


DOI: 10.15290/rtk.2018.17.1.05

 0000-0003-0382-3646

Rev. Andrzej Proniewski
Uniwersytet w Białymstoku

Between Tradition and Modernity— Dogmatic Theology’s Correlative Task

This article reflects on tradition’s relationship to the present by considering issues pertaining to dogmatic theology. Such a reflection makes it easier to understand the inestimable role of Tradition in dogmatic theology, which links the course of human history with salvation history. Each person regardless of the time or geographical location in which he lives is invited into the dialogue of salvation. Dogmatic theology correlatively conjoins the metahistorical truth of salvation as none other than the irreplaceable and only existential content that is proper to the mentality of the man of every era. The theological interpretation of existential matter cannot avoid the changing historical and cultural reality of life. A mutual relationship and interdependence exists between the theology of yesterday and the theology of tomorrow, of biblical theology and Tradition and the ongoing theology of life and signs of the time. This article describes (1) the lasting value of Tradition, (2) its timeliness during this time of anthropological upheaval, and (3) the problem of understanding today.

Key words: Tradition, dogmatic theology, Fathers of the Church, anthropology, Karl Rahner, Joseph Ratzinger.

One cannot come to a full understanding of modernity without considering Tradition, just as a person would not attempt to build the higher floors of a building without first laying solid foundations. A builder also knows, however, that the upper floors of a building are not exact replicas of the foundation; they have their own layout and dimensions and must often be constructed using other materials. Nevertheless, the upper floors of a building are always closely related to the foundation upon which they are built. The same applies when

considering what has taken place in the history of the Church and its theology. In this day and age, the Church looks like the highest floors of a building, but its foundations cannot be forgotten. Although it was not then called “dogmatic,” theology that sheds a deeper light on and systematizes the truths of the faith is that which, from the very beginning, has connected what has come before with what is in the Church today.

When considering this issue, it is important to be aware that the so-called “building” of the Church includes the entire history of Christianity and is realized through the dynamic process that has taken place between what has occurred in the past and what is happening in the present moment. Generally speaking, that which has taken place in the past and even one moment ago is already part of the current of tradition. Our approach today will also become a memory tomorrow that, nevertheless, is a part of this same current. In order to understand modernity, it is necessary to broadly examine the process of the formation and flow of Tradition. This task belongs (but is not exclusive) to dogmatic theology.

What is dogmatic theology that it can perform this correlative task? In the book *An Introduction to Dogmatic Theology*, J. O'Donnell provides an answer to this question in the first part of his book: “it identifies with neither revelation nor faith.”¹ The content of revelation is contained synthetically in the Bible. Faith is a gift and the basis for accepting revelation. The task of dogmatic theology, which creates arguments for the rationality of the faith and simultaneously expresses it in a defined manner in dogmas, is correlative and bipolar. Dogmatic theology considers the person and events of Christ whose works are contained in the Holy Scriptures and fixed in Tradition. In this way, dogmatic theology refers to the past and interprets it in every historical era, providing new thoughts and expressions that take into account the “signs of the times” of the Church, thereby locating it in the present and orienting it toward the future.²

Maurice Wiles wrote the following about the nature of dogmatic theology:

A great part of