minority vis-à-vis a society of non-believers?²⁷ Is this the inevitable future that the Church in Europe, including the former Soviet bloc countries, is going to face?

3. Unfolding of a Public Discourse

In his spiritual journal, Pope Bl. John XXIII remarked that “I was the first to be surprised at my proposal [to convene the Council], which was entirely my own idea.”²⁸ “[A]fter this” initial decision, as he recorded during his private retreat on the eve of the

²⁵ See David GUTMANN and Fabian PETERS, *German Churches in Times of Demographic Change and Declining Affiliation: A Projection to 2060* in: *Comparative Population Studies* 45 (2020) David GUTMANN and Fabian PETERS, *#projektion2060 - die Freiburger Studie zu Kirchenmitgliedschaft und Kirchensteuer. Analysen - Chancen - Visionen*, Neukirchener, Neukirchen-Vluyn, 2021.

²⁶ Cf. David GUTMANN and Fabian PETERS, *German Churches in Times of Demographic Change and Declining Affiliation: A Projection to 2060*, 20.

²⁷ The issue of a non-linear accelerating secularization towards relative social obsolescence was also discussed recently by Helmut HOPING and Magnus STRIET, *Gott, Freund der Freiheit. Ein Streitgespräch*, Herder, Freiburg, 2023 (ed. Stefan ORTH), 137.

²⁸ Pope JOHN XXIII, *Journal of a Soul*, Geoffrey Chapman, London, 2000 (trans. Dorothy WHITE), 326.

Council, “everything seemed to turn out so naturally in its immediate and continued development” (*ibid.*). At the same time, one is compelled to observe that the moment of “surprise,” i.e., the character of being unanticipated, was not entirely absent from the ensuing (post-)conciliar development as well. It was not only the feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, invoked by Pope St John XXIII’s speech, that was profoundly transformed in the post-conciliar decade. The ways of expressing agreement or disagreement, too, were no longer confined to semi-audible (or imagined) grinding of teeth and accompanying silent thoughts among the audience.

Of course, radical expressions of both agreement and disagreement, emerging from whatever direction, can be regarded as historical constants throughout ecclesiastical history, from the early centuries of the Church’s inception to the present day. Indeed, there was no shortage of such radical events in the early post-conciliar decades, ranging from deserting priests – e.g., Johannes Neumann (1929-2013), the friend, professorial colleague, and ecclesiastical legal advisor of Küng, who officially disaffiliated himself from the Catholic Church, married her assistant, and became an outspoken atheist and vocal opponent of state-sponsored religions education²⁹ – to standpoints approaching, or regrettably even crossing, the threshold of heresy or schism, reaching up to the upper echelons in the tragic case of Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre (1905-1991). Yet, as said above, from a broader ecclesiastical historical perspective, these developments should not come as a surprise to anyone. It also goes without saying that the full and unconditional acceptance of the decrees of an ecumenical council is a *conditio sine qua non* prerequisite of being a Catholic Christian (both according to the pre-conciliar and the post-conciliar Codes of Canon Law).³⁰ Yet, there is always a legitimate space for interpretation and discussion that is a prerequisite to understanding itself (and, by the same token, a prerequisite to obedience itself), especially regarding the implementation of such decrees. What is noteworthy intellectually – and what we will study from a scholarly point of view in following part of the present paper – is precisely this conspicuous historical phenomenon of non-partisan, intellectually serious discussion arising from the *midst of the Church herself*.

²⁹ See from an autobiographical perspective (though highly critical also of the Church): Ursula NEUMANN, *Der Kirchenrechtprofessor nimmt Vernunft an, wird mit mir glücklich und stirbt*, Books on Demand, Norderstedt, 2017.

³⁰ Cf. es1917 *CIC*, can. 1323, § 2; 1983 *CIC*, can. 749, § 2.

One of these perplexing cases is the French-American Catholic convert, theologian, and public intellectual Louis Bouyer CO (1913-2004). Bouyer was a behind-the-scenes insider co-architect of the post-conciliar liturgical reform: he participated in the sub-commission on the missal reform, and, together with Bernard Botte OSB [1893-1980], infamously finished their draft of the pre-consecration epiclesis *Vere sanctus es, Domine, fons omnis sanctitatis...* from today's widely used *Eucharistic Prayer II* on a "Trastevere café terrace."³¹ Yet, in the early post-conciliar era the eloquent and sharp-witted Bouyer became one of the first interlocutors of the ensuing discussion. In a much-publicized pamphlet on the "decomposition" of Catholicism, first published in French in 1968 and translated into English almost immediately (published at a major ecclesiastical publisher of its time), Bouyer drew the attention to what he termed the "well-intentioned" "naiveté" of the council fathers: "Of all Christians [...], it was the bishops who were accustomed [...] to living in the most protected regions of Catholic hinterland;" thus, for them "to speak of the world was to speak from hearsay."³² Bouyer's critique also targeted a Manichean idea of a future cushioned in entirely positive terms: "consist[ing] simply in scrapping the whole idea of tradition in order to fly into the arms of a futurity whose face no one really knows" (44). At the same time, Bouyer was keen to avoid identifying himself with either of the perceived extreme wings of post-conciliar ecclesiastical politics (which he termed "progressivism" and "integralism"). Quite the contrary, he claimed that both extreme positions "are what the geometrists call enantiomorphs: they are like a figure and its reverse image in a mirror [...], they live and develop in relationship to one another" (55). It is thus not without reason that Bouyer could be

³¹ Louis BOUYER, *The Memoirs of Louis Bouyer. From Youth and Conversion to Vatican II, the Liturgical Reform, and After*, Angelico, Kettering (OH), 2015 (trans. Peter KWASNIEWSKI), 222. As an antidote to thinking of Bouyer as frivolous bystander, see his simultaneously erudite and pious pre-conciliar contribution to liturgics: Louis BOUYER, *Liturgical Piety*, Cluny, Providence (RI), 1955. (cf. 184 concerning his assessment of the description of Roman liturgy by St Hippolytus, upon which the eucharistic prayer in question was based). It must be further noted that, even though Bouyer's memoirs are often invoked by certain authors today due to its vitriolic descriptions of his collaborators and superiors (especially of the protagonist liturgical reformer, Annibale Bugnini CM [1912-1982]), there are oft-overlooked passages according to which Bouyer actually seems to have been *fully satisfied* with the actual content of the liturgical texts they drafted: their "three Eucharistic Prayers [...] reclaimed pieces of great antiquity and unequalled theological and euchological richness" (220), cf. "excellent elements it [their product] nevertheless contains" (224).

³² Louis BOUYER, *The Decomposition of Catholicism*, Franciscan Herald, Chicago (IL), 1969 (trans. Charles UNDERHILL QUINN), 40.

considered a representative of the middle ground,³³ not to mention the fact that the English translation of his book received the *Nihil obstat* from the Archdiocese of Chicago.

Bouyer was far from being a lone voice. The author of the decades-long influential column *Yardstick*, George G. Higgins (1916-2002), whose vocal support for the social issues (*Arbeiterfrage*) earned him the epithet “The Labor Priests’ Priest”³⁴ still in the pre-conciliar age, said in relation to Bouyer’s pamphlet “that a number of so-called ‘liberal’ or progressive commentators are having second thoughts [...]”³⁵ Perhaps the most prominent example of such a post-conciliar volte-face – provided that such a description is correct – was, albeit from a different cultural sphere, the laywoman Ida Friederike Görres (1901-1971). Already being an established devotional writer in Germany (and considered as an unconsecrated but *de facto* virgin until her surprise marriage in 1935),³⁶ Görres had published a poetic, but surprisingly acidic essay on the present state of the German Catholic Church in the November 1946 issue of the Left-Catholic *Frankfurter Hefte* that reverberated well beyond the confines of her homeland in a way that is hard to overestimate. Even Pope Pius XII complained of a “certain recent case from beyond the Alps, a case of dishonorably hurtful and bitterly unjust criticism from a Catholic pen;”³⁷ and Ida Friederike Görres’ forceful diagnosis of “chronic ills within the structure of the Church”³⁸ could probably be regarded as a precursor of the topoi currently discussed at the German Synodal Path (*Synodaler Weg*).

³³ As a scholarly example of such a view of Bouyer’s pamphlet, see its review notice by Glenn O. Hilburn (1930-2016), professor of religion at the Baptist Baylor University in Waco, Texas: Bouyer “points out that what the Church needs today is neither radicalism to the far-left nor conservatism to the far-right,” both being “two sides of a single coin, a common mentality” (*Journal of Church and State* vol. 12, no. 3. [1970], 535-536 [quotations: 536]; for Hilburn’s biographical data: <https://news.web.baylor.edu/news/story/2016/baylor-university-mourns-passing-retired-chair-religion>; last accessed July 9, 2024).

³⁴ Patrick J. SULLIVAN, *Monsignor George G. Higgins: The Labor Priests’ Priest* in: *U.S. Catholic Historian* 19 (2001/4), 103–118.

³⁵ George G Higgins: *The Yardstick: Books on Vatican II*. In: *The Advance* (main title variant: *The Catholic Advance* [Official Newspaper of the Diocese of Wichita]; Wichita, Kansas) vol. 104, no. 32. (Apr 24, 1969), 3. It is indicative of the intellectual fragility of early post-conciliar years, that within less than a year Higgins – perhaps due to a closer acquaintance with the actual content of Bouyer’s booklet – condemned Bouyer’s “aggressive polemics” that is “out of character for a man of his stature” (*The Yardstick: Has a Few Unkind Words For a Couple of Vitriolic Writers*. In: *Lake Shore Visitor. Official Newspaper of the Diocese of Erie* [Erie, Pennsylvania; Feb 20, 1970], 5).

³⁶ As reported by Hanna-Barbara GERL-FALKOVITZ, “Only the Lover Discerns”: A Brief Introduction to Ida Friederike Görres in: *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 23 (2020/4), 117–122, 120.

³⁷ Quoted from: »Brief über die Kirche«. *Die Kontroverse um Ida Friederike Görres’ Aufsatz. Ein Dokumentationsband*, Böhlau, Köln, 2005 (ed. Jean-Yves PARAÏSO), 71.

³⁸ Quoted according to the edition at »Brief über die Kirche«. *Die Kontroverse um Ida Friederike Görres’ Aufsatz. Ein Dokumentationsband*, 33–52. (quotation: 49, orig.: 730).

Before proceeding to analyze the post-conciliar shift in her standpoint, however, it is probably worth formulating a critical remark concerning her original critique of post-war pre-conciliar German Catholic Church. One is compelled to discern, especially from the vantage point of today, a strange, almost nostalgic overtone of the critique voiced by her, as if she had been chasing an utopistic mirage of worldly perfection, while not only losing sight of its earthly anticipation, but even actively denying the possibility of the latter. In other words: What should, ultimately, be the problem with the “high statistical figures” of churchgoers she is complaining about (51, orig.: 732)? Why is she so sure that religious “enthusiasm” is merely a “stopgap measure, rather than a valid embodiment of an ideal demand” (40, orig.: 722)? Is the supposed link between “»arch-Catholic« [or: cradle-Catholic; *stockkatholische*] environment” and making somebody “loathe the faith” (39, orig.: 721) so strong and automatic? Or we may ask, based on our pastoral experience in the radically secularized world of today, is it really worth depriving the people of their opportunity to authentically encounter faith in their cultural environment just because of the perceived risks originating from the infamous “cradle-Catholic environment”? Conversely, is not she holding the German clergy of her age to a utopically excessive standard, when – while admitting that they are “of a good healthy standard in average” (40, or. 722), in marked contrast, according to her, to the Sudeten German regions or remote areas like the “South American Continent” (41, orig.: 723) – she reproaches them for their „hardness of heart, the deep lack of kindness, love, compassion and understanding for the fate of others” (42, orig.: 723-724)? Or is it not an excessively high intellectual demand when she complains that parishes have no “spiritual atmosphere,” that they are not a “crystallization point of people for whom the cause of God is their [...] burning concern” (43, orig.: 725)? In other words: if these utopic high standards were unattainable, is it worth demolishing the parishes and dismantle a comprehensive pastoral care of admittedly »good healthy standard in average«?

Perhaps such questions may have been on the minds not only of her readers today but also of Ida Friederike Görres herself. On April 17, 1970, Ida Friederike Görres delivered an equally ferocious lecture that, however, was cast in diametrically opposite terms. *Nota bene*, her critique was directed not at the council itself, which she regarded as the “the fruit of a [...] rebirth movement,” the apex of “ideas, impulses, premonitions [...] developed over many generations.”³⁹ Quite the contrary, her critique was aimed at the

³⁹ Ida Friederike GÖRRES, *Trusting the Church. A Lecture in: Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 23 (2020/4), 123–147, 135, 136.

post-conciliar phase of »implementation« that, according to her description, brought about “the downfall of the Church,” instead of the promised “purification, strengthening, [...] rebirth” of the Church (136). Ida Friedrike Görres painted a dark vision of almost prophetic proportions: People hitherto hostile or neutral towards the Church, “who really only believe in the alternative religion of the zeitgeist, that is, in progress, science, moral autonomy, and a future paradise resulting from all three, rush upon the Church to remodel everything” (138). Nothing is left untouched, according to her, by the unfolding destructive dynamics of self-demolition. “The sacraments” are deemed mere “misunderstanding and magic [...], remnants from various forms of paganism” (125). “Angels and devils are abolished with laughter, veneration of saints is [...] taboo” (126). The ordinary faithful cannot count on the very intelligentsia that was supposed to assist and protect them: “theology” “continually explains its own bankruptcy via leading speakers; [...] rejects tradition, dissolves the Bible, denies the highest magisterium” (127).

One and a half months later, on June 4, a speech was delivered in Munich in front of an audience of almost 1,000 Catholics. It bore a title that could indeed raise eyebrows even today – not because of the title itself, but because of the very situation that necessitated it. Entitled *Why I Am Still in the Church*, delivered by a professor of Catholic dogmatics (!) from the nearby University of Regensburg, it provided a theologically more nuanced rehearsal of the arguments marshalled by the freelancer author and laywoman Ida Friederike Görres. The recent council, indeed, “seemed to have gathered in the mature harvest from the awakening of the last decades;”⁴⁰ yet, what is brought about was not the “new Pentecost [...] we were hoping” for (*ibid.*), but rather an accelerating breakdown: “the Church is being extinguished in souls and is collapsing in communities” (134). This speaker, too, blamed the same suspects as Ida Friederike Görres, albeit in a more sophisticated way. Modern theology, according to the diagnosis offered, is not simply abandoning or overthrowing the dogmas, but deconstruct them: they are emptied of their traditional meaning while their literal forms are retained. Or, as the speaker put it: “the boundaries between interpretation and denial become increasingly unrecognizable” (138). Their concerns were not entirely unfounded, even if the wording of some of their statements may appear too bold.

⁴⁰ Joseph RATZINGER, *Fundamental Speeches from Five Decades*, Ignatius, San Francisco, 2012 (ed. Florian SCHULLER), 135.

4. »Avant-Garde« Catholics and their Creed

In the turbulent boiling summer of 1968, on the eve of his controversially discussed encyclical *Humanae vitae* (cf. DH 4470-4479), Pope St Paul VI issued a *motu proprio* (*Solemni hac liturgia*, June 30, 1968), in which he proposed a common *Creed for the People of God* (let us not forget that there had been no universal catechism in the Catholic Church until the initiative by Pope St John Paul II at the twentieth anniversary of the Council in 1985). This simple magisterial act by the Saint Pope immediately elucidated precisely the type of responses from self-designated progressivists to which the above speaker in Munich was referring to. “The problem lies not so much in what the Pope’s credo [...] says” – *The National Catholic Reporter*, an independent lay-run newspaper in the United States not officially affiliated with the Catholic Church, generously remarked in their editorial suggestively entitled *Credo for yesterday*: “Even for the most avantgarde Catholics, it is still possible to affirm the truths the Credo proclaims without compromise,” they charitably noted; yet, not without simultaneously formulating a crucial constraint: “provided, however, that some indication is given in the style or *content* [...] that our contemporary understanding of these truths is in fact contemporary—and, therefore, different from the understanding that prevailed in other times.”⁴¹ Parts of the European press reacted in a similar vein, especially in the Netherlands, where an independent catechism, *De nieuwe katechismus* – carrying the nominal imprimatur of Cardinal Bernardus Johannes Alfrink (1900-1987), whom Hans Küng termed “progressive” and, “if necessary, a courageous leader” (42); yet evoking widespread controversy – was published in 1966 upon a grassroots initiative and translated into English almost immediately.⁴³ A leading Dutch daily scolded Pope

⁴¹ *The National Catholic Reporter* vol. 4, no. 7. (July 10, 1968), 3.

⁴² Hans KÜNG, *Umstrittene Wahrheit. Erinnerungen*, 193, 184.

⁴³ See *A New Catechism. Catholic Faith for Adults*. Trans. Kevin Smyth. New York (NY): Herder & Herder, 1967. With regard to the bold adjective »new« contained in its title and the general problem discussed above, the Dutch bishops – the principal behind-the-scenes authors of course being native theologians, e.g. Piet Schoonenberg (1911-1999; cf. ²NCE vol. 12, 783) – wrote: “the whole faith remains the same, but the approach, the light in which the faith is seen, is new” (V). Pure declarations did not prevent the “maelstrom of controversy swirled about it” (²NCE vol 3., 245.), which culminated in an official condemnation by the Vatican in 1968 (cf. AAS 60 [1968], 685-691). It was indicative of the ensuing situation that the contemporaneous Hungarian translation, published at an extraterritorial press in Újvidék (Novi Sad, then: Yugoslavia, today: Serbia, part of historical Hungary until 1920), included the Vatican statement and the resulting textual modification as an appendix, cross-referenced to the main text, while still providing the original text they deemed “revolutionary” (*Új katekizmus*. Trans. Török Jenő – Kiss Béla. Újvidék: Agapé, 1988; quotation: V). – Concerning the history of twentieth-century catechisms in general, see ²NCE vol. 3, 243-246.

St Paul VI's *Creed* that "what has been preached for many centuries is simply repeated in the same words, as if the world and man have not changed in the meantime."⁴⁴

There is often a direct immediate link between, on the one hand, such postmodern re-interpretation of the content of faith and, on the other hand, direct ecclesiastical political action in favor of the perceived reform. It was amply demonstrated by the highly publicized manifesto of 34 prominent theologians – including, besides the mastermind Hans Küng, *inter alia*, Johann Baptist Metz (1928-2019), and Edward Schillebeeckx (1914-2019) – issued simultaneously in March 1972 in Catholic newspapers in Italy, Spain, Germany, the Netherlands, the United States and elsewhere.⁴⁵ They not only claimed that the Church "must understand anew" the "Gospel [...] in every new situation;" but simultaneously put forward the bold thesis on the basis of the supposed lack of identity of the ever-renewing *kerygma* (with explicit reference to the contested issues of "celibacy" and the method of "electing bishops"): "Wherever ecclesiastical authority acts in a way that clearly fails to correspond to the Gospel, resistance is permitted and even required" (*ibid.*).

The aforementioned speaker in Munich in 1970 carefully observed these developments, anticipated their future trajectory, and provided a penetrating theoretical explanation of it, including the link, observed above, between the deconstruction of the dogmas and the radical reforms that are actually on the verge of destruction. According to the analysis of the speaker, a significant fraction of people exist within the Church who "become alienated from the Church's faith" and "regard the Church as too old-fashioned, [...] too hostile to the world and life" (*op.cit.*, 133), but, instead of leaving the Church (technically speaking: apostatizing): "reject her [the Church's] entire historical character and passionately fight against the meaning that her [the Church's] officials try

⁴⁴ Quoted according to the press review in *The Catholic Transcript* vol. 71, no. 14 (July 26, 1968), 10.

⁴⁵ Quoted according to its full publication in *The National Catholic Reporter* vol. 8, no. 2. (March 31, 1972), 8 [inlayed double page]. On the history of its origins (and Küng's formative role in it that he denied vis-à-vis the *Reporter*, see 1), see his admission in: Hans KÜNG, *Umstrittene Wahrheit. Erinnerungen*, 482 ff. – It is, again, indicative of the reverberations of such disputes of ecclesiastical politics that, even though the entire text of the *Manifest* was not published in Hungarian, it was widely reported upon by the remnants of Hungarian religious journalism, though not without accompanying critical commentary (see, e.g., the ecumenical Protestant *Theologiai Szemle* [*Theological Review*, vol. 15, no. 7-8 [1972], 194], which quoted its official Catholic [!] description as "ecclesiastical guerilla warfare" and the corresponding claim that "the faithful have an immense desire to return again and again to the authority that stands on solid ground;" *ibid.*). The émigré Catholic intellectual journal *Mérleg* (*The Scales*; vol. 8, no. 3 [1972], 202), though generally considered progressive, similarly rejected what they perceived as a "rebellion," while highlighting the conspicuous lack of French signatories – a situation that becomes more understandable given the historically strong Francophone orientation of progressive-minded Hungarian Catholics.

to give to [the Church]” (134). In other words, members of this disillusioned fraction try to remodel the Church »in their likeness« (cf. Gen 1, 26), i.e., to foist a different conception upon the Catholic Church itself (surreptitiously or often subliminally in a way that this discrepancy does not become transparent even to themselves). In fact, the same mechanism was diagnosed by Ida Friederike Görres as well: the phenomenon of “ ‘non-practising’ Catholics,” she argues, is certainly timeless (at least since the dawn of modernity), rather than being a product of the post-conciliar era. However, they had formerly been characterized by their corresponding “total disinterest in [...] the Church’s [...] inner life, in dogmas and liturgy (if they knew there was such a thing).”⁴⁶ What constitutes a concerning novel development is, according to her analysis, that nowadays these pseudo-believers, “who really only believe in the alternative religion of the *zeitgeist*,” “interfere in Church matters and tell us how we should run [the Church]” (138). The professor of theology speaking in Munich, however, offered a deeper analysis, insofar as he, first, pointed out that this sociological phenomenon is based on an ecclesiological fallacy, namely *the reduction of the Church to its mere inner-worldly appearance*, more precisely to the inner-worldly promises carried by it: “taking away her [the Church] theological attributes and discussing her [the Church] as something purely political” (140), with regard to inner-worldly promises of essentially political nature, i.e., the Church “[f]or social criticism, for developmental aid, for revolution” (139).

Seen from this point of view, what happened during the immediate post-conciliar decade we are currently analyzing was that these inner-worldly promises took on an independent life on their own and *de facto* superseded, displaced the proper transcendent essence of the Church. Seen from this angle, the truly emblematic part of the opening address by Pope St John XXIII was not his embracing of the modern world *per se*, but rather the *optimistic hypothesis that modernity does not carry any potential danger for the Church* (e.g., in the form of hypostatized non-transcendental aspects displacing the true transcendental nature of the Church). More precisely, as the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* demonstrates, the Saint Pope was well aware of the potential dangers of modernity, and he even named some of them explicitly: “ways of life, which despise God and his laws or place excessive confidence in technical progress [,] and a well-being based exclusively on the comforts of life” (*GME* 172 / 27-28). It is only that the Saint Pope seems to have been convinced that these errors – precisely because they do exist and “have produced

⁴⁶ Ida Friederike GÖRRES, *Trusting the Church. A Lecture*, 137.

[or: manifested] such lethal fruits” in such a manifest way (172 / 27) – are bound to be *rectified automatically*. They might “vanish as quickly as they arise, like fog before the sun” (172 / 27). It is not by chance that the aforementioned famous declaration, which is quoted so oft without its proper context – namely, that the council is neither doctrinal nor condemnatory, it rather offers “the medicine of mercy [*miser cordiae*]” (*ibid.*) –, is to be found precisely here, in the context of this hypothesis about the self-correcting errors of modernity; and precisely this assumption was challenged by the more realistic Latin translation of the passage discussed above (let it be either through the influence of the papal aides or by the Saint Pope himself in the process of collectively »weighing the words«).

5. The Janus-Faced Watershed Trauma of 1968

In order for us to be able to unpack and assess the above debates theoretically, it is high time to unmask the identity of the mysterious speaker in Munich: he was none other than Joseph Ratzinger (1927-2022), the future Pope Benedict XVI. As if that were not enough, precisely around the time of his lecture in Munich, Ratzinger was undergoing a deep transformation that is closely related to the problem of secularization we are discussing. In 1969, he received an invitation to exchange his professorship at the prestigious elite research University of Tübingen in favor of the provincial University of Regensburg in Bavaria, the Catholic South of Germany. The aforementioned Hans Küng, the *enfant terrible* of post-conciliar German theology who personally invited Ratzinger to the University of Tübingen on the eve of Vatican II (moreover, it was the famed *unico loco* appointment proposal, i.e., Ratzinger being the sole candidate for the position),⁴⁷ was baffled by Ratzinger’s decision in 1969. Küng “compared Ratzinger’s move [...] to a withdrawal from Harvard to Idaho State University.”⁴⁸ With regard to the student revolts (*Studentenbewegungen*) that reached its apex precisely in 1969 (with the university city Tübingen naturally being one of its hotspots), Küng attributed to Ratzinger an “unmastered trauma” (244), a “pessimistic crisis anxiety [...] fueled by the dualistic view of history by Ratzinger’s preceptor Augustine” (245); and, as if that were not enough,

⁴⁷ See his own account: Hans KÜNG, *Erkämpfte Freiheit. Erinnerungen*, 904 ff., Hans KÜNG, *Umstrittene Wahrheit. Erinnerungen*, 23 ff.

⁴⁸ Hans KÜNG, *Umstrittene Wahrheit. Erinnerungen*, 250.

Küng – in an almost Freudian slip of tongue revealing the actual lack of faith – went on to criticize Ratzinger in the 1970s for preserving “an un-enlightened ‘Lord’s Corner’ [*Herrgottswinkel*] in his pious Bavarian heart” and acting out of it (716).

Autobiographical accounts, especially in such controversial and complicated cases as that of Küng, can be simultaneously revelational and misleading. To begin with, Küng was apparently unaware of the fact – or he intentionally remained silent about it – that it was actually Ratzinger, rather than he, who was first proposed for the professorial position in Tübingen in the early 1960s.⁴⁹ On the other hand, in his own autobiography written years before his election as pope, Ratzinger – while downplaying the discontinuities of his intellectual trajectory and insisting on its underlying fundamental continuity – indeed voiced his irritation over “the Marxist revolution [that] kindled the whole university with its fervor, shaking it to its very foundations,” with the theological faculties – hitherto exempt from the “Marxist temptation” – becoming “its real ideological center.”⁵⁰ It must also be taken into account that the student revolts (*Studentenbewegungen*) – though usually portrayed in a positive way by contemporary intellectual historiography – proved to be a cathartic negative experience for a number of thinkers who were *at that time* far from being conservatives, most notably the Catholic philosopher Robert Spaemann (1927-2018), who was of the same age as Ratzinger (born in almost the same month). Spaemann, who was appointed to the equally prestigious elite research University of Heidelberg in 1969, “in the midst of cultural revolutionary turmoil,”⁵¹ decided, in a closely similar vein, to abandon his professorship and return to the academically less prestigious University of Stuttgart, whence he was appointed to Heidelberg. In doing so, Spaemann was motivated, as he later recounted in his autobiographical conversations (193 ff.), by the tragic incident of the Dutch philosopher and psychoanalyst Jan van der Meulen (1917-1969), at that time honorary professor of philosophy in Heidelberg, who, faced by the aggressive student critics of his lecture course on Marx (not to mention the lack of solidarity by the faculty according to Spaemann), committed a suicide.⁵² Even if less dramatic, it is also worth mentioning that the French philosopher Paul Ricœur (1913-2005), an uncontested member of the post-war Con-

⁴⁹ Cf. Peter SEEWALD, *Benedict XVI: A Life. Volume II: Professor and Prefect to Pope and Pope Emeritus (1966 to Present)*, Bloomsbury Continuum, London, 2021 (trans. Dina LIVINGSTONE), 6–7.

⁵⁰ Joseph RATZINGER, *Milestones. Memoires 1927-1977*, Ignatius, San Francisco, 1998 (trans. Erasmo LEIVA-MERIKAKIS), 137.

⁵¹ Robert SPAEMANN, *Über Gott und die Welt. Eine Autobiographie in Gesprächen*, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 2012, 190.

⁵² On his basic biographical data, see the Common Index Data of German Libraries (<https://www.deutsche-biographie.de/pnd116959118.html#indexcontent> ; last accessed: July 17, 2024).

tinental philosophical pantheon, who had been the dean of the Faculty of Humanities at the French reform University of Nanterre, was assaulted physically by the students (or, at least, such an assault was simulated in order to frighten him), and, having been unable to control the situation involving “[b]attles between Maoists and Communists,” respectively “clashes between the Maoists and the police,” resigned, and summarily left France for the USA to teach at the University of Chicago for three years.⁵³ In the light of such events, Ratzinger’s alleged »trauma« could hardly be seen as an overreaction, not to mention that fact that Küng, too, appears to have been no enthusiastic supporter of the revolting students – it is only that he was able to manage them psychologically by virtue of his clever tricks and his personal charm.⁵⁴

Küng’s personal appeal to the revolting students may have stemmed from the fact that he was perceived as a reformist in general; yet, it is not by chance that a close friend of his asked him: “why I, who was »left-wing« in the Church, was not also »left-wing« politically?” (161.) Küng’s growing obsession with the radicalized ecclesiastic reformist agenda, which ultimately led him to his breakup with the official Church by the end of the decade, indeed became increasingly *old-fashioned* with the emergence of the theologies of liberation (proponents of which claimed to have “»overcome« [...] my struggle for structural reforms in the Church,” Küng complained; 836). He was, in turn, dismissive of the theologies of liberation (he claimed, i.e., “Jesus was not a political revolutionary against the occupying power;” 623), albeit politically he was, again, politically clever enough to engage them (not least due to his friendship with Jürgen Moltmann [1926-2024], his colleague at the Faculty of Protestant Theology).

6. “Love for the Church;” or Parallel Lives (and Regrets?) at the Curia and in Germany

Regarding the relationship between Ratzinger and Küng (or, more precisely, the conspicuous parallelisms or coincidences of their trajectories before and after the Council), there is an almost legendary anecdote that Pope St Paul VI reportedly said during the

⁵³ As recounted by Charles E. REAGAN, *Paul Ricoeur. His Life and His Work*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996, 35, 36.

⁵⁴ Cf. Hans KÜNG, *Umstrittene Wahrheit. Erinnerungen*, 227 ff.

Council, “the Roman Curia was in urgent need of competent young men,” where the Pope “was thinking particularly of Küng and Ratzinger, but [for the Pope] Küng did not seem to have enough »love for the Church.«”⁵⁵ Küng, who recounted this anecdote, attributing it to his fellow *peritus* Yves Congar *OP* (1904-1995), certainly acted accordingly – namely by dismissing the papal invitation, both during his own private audience with the Pope on Dec 2, 1965 (“[t]he big chance of my life – did I waste it?” – he asked himself retrospectively; 861-862), as well as later, e.g., in Easter 1966, when he received a message from the Pope, accompanied by a “gold gilded plaque” (897). Regardless of the historicity of this anecdote (Congar’s own memoirs seem to confirm this to some extent, while also painting an unflattering picture of Küng),⁵⁶ it is compelling to conceive of Ratzinger’s trajectory as that of someone who, in marked contrast to the reckless *enfant terrible* Küng, understood what was at stake in the Church and responded to such invitation, in whatever form it came about. Indeed, the author of the most recent quasi-biography on Pope Benedict XVI, namely his private secretary, Georg Gänswein (b. 1956), also seems to have accepted this anecdote: “Unbeknownst to him [Ratzinger], Paul VI had been keeping an eye on him since the Second Vatican Council, while Ratzinger was pursuing an academic career.”⁵⁷ The only remaining question, then, is what the intellectual-theological stakes of their personal divergences were.

As a Pope Emeritus, during his last autobiographical conversations with his biographer Peter Seewald, Benedict XVI spoke quite openly about Küng, who is mentioned only in a reluctantly diplomatic manner in Ratzinger’s earlier autobiography: “Well, I

⁵⁵ Hans KÜNG, *Erkämpfte Freiheit. Erinnerungen*, 859.

⁵⁶ Even though Küng fails to mention the exact source of his general reference to Congar, one could find a more-or-less corresponding passage in Congar’s memories (where Congar actually relies on a second-hand account of what Pope St Paul VI thought and said): “The Pope is somewhat hurt and disappointed. He [the Pope] said: Küng is young. I was hoping he could be a theological leader for the future. But he is without love. He will not be able to be that.” (Yves CONGAR, *My Journal of the Council*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville (MN), 2012 (trans. Mary John RONAYNE and Mary Cecily BOULDING), 733.; entry for Feb 23, 1965, i.e., *antedating* Küng’s personal encounter with the Pope). As early as in January 1961, Küng invited Congar for a lecture in Tübingen in order to collude with him in “achieving a common strategy at the Council” (Hans KÜNG, *Erkämpfte Freiheit. Erinnerungen*, 514.), which continued during the subsequent months on the eve of the Council (cf. 521, 540, 547). Yet, one year into the Council, in his diary Congar described Küng as “extremely critical” (Yves CONGAR, *My Journal of the Council*, 369.), “an impatient man” who is in a “dangerous position,” because, albeit “surrounded by the prestige of success,” lacks “the support of a community of religious and regular life” (370). On November 30, 1965, i.e., on the eve of Küng’s private audience at the Pope, Congar, again, described him as “always very critical,” as someone who “says some true things, but [...] the critical research [...] is not sufficiently tempered by concern for concrete situations” (861).

⁵⁷ Georg GÄNSWEIN and Saverio GAETA, *Nichts als die Wahrheit. Mein Leben mit Benedikt XVI*, Herder, Freiburg, 2023 (trans. Friederike HAUSMANN, Katja ISSING, Stefanie RÖMER, and Gabriele STEIN), 15.

had the naive assumption that although Küng has a big mouth and says cheeky [*freche*] things, he basically wants to be a Catholic theologian.”⁵⁸ As if that were not unequivocal enough: “his theological journey went somewhere else and became more and more radicalized. I couldn’t and wasn’t allowed to be part of that” (184). What makes this observation truly interesting is that this assessment of the post-conciliar situation by the Pope Emeritus is not about *Küng alone*. Immediately related to this point, he namely formulated it on a more general level: “I realized that theology was no longer an interpretation of the faith of the Catholic Church, but was instead making up its own ideas about how things could and should be. For me as a Catholic theologian, that was not compatible with theology.” (184-185.) As if that were not bold enough, he even applied this realization to the *Council and his own intellectual development as well*. At the beginning of the Council, he said being a “progressive did not mean breaking away from the faith, but learning to understand it better and living it more correctly, from its origins” (153-154). However, he observed from the vantage point of more than a half-century (the majority of it spent in the magisterial service of the Church), “the shift in color was already noticeable in the second year of the Council” (154).

Pope Benedict XVI appears to have been convinced of this to such an extent that, upon the question of his long-standing interview partner, he even toyed with the idea that Cardinal Josef Frings (1887-1978) “had later very strong feelings of remorse [*Gewissensbisse*]” about their actions (166). This is all the more remarkable, since Frings, archbishop of Cologne in Germany, was precisely the synodal father whose personal theological advisor was Ratzinger – before his elevation to the status of a general theological expert (*peritus*) of the Council – and, more importantly, who, on the advice of the young Ratzinger, was instrumental in the key early events at the Council which set the way ahead: the *tabula rasa* election of commission members (instead of rubber-stamping the curial members from the preparatory commissions);⁵⁹ as well as the infamous “swift and deadly”⁶⁰ intervention on the plenary floor on Nov 14 that torpedoed the doctrinal proposal (*schema*) entitled *De fontibus revelationis (On the sources of revelation)*. Start-

⁵⁸ BENEDIKT XVI. and Peter SEEWALD, *Letzte Gespräche*, Droemer, München, 2016, 176. Cf. JOSEPH RATZINGER, *Milestones. Memoires 1927-1977*, 135, 139.

⁵⁹ Cf., e.g., JOHN W. O’MALLEY, *What Happened at Vatican II*, 97.

⁶⁰ RALPH M. WILTGEN, *The Rhine Flows Into the Tiber. The Unknown Council*, 47.

ing with the dramatic words “I do not approve the text, if I may speak openly,”⁶¹ Frings not only dared to publicly contradict the legalistic argument of authority by Ottaviani who invoked the Pope to prevent the text from being challenged in its entirety in favor of alternatives floating around,⁶² but tactically reversed the argument of authority by invoking Pope John XXIII’s aforementioned opening address: “In the text that is proposed to us today, it does not seem to me that the voice of the Mother and Teacher is audible [...], but rather the language of Scholasticism [...]. What is appropriate is the pastoral character [*nota pastoralis*] that the Blessed Pope John [...] desired so ardently for all proceedings of the Second Vatican Council to incorporate” (AS I 3, 34). A direct retort to Ottaviani who, in his introductory presentation, tried to twist and mold Pope John XXIII’s words into his own standpoint by rephrasing them: “the primarily task, the fundamental *pastoral* task is the doctrine” (27; my emphasis). When the Pope soon remitted the proposal and returned it to revision, the public opinion triumphed in a victorious mood: “The liberals had won the election encounter” – as stated in the widely read history of the Council (also available in Hungarian) – “and now they had won the debate on revelation.”⁶³ Did Cardinal Frings feel – or should he have felt – a »buyer’s remorse«?

It is not by chance that one of the authentic conciliar limericks – confirmed by contemporaneous press publications, rather than the potentially distorting autobiographic memories of the participants themselves – ranks Ratzinger alongside Küng as a brave reformed against the perceived mortal threat of Curial orthodoxy: “There were Ratzinger, Rahner and Kung [*sic!*] / Whom some would like decently hung / [...] But by others their praises are sung.”⁶⁴ At the beginning of the Council, Ratzinger namely voiced such tones that – albeit only later – would have been classified as belonging to the camp of »progressivists.« In a hugely influential field report on the first session of the Council, first delivered as a lecture on Jan 18, 1963 in Bonn, Germany, and published simultane-

⁶¹ ASI 3, 34 (the dramatic second clause is missing from the written version, cf. 36).

⁶² Cf. ASI 3, 27. It is indicative of the gravity of the ensuing situation that Ottaviani’s direct invocation of the actual psychological intention of Pope Paul John XXIII (“it is his intention [*mens eius*] that this text be discussed, not others proposed privately”) figures in the oral version only, while the written version merely marshals a legalistic argument about the prerogatives of the pope (38), without making any claim about what he actually thinks and wishes for.

⁶³ Ralph M. WILTGEN, *The Rhine Flows Into the Tiber. The Unknown Council*, 51.

⁶⁴ *The National Catholic Reporter* vol. 1, no. 9 (Dec. 23, 1964), 8 (entitled „Cursory rhymes from the council”). – Despite being comparative late, this report (humorously described as stemming “[f]rom sources deep in the Roman underground – lower than even the Catacombs) must indeed stem from a deep layer, i.e., manifest an early impression from the Council, voiced in one of the opening issues of this progressive, unofficial organ.

ously in German and English during the last months of John XXIII's pontificate (receiving three book reviews alone in the same year, thirteen during the Council in total),⁶⁵ Ratzinger provided a concise summary of several of the future topoi of such an interpretation. It is not only that he unconditionally praised the "positive aspects" of Pope John XXIII's *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*, crediting it with "a real confrontation of the modern age and its problems"⁶⁶ despite its ostensible lack of any critical overtone otherwise typical of a »confrontation«) and a "sign that the neurosis of anti-Modernism" came to an end (272), but Ratzinger also appears to have fully subscribed himself to "the Pope's [...] stimulating optimism" (287): "The Church could now abandon its defensive role and start a Christian offensive, marked by positive thinking and action" (281). Ratzinger's text is indeed interspersed with the antagonisms resulting from such an almost eschatological juxtaposition between bleak ecclesiological past and bright future: "We must put aside the negative, 'anti' attitude" (288), such as "being entangled in strange traditions" (283), "the boundaries of a very contracted Latin horizon" (278), "the sterility to which Catholic theology and philosophy has [...] been condemned since the end of the Enlightenment" (278) etc. Instead, the Church should "open a new page, and go out in a fresh and positive manner" (281), embrace "the open and progressive mentality of the Council" (284), "realise the extent of the revolutionary change [!] proposed here" (278). As the young Ratzinger said in a vocabulary that gains a special significance from the vantage point of today's discussions: "A synodal element has thus been inserted into the structure of the Church as a permanent factor" (276). He even went as far as to claim, as if echoing Küng's silent remark during the *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* (quoted in our introduction): "Pope John has taken the side of the Council against his officials" (284). It is no wonder that Küng was quick to publish a short review notice on Ratzinger's "excellent" pamphlet, "rich in content," in which Ratzinger – at least, according to Küng – "underscores" the "significance" of the Council "as a profession for the perpetual need for renewal of the Church."⁶⁷

It is comparatively easy to locate the signpost in Ratzinger's contemporaneous occasional writings that mark his way from the above unconstrained optimisms to his

⁶⁵Cf. Vinzenz PFNÜR, *Joseph Ratzinger - Papst Benedikt XVI. Das Werk. Bibliographisches Hilfsmittel [...]*, Sankt-Ulrich-Verlag, Augsburg, 2009.

⁶⁶ Joseph RATZINGER, *The Second Vatican Council. The First Session in: The Furrow 14* (1963/5), 267–288, 269.

⁶⁷ Hans KÜNG, [Rezension] Ratzinger, Joseph, *Die erste Sitzungsperiode des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils in: Theologische Quartalschrift 144* (1964/4), 506, 506.

lecture in Munich analyzed in the previous section. The most unambiguous and simultaneously most influential *terminus ante quem* of Ratzinger's intellectual evolution is perhaps his speech at the semiannual National Congress of German Catholics (*Katholikentag*) in Bamberg on July 14, 1966 (it was indicative of the reverberating influence of this speech that, together with Ratzinger's aforementioned Munich lecture, they were translated in an almost *samizdat* form in Hungary during the Socialism).⁶⁸ In fact, the shocking impact that this speech of Ratzinger, hitherto regarded as an ally of progressive theologians, could be measured upon how the contemporaneous public received it – or, more precisely, what was omitted or selectively distorted in these immediate reports. An American Catholic news-wire service quoted Ratzinger as having “criticized those defenders of exaggerated faith, who become ‘only the sacrifices of their own narrow-mindedness;’ ”⁶⁹ while a Swiss daily – in response to the question by an anonymous discouraged reader who asked doubtfully: “But doesn't Christianity cease to be the salt of the earth when it becomes »worldly« [weltlich] itself?” – triumphantly referred to Ratzinger's recent speech in order to underpin the idea that “Calls of Time [Zeitrufe] are also Calls from God [Gottesrufe]!”⁷⁰

In Spring 1966, Ratzinger, freshly appointed professor at the University of Tübingen, had actually been more susceptible to the unnamed discouraged reader than to the triumphant optimism still attributed to him. In fact, he ended his lecture with apologizing for that: “You may have expected me to be more optimistic and to have painted a more joyful and brighter picture.”⁷¹ Truly, he opened his speech by “admitting quite frankly that there prevails amongst us today a certain air of dissatisfaction, an atmosphere of depression and even of disappointment” (303, ET: 4). What is important for our pur-

⁶⁸ The first part (305-308) of its section on the renewal of liturgy (Joseph RATZINGER, *Das neue Volk Gottes. Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie*, Patmos, Düsseldorf, 1970, 305–312.) was translated in *Teológia* vol. 14, no. 1., (1980) 39-41. It is indicative of the *Rezeptionsgeschichte* of this text by Ratzinger that the Hungarian translation – just like the English one to be discussed above – omitted Ratzinger's long self-critical footnote, in which he responded to the “objection” that in his expositions, “in the wake of the tendencies of the Reformation, Christian worship would be narrowed down one-sidedly to the Word, its sacramental component would be erased and the realism of the sacrificial concept, as emphasized by Trent [... cf. DH 1738-1759], would be concealed” (306, n. 1). – Ratzinger's Munich lecture was published in *Szolgálat* vol. 21 (1974), 33-43. – The former journal was the official organ of the so-called *Roman Catholic Theological Academy*, the surviving residuum of the Faculty of Catholic Theology at the University of Budapest after its forceful Stalinization in 1950, the latter journal was published in exile in Eisenstadt in Austria (formerly Kismarton in historical Hungary).

⁶⁹ *National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service* (July 18, 1966) 12.

⁷⁰ *Die Tat* (Zürich) vol. 31, no. 202 (Aug 27, 1966), 39.

⁷¹ Joseph RATZINGER, *Das neue Volk Gottes. Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie*, 321.; ET (mod.): Joseph RATZINGER, *Catholicism After the Council* in: *The Furrow* 18 (1967/1), 3–23, 22..

poses is, however, not merely to register the shift of tone in Ratzinger's declarations, but also to investigate its theoretical underpinnings, and this speech of his is instructive in this regard.

Ratzinger first addressed the ongoing reform of liturgy. We should remember that this was the era of runaway spontaneous liturgical experiments (at least, in the otherwise fortunate Western part of the Catholic globe; while the Eastern hemisphere was under the yoke of an overtly anti-religious and anti-clerical totalitarian regime, fighting for the right to celebrate liturgy at all); until the liturgical reform of Pope St Paul VI in 1969 ensured the stability long sought after. Speaking out of this special interim historical context, Ratzinger equally condemned "making the liturgy a museum-piece" (307, ET: 8) and "the recent upsurge of enthusiasm for jazz music" (310, ET: 11). In trying to navigate midway between "mere archaism" and "mere modernism" (*ibid.*), Ratzinger was essentially on the same platform as Bouyer, who – in accordance with his mediating position analyzed above – equally opposed unconnected modernism and "artificial restoration" based on "an idealized vision of some historical period."⁷² In other words, Bouyer was especially against the fictitious "archeologism" (*ibid. and passim*) that proceeds as if a certain historical form – for instance, to name a contemporary example, the Roman Missal of 1962 (or, if one likes, that of 1954, presumably prior to the arrival of Annibale Bugnini [1912-1982] on the scene) – were frozen in time, i.e., it does not take into account that they *would have continued to develop further organically* had there been no liturgical reform.

These ideas of Bouyer (and Ratzinger) are perhaps thought-provoking amidst today's controversies around TLM and the general flare-up of past »liturgical wars« in the Western world that must have been unimaginable for the synodal fathers half a century ago; however, let us return to the underlying issue of secularization (of which this flare-up is a *pars pro toto* illustration and consequence). In this regard, the Ratzinger of 1966 offers an analysis in terms of two interlapping theological paradigms. First, "Incarnation-oriented Christianity," which – instead of "mortification [*Abtötung*], aversion from the world [*Weltflucht*]" – "plunged confidently into the world of our time and embraced joyfully everything" (315, ET: 15). One might think that this paradigm is what Ratzinger considers typical of his (post-)conciliar age, but he distances himself from this paradigm (not least due to its perceived susceptibility towards a "restoration of the Middle Ages" as the alleged

⁷² Louis BOUYER, *Liturgical Piety*, 39.

apex of the “incarnation of Christianity;” 315, ET: 16-17). Instead, Ratzinger distinguishes a second, “eschatological” paradigm (315, ET: 16), and this is the one that was, according to him, epitomized precisely by *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*. According to this novel conciliar paradigm, the “task of Christianity was not to Christianize the world but the unleashing of the world into its own worldliness [*Weltlichkeit*], recognition of the world as such” (316, ET [heavily mod.]: 17). Pope St John XXIII, according to Ratzinger, epitomized this paradigm by virtue of his “theology of hope” (ET: 17); however, it is of paramount importance to distinguish between various types of such a »theology of hope«! The Saint Pope’s “optimism was an optimism born of faith,” which is, however, dangerously easy to be “confused with the less high-minded optimism of a progress-conscious age” (*ibid.*). The latter variant of optimism, says Ratzinger summing up the long thread of discussion analyzed above, would imply “an orientation of the Church towards the world that would mean a turning away from the Cross” (ET: 18). Such a move, Ratzinger says almost echoing the vocabulary of Bouyer, would not amount to “a renewal of the Church but to its decline and eventual decay” (*ibid.*). In order to underscore this warning, Ratzinger employs the powerful language of the “scandal” (ET: 20) of God’s self-sacrificing love that clearly marks the boundaries of Christianity which cannot be reduced into something fitting smoothly within the world. It is even more interesting, I think, what Ratzinger says about the way to discern false optimism: namely “by virtue of exhaustive debate and discussion before its true nature could be revealed” (ET: 18). Apparently, Ratzinger was not thinking directly of conducting debates and discussion but rather *understanding* their deeper stakes and implications. This is manifested by his remark that, even though “[d]ebates and discussion was in plenty at the Council” (ET: p 18), we still “did not really come to grips with the real depths of the questions” (*ibid.*). It is easy to get confused in the heat of controversy. “Ironically,” Ratzinger remarked, the much publicized “clash” during and after the Council between the Curial and the self-designated progressivist factions was far from being a collision between an attitude of rejection of the world and an attitude of openness to the world, given that “the Curia is in reality well-versed in the affairs of the world” (ET: 18). This can be confirmed in the light of what we have observed in the above investigation, starting from Sebasita(a)n Tromp’s hidden synodal spirit, not to mention Ratzinger’s later career at the Curia. However, how should we correctly understand these »debates and discussion«, and, even more importantly, how can this help us in the face of the growing threat of secularisation?

5. Epilogue: (De-)Secularization as the »Preparation for the Gospel« in our Age

It is against this intellectual historical development that we should interpret the momentous speech on secularization by Joseph Ratzinger (who, in the meantime, became Pope Benedict XVI as the surprise apex of the parallel biography investigated above),⁷³ delivered in Freiburg on Sept 25, 2011 – a speech that is often regarded as Pope Benedict’s spiritual legacy for Christianity in his homeland in particular and the European heartland in general.⁷⁴ By that time, the verb tense of sentences about secularization in the European heartland had shifted from future to present perfect continuous (which, coincidentally, is literally manifested in the official Vatican translation of Benedict’s speech): “we *have been experiencing* a decline in religious practice and we *have been seeing* substantial numbers of the baptized drifting away from church life [*in a more literal translation: we see an increasing alienation of considerable numbers of the baptized from church life*]” (par. 2; *my emphasis*). It is also not by mere chance that Benedict quoted a central observation about secularization from the encyclical *Ecclesiam suam* of his predecessor Pope St Paul VI: “If the Church [...] is now struggling ‘to model itself on Christ’s ideal’, this ‘can only result in its acting and thinking quite differently from the world around it, which it is nevertheless striving to influence’” (par. 6).

Yet, at this point we encounter another instance of philological-semantic ambiguity akin to the exact wording of Pope St John XXIII’s speech *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* studied at the beginning of our paper. This ambiguity is best epitomized by the contemporaneous Hungarian translation of Paul VI’s *Ecclesiam suam*, which prepared under *samisdat* circumstances at the Catholic Theological Academy of Budapest, the remnant of the erstwhile theological faculty forcibly severed during the communist reign from the University of Budapest (which was itself originally founded by Cardinal Péter Pázmány [1570-1637] in 1635). In this translation, the aforementioned sentence of Paul

⁷³ Archbishop Georg Gänswein (b. 1956), who had been the personal secretary of Ratzinger since before the conclave, has recently made a convincing case that the election may indeed have taken Ratzinger – and his narrow inner circle – by real surprise, even if it may have seemed like a natural choice to most outside observers (Georg GÄNSWEIN, Saverio GAETA, *Nichts als die Wahrheit. Mein Leben mit Benedikt XVI*, 53 ff., 66 ff.).

⁷⁴ Benedict XVI: *Meeting with Catholics Engaged in the Life of the Church and Society* (https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110925_catholics-freiburg.html; last accessed: Sept. 24, 2024). To my best knowledge, there is no printed edition of the speech. Referenced according to the paragraph numbering (not indicated either in the English translation or the original, which is available on the same website).

VI is namely translated in a diametrically opposite sense: “the Church [...] is immediately freed from all that deeply separates her from the human environment in which she lives and which surrounds her.”⁷⁵ At a closer look, the widely disseminated English translation – which is quoted by the official translation of Benedict’s speech – is, too, on the verge of semantic ambiguity, insofar as the key statement is embedded in such a general framing that the reader may not know at first whether we are supposed to agree or disagree with the process that is described. Let us take a closer look at the issue: “What contacts ought it [the Catholic Church] to make at the present time with human society? —seeing the Church’s ever-increasing self-awareness and its struggle to model itself on Christ’s ideal can only result in its acting and thinking quite differently from the world around it, which it is nevertheless striving to influence.” At this point, one is almost compelled to believe *as if it were Pope Benedict XVI who misquoted the words of his predecessor*, since the alienation of the Church from the world (“[its] thinking quite differently from the world around it”) seems, according to this full sentence from Paul VI, to stem from the “*struggle*” of the Church “to model itself on Christ’s ideal,” i.e., the alienation itself would represent a *negative consequence* that must be overcome by restoring the supposed unity of the Church and the world around her. It almost seems as if the *samisdat* Hungarian translation were ultimately right in claiming that the Church must be “freed from all that deeply separates her from the human environment,” even if the latter’s grammatical structure and wording are apparently utterly alien to that of the English translation. Or is this so-to-speak *samisdat* interpretation really warranted?

That Pope Benedict XVI did not share this optimistic interpretation is made unambiguously clear by his subsequent sentence that immediately introduces the core tenet of his speech: “In order to accomplish her mission, she [the Church] will need again and again to set herself apart from her surroundings, to become in a certain sense ‘unworldly’ [*ent-weltlichen*]” (par. 6). Before proceeding to entangle Benedict’s curious idea of “*ent-weltlichen*” (let alone finding the proper English translation of this German word, which simultaneously sounds simple and natural while carrying an immense speculative depth that penetrates far into the abyss of German idealism and transcendental philosophies), let us first address the discussed semantic ambiguity of quoting *Ecclesiam suam*, an ambiguity that so-to-speak constitutes a *pars pro toto* example of the fragility

⁷⁵ Published retrospectively in: *Az Egyház küldött. VI. Pál pápa apostoli műve*, Szent István Társulat, Budapest, 2009 (ed. Mihály KRÁNYI), 161. Hungarian original: “az egyház [...] azonnal megszabadul mindattól, amely őt mélyen elválasztja az emberi környezettől, melyben él, és amely körbeveszi.”

of (post-)conciliar dynamics of secularization and de-secularization studied in our paper (in other words: it constitutes a counter-point to the semantic ambiguity of hearing Pope St John XXIII's *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia*). Curiously enough, there is namely a *different* contemporaneous English translation of Paul's encyclical that speaks an unmistakably – and different! – language on the direction of the causality between following on Christ's footsteps and secularization or alienation from the world: "If the Church acquired an ever-growing awareness of itself, and if the Church tries to model itself on the ideal which Christ proposes to it" – i.e., provided the positive, ideal circumstances – "the result is that the Church becomes radically different from the human environment in which it, of course, lives or which it approaches."⁷⁶

Yet, it is precisely the above English translation of this anonymous, ephemeral edition that closely matches the intention of original Latin with regard to the direction of this ominous relationship between Christ and world, expressed by the original Latin words of Paul VI's encyclical: "*Accidit enim ut, si Ecclesia [...] exemplar nitatur exprimere, quod Christus illi proposuit, plurimum existimetur ea differre ab hominum sensu et usu, inter quos vivit, ad quosque se applicare studet*" (AAS 58 [1964], 637). "In case the Church strives to emulate the model given to her by Jesus," i.e., in that *positive* case we all should aim to achieve (rather than in the *negative* case of *struggling* to "model" ourselves "on Christ's ideal," as suggested by the above widespread English translation), the Church is going to be "very different from the mentality and praxis of the people," i.e., of the people who surround the Church and who, simultaneously, constitute the target of the Church's efforts to evangelize. The only constraining linguistic facets of the sentence are the embedded verb "*existimetur* [*< ex-istimo*]," under which the above claim is subordinated (i.e., the aforementioned states of affair "is judged" or "is considered to" subsist), as well as the initial verb "*Accidit* [*< ac-cido*]" introducing the main sentence (i.e., it "occurs" so), insofar as they both suggest that the discrepancy between the Church and the world is something occurring as if by virtue of a natural process, rather than being a directly intended result.

In fact, this sentence is justly regarded the apex of Paul VI's encyclical, on which its interpretation hinges. One the one hand; still at the beginning of this debut encyclical – promulgated in August 1964, during the intersession of the Council – the Saint Pope

⁷⁶ Pope PAUL VI, *Ecclesiam suam. Paths of the Church. First Encyclical Letter [...]*, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington (D.C.), 1964, 38.

makes an emphatic offer for dialogue (sec. 3), specifically for a “dialogue [*colloquium*] with the modern world” (ET sec. 14; AAS 58 [1964], 613), which the “Church must enter into” (sec. 65). Furthermore, the notion of dialogue gradually assumes the role of an overarching concept through the course of the text: »dialogue« – another secular catchword *du jour* – not only subsumes the traditional subject matter of theology and religious life (revelation, salvational history, religion, prayer etc., sec. 70 ff.) but also becomes the governing principle of interaction between the Church and her environment. The invitation for dialogue was extended even to the avowedly anti-clerical communist regimes (sec. 102), to the utmost surprise of the opposite side who, according, e.g., to the inner reports by agents of the Hungarian Communist secret police embedded in the Hungarian delegation to the Council. On the other hand; rather than nurturing false hopes, the Saint Pope was also fully aware of the challenge of how “the various doctrines of the people of this our age [are to be] compared [*or*: combined, reconciled etc.] with Christian wisdom [*hominum ... variae doctrinae cum christiana sapientia collatae*]” (to cite another passage that has created philological-semantic ambiguity in its various translations).⁷⁷ Paul VI employed the epidemiological metaphor – all too familiar to us in times of the pandemics – of a physician who is striving to help their patients while trying to avoid infecting themselves and other healthy people (sec. 63); and spoke unmistakably of the “difference [*discrepantia*] between the Christian and the worldly [*profanam*] life” (ET: sec. 60; AAS 58 [1964], 638). As if that were not enough, Paul VI – echoing the ideas studied in Section 2 of our paper above – explicitly condemned those “who think that the reform of the Church should consist principally in adapting its way of thinking and acting to the customs and temper of the modern secular world [*profanis ... saeculi*]” (ET: sec. 48 [cf., e.g., 49]; 630). In the end, Paul VI’s approach to the tension between the Church and the world is deeply and pervasively Biblical, as manifested by the magnificent words of the Lord from His High Priestly Prayer: not “to take them out of the world,” even though “[t]hey do not belong to the world” (Jn 17:15-16 [NRSVCE]). It was quoted twice by Paul VI in his encyclical at emphatical passages: immediately before referring to John XXIII’s idea of *aggiornamento* (sec. 49), as well as when intro-

⁷⁷ AAS 58 (1964), 613. The official version (“the current of modern thought over against Christian culture,” sec. 15) is surprisingly against the idea secularization (or undecipherable). Others (e.g., Pope PAUL VI, *Ecclesiam suam. Paths of the Church. First Encyclical Letter [...]*, 7.) omit the semantically challenging “*collatae*” and, hence, the head of the noun phrase that is supposed to describe what the challenge would consist in (unlike other enumerated challenges within the same sentence).

ducing and detailing his own idea of proper dialogue (sec. 62; cf. also. sec. 97). Or, as Paul VI cited the Apostle: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Rom 12:2 [NRSVCE]). Incidentally, at this passage the former imperative might also be translated as “Do not be secularized” – following into the footsteps the of Vulgate’s rendering of “world [αἰῶνι < αἰῶν]” as “*saeculum*.”

It is this idea of an eschatological tension between the Church and the world that was taken up by Benedict XVI and pursued to its utmost radical consequence. Paul VI’s *Ecclesiam suam* was not yet entirely devoid of a certain residual “naive optimism” (sec. 59). It is, namely, not only that *Ecclesiam suam* assumes that there were “[t]he great advances made in science, technology, and social life,” not to mention “the various currents of philosophical and political thought [*sive philosophiis, sive variis de moderanda republica doctrinis*] pervading modern society” (ET: sec. 26, AAS 58 [1964], 638), upon which the Saint Pope still appeared to have pinned certain hopes. On top of that, there is an ever deeper sense of residual »naïve optimism« lurking in *Ecclesiam suam*, namely in a philosophical sense, insofar as the Saint Pope explicitly criticizes “[f]alse [p]hilosophies,” such as “naturalism” and “relativism.”⁷⁸ As antiquated and nineteenth-century ultramontane style as such a philippica may sound to some of us at the dawn of the twenty-first century, such a philippica is, I think, paradoxically still underpinned by a strong faith in a *better* reason – at least vis-à-vis the standpoint of another saint pope of the last century who *simultaneously* acknowledged the “autonomy [*autonomia*] of philosophy” and the “human reason’s being wounded [*sauciata*] and weakened [*hebetata*].”⁷⁹

The crux of the issue is that, for Benedict XVI, secularization is a pervasive phenomenon – no more to be mitigated by »great advances« in secular philosophies or, at least, the rectification of their present negative state – while, at the same time, it is precisely the inexorable and self-accelerating progress of secularization that *carries the decisive chance for the Church*. This idea is indeed so striking that it was taken up by none else than his successor Pope Francis who cited in agreement Benedict XVI’s Freiburg speech during his own apostolic visit to Hungary in April 2023: “Benedict XVI said that different periods of secularization proved helpful to the Church, for they ‘contributed significantly to her purification and inner reform. Secularizing trends... have always meant a profound liberation of the Church from

⁷⁸ ET: sec. 49 (it is worth noting that the section heading “*False Philosophies*” itself is missing from the Latin original; cf. AAS 58 [1964], 631).

⁷⁹ Pope St John Paul II: *Faith and Reason* (https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/la/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html; last accessed: Sept. 27, 2024; sections 49 and 51).

forms of worldliness.” Thus, Francis concluded, even echoing the idiosyncratic vocabulary of his recently deceased predecessor: “With every kind of secularization, there is a challenge and an invitation to purify the Church from every type of worldliness.”⁸⁰

Benedict XVI has based this idea on the Patristic theology of “*sacrum commercium*,” i.e., a salvific “exchange between God and man” (par. 7). The prerequisite of such an exchange is the fundamental metaphysical asymmetry between the Creator and the finite created beings (especially in the present state [*status naturae lapsae*] of the latter): “we have nothing to give God, we have only our sin to place before him [...] while in return he gives us himself and his glory: a truly unequal exchange” (*ibid.*). In a similar vein, on a collective-ecclesiological level, the Church “has nothing of her own to offer to” God (par. 8) Her only “*raison d’être* consists in being a tool of redemption” (*ibid.*), which is rendered possible precisely by her total reliance on God, rather than on secular substitute goods and ideologies. “For those who want to save their life,” the Redemptor said (nota bene: He said it *specifically to his disciples*), “will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.” (Mt 16:25 [NRSVCE]) It is this theological line of thought from which the practical exhortation cited by Benedict XVI’s papal successor is derived: “One could almost say that history comes to the aid of the Church here through the various periods of secularization, which have contributed significantly to her purification and inner reform” (par. 10). Put differently (and more poetically): “History has shown that, when the Church becomes less worldly, her missionary witness shines more brightly” (par. 12). For Benedict, this asymmetrical exchange is closely related to what he terms that “the Christian faith is a scandal” (par. 15), directly echoing the terminology of his speech delivered as a professor at the University of Tübingen analyzed above. Benedict’s call for the Church “to detach herself from her tendency towards worldliness” (par. 10) especially reverberated in his native Germany, given the special nature of the so-called »*hinkende Trennung*« (asymmetrical separation) between Church and state in the German Federal Republic⁸¹ (consider, e.g., the aforementioned state-collect-

⁸⁰ Original: <https://ferenc2023.hu/en/informatio/pope-francis-address-1>; cf. also: <https://press.vatican.va/content/salastampa/it/bollettino/pubblico/2023/04/28/0316/00685.html#en> (both last accessed: Sept. 27, 2024).

⁸¹ For an emphatic plea for this German ecclesiastical *Sonderweg* (from the pen of one of its architects), see, e.g.: Ernst-Wolfgang BÖCKENFÖRDE, *Der säkularisierte, religionsneutrale Staat als sittliche Idee – Die Reinigung des Glaubens durch die Vernunft, Wissenschaft, Politik, Verfassungsgericht*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2011, 84–96. For a more sober presentation of the actual details of this arrangement, see Ansgar HENSE, *Grundlinien der Kirchenfinanzierung in Deutschland. Kirchensteuer und sogenannte Staatsleistungen* in: Jürgen ERBACHER [ed.], *Entweltlichung der Kirche? Die Freiburger Rede des Papstes*, Herder, Freiburg, 2012, 254–276., which acknowledges that, at least from the inner point of view of the German legal system, “the Church tax is considered under fiscal constitutional law, as it is not levied by the state, but by an institution that is attributable to the social sphere” (257).

ed Church tax that would amount to oxymoron not only in states of the world committed to the idea of rigorous *laïcité* but also in Central and Eastern Europe burdened by the heritage of an actively anti-clerical state). At the same time, it is equally important to emphasize that, for Benedict, the *de-worlding* (*ent-weltlichen*) of the Church was far from being antithetical to her work of charity in the world (cf. par. 16).

On a more scholarly level, Pope Benedict's notion of secularization, more specifically his historiographical claim that "various periods of secularization" – i.e., "expropriation of Church goods, or elimination of privileges or like" (pars. 10, 11) – were directly beneficial for the Church has been criticized by Church historians for being overly optimistic, and perhaps only true of the (Western) European case, where the trauma of secularization brought about by the Enlightenment and the French Revolution was followed by a surprise renaissance of popular religiosity and the successful ultramontane doctrinal and organizational restructuring of the global Church in the course of the nineteenth century. That »adverse human circumstances« – to recall the translational and interpretative ambiguities manifested by Pope St John XXIII's *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* – always bring about such glorious developments is far from being certain. At least, ecclesiastical historians are keen to provide compelling "counterexamples from the history of Christianity in which the disempowerment [*Entmachtung*] of the churches was only the beginning of their increasing insignificance or even eradication, such as the entire Asian churches in the Middle Ages, whose mission extended as far as China."⁸² In general, one might wonder whether the notion of secularization employed here is one-sidedly confined to its core legal meaning (i.e., the voluntary or involuntary transfer of properties or persons from clerical to non-clerical status),⁸³ disregarding the ramified theoretical semantic field of this heterogenous concept.⁸⁴

Conversely, one might also wonder about the semantic intricacies and implications of the aforementioned word "*Entweltlichen*," which became the signature *terminus technicus* of this speech. It was none other than Pope Benedict XVI himself, already as a Pope Emeritus, who

⁸² Franz-Xaver KAUFMANN, *Entweltlichung. Anmerkungen zur Freiburger Rede von Papst Benedikt XVI* in: Jürgen ERBACHER [ed.], *Entweltlichung der Kirche? Die Freiburger Rede des Papstes*, Herder, Freiburg, 2012, 119–129, 124.

⁸³ See especially 1917 *CIC*, can. 640 (cf. also can. 638, 641, 643). In the 1983 *CIC*, the terminology was updated and, to my best knowledge, the "indult of secularization [*indultum saecularizationis*]" became a *hapax legomenon* (can. 684, § 2). – It is worth noting that "*Säkularisierung*" and "*Säkularisierung eines Ordensprofessen*" constitute two separate headwords in ²*LThK* (vol. 9, published in 1964), written by different authors.

⁸⁴ Cf. Giacomo MARRAMAO, *Säkularisierung* in: Karlfried GRÜNDER [ed.], *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie. Band 8: R–Sc*, Schwabe, Basel, 1992, 1133–1161.

questioned the appropriateness of this terminological choice of him: “I am not sure whether the term »*Entweltlichung*,« a coinage from the vocabulary of [Martin] Heidegger, was wisely chosen by me as a concluding keyword in Freiburg.”⁸⁵ Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), the philosopher *du jour* of Ratzinger’s youth, was indeed the most prominent philosophical user of this term – both in his *History of the Concept of Time* and the subsequent *Being and Time* –, understood as a dislocating modification involved at present-at-hand objects or the (spatiotemporal) world in its entirety.⁸⁶ However, the usage of this notion within the dense philosophical constellation that is gradually discovered by historians of philosophy – which included not only Heidegger but both his Freiburg teacher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and other lesser-known phenomenologists or phenomenologically-inclined contemporaneous philosophers and organically reached to Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), Heidegger’s colleague in Marburg – was considerably more intricate (in a certain way, this semantic complexity is already indicated by the various sporadic English translations of term *Entweltlichung*: *de-worldling*, *de-mundialization*, not to mention *de-secularization*).⁸⁷ As if that were not enough, it is precisely the English equivalent *de-secularization* that was preferred by the translator of Bultmann’s *Theology of the New Testament* (not without due reasons, as it is well aligned with Bultmann’s related notion of *Entgeschichtlichung*, which both imply a different conception of secularization).⁸⁸ In the final analysis – and this is far from being intended as a critique of Benedict’s theology, but rather a critique of philosophy itself –, the supposed theoretical concept of *Entweltlichung* might prove to be a mirage (one could probably

⁸⁵ BENEDIKT XVI (Joseph RATZINGER) and Tobias WINSTEL, „War ich ein guter Seelsorger?“ *Auf den Wegen und Spuren des Kaplans Joseph Ratzinger* in: *Herder Korrespondenz* 75 (2021/8), 13–18, 17.

⁸⁶ Cf., e.g., Martin HEIDEGGER, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte des Zeitbegriffs*, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1994 (ed. Petra JAEGER), 266.

⁸⁷ For both Husserl, who was demonstrably aware of Heidegger’s use of the term (Edmund HUSSERL, *Randbemerkungen Husserls zu Heideggers Sein und Zeit und Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* in: *Husserl Studies* 11 (1994/1–2), 3–63, 22.), as well as minor figures, e.g., Georg Misch (not to mention cases of ambiguous authorship like the 1933 *Kant-Studien* essay) the term *Entweltlichung* and its derivatives, in contrast with Heidegger, actually signified the phenomenological reduction itself (cf. Georg MISCH, *Lebensphilosophie und Phänomenologie. Eine Auseinandersetzung der Dilthey’schen Richtung mit Heidegger und Husserl*, B. G. Teubner, Leipzig, 1931, 220 Eugen FINK, *Die phänomenologische Philosophie Edmund Husserls in der gegenwärtigen Kritik (mit einem Vorwort von Edmund Husserl)* in: *Kant-Studien* 38 (1933/3–4), 319–383, 372.). – It is probably also indicative of the historical semantical (*begriffsgeschichtliche*) intricacies of the term »*Entweltlichung*« and its correlates that the corresponding headword is missing from the twelve volumes of the *tour de force* of terminological lexica, the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (albeit it lists *Verweltlichung* as an equivalent of *Säkularisierung*, see Giacomo MARRAMAO, *Säkularisierung*, 1133. [interestingly enough from the point of view of theology, the sporadic four occurrences of *Entweltlichung* includes the pair of terms *Entweltlichung* – *Verweltlichung* featured prominently within the headword *Montanismus* (vol. 6 [1984], 148))).

⁸⁸ See Rudolf BULTMANN, *Theology of the New Testament*, Charles Scribner’s Sons, New York, 1951 (trans. Kendrick GROBEL), 25, 182.

say the same of the early post-war German philosophical synthesis – i.e., a broadly conceived existentialism, based on the then-published tip of the iceberg of Heidegger’s philosophical output etc. –, seemingly so stable and promising, which the young Ratzinger encountered during his studies).

Yet, I believe the Benedict XVI’s ideas expounded in his Freiburg speech are still instructive with regard to understanding and answering the challenge of secularization discussed in the present paper; and this is what I intend to pursue in the remaining final part of my paper: Rather than being guaranteed by historiographical generalizations or philosophical considerations, the eschatological hope for a positive scenario in today’s increasingly secularizing age is *underwritten by God alone*. This could be regarded as the ultimate manifestation of the asymmetrical metaphysical exchange (*sacrum commercium*) described by Benedict XVI. In other words: If one is about to find a passable intellectual midway between the Scylla of the *inner-worldly eschatology* of human progress automatically being beneficial to the Church and the Charybdis of a pessimistic rejection of any change *per se* (both standpoints amply exemplified by the layers of interpretation of Pope St John XXIII’s *Gaudet Mater Ecclesia* and the ensuing public discourse studied above), then one has to assume that the undeniable reality of accelerating secularization and the Church’s becoming a diaspora (at least for the European heartland) must, too, be part of the »arcane plans of Divine Providence,« invoked by John XXIII. It is as if we were to encounter a *praeparatio evangelica* in reverse: Akin to the theory of Eusebius of Caesarea, devised at a watershed historical moment of the nascent Church, according to which the historical succession of various forms of philosophical and religious thought is not arbitrary, but rather manifests an innate teleological tendency towards the emergence of Christianity; we might assume that the secularization we are currently experiencing in the post-conciliar era is not a contingent historical deficiency, but they exhibit the Divinely intended teleology of human history itself, even though the reasons for being so are shrouded in mystery for us. Inscrutable as these circumstances are for us, they constitute the very conditions within which the Church of today must operate and evangelize – precisely according to the ordinance of the Lord of history. In other words: instead of the superficial triumphalism pervading Eusebius and other thinkers of the Constantinian transformation or the Christian mediaeval age; the Church of the late twentieth and earlier twenty-first centuries has nothing but the inexorable process of secularization to pin her eschatological hopes upon – in the true spirit of Benedict XVI’s asymmetrical *sacrum commercium*.

From the vantage point of such a view, we can approach the empirical process of secularization as described in Chapter 2, as well as the related bleak statistical prognoses with much greater calmness and trust in Divine Providence. Furthermore, perhaps equally importantly, this point of view also elevates the significance of the interpretative and ecclesiastical-political debates surrounding and following the council, which we examined in the subsequent sections above. Rather than regarding these debates as superficial quarrels, we can now consider them – following in the footsteps of the cue by the early Ratzinger – as events through which, despite their apparent contingencies, the hidden Divine intention and the proper way of being the Church that is expected of us by the Lord of the history can be discerned. From this arises the task for intellectual historians, namely, to study these debates in a scholarly way, so-to-speak to engage themselves in the discipline of *in concreto* ecclesiology (or, in different parlance, *in concreto* social philosophy of religion). One might even venture to say that the attempt to uncover the deeper meaning of these interpretations and public discourse coming from the midst of the Church during and after the Council has to do with the spirit of true *synodality*, so often sought after today. This scholarly task is, I think, particularly timely and appropriate for us in the eastern part of Europe, including Hungary, where, for better or worse, an actively anti-clerical state regime had shielded these countries from these debates during in the 1960s and 1970s. This is the task to which the present study humbly sought to contribute with the modest tools at its disposal.

Abbreviations for Magisterial and Further Ecclesiastical Sources

ADA	<i>Acta et documenta concilio oecumenico Vaticano II apparando. Series I (antepraeparatoria)</i> 12 vols. Typis polyglottis Vaticanis, Vatican, 1960-1961
AS	<i>Acta Synodalia Sacrosancti Concilii Oecumenici Vaticani II</i>
AAS	<i>Acta Apostolicae Sedis</i> (1909 ff.)
CDB	<i>Council Daybook. Vatican II, Sessions 1 and 2.</i> Ed. Floyd Anderson. National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington (D.C.), 1965.
1917 CIC	<i>Codex iuris canonici</i> (Pio-Benedictine version)
1983 CIC	<i>Codex iuris canonici</i> (version in force as of 2023)

DH	Hünemann, Peter (Ed.): <i>Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum [...] / Compendium of Creeds, Definitions and Declarations [...]</i> . Latin-English. 43 rd ed. Ignatius, 2012.
GME	<i>Gaudet Mater Ecclesia</i> = AS I/1, 165-175 (ET: CDB 25-29)

Further Abbreviations

¹ NCE	William J. McDonald <i>et al.</i> (Eds.): <i>New Catholic Encyclopedia</i> . 15 vols. McGraw-Hill, New York, 1967.
² NCE	Berard L. Marthaler <i>et al.</i> (Eds.): <i>New Catholic Encyclopedia</i> . 15 vols. Catholic University of America Press (Thomson Gale), Washington (D.C.), 2013.

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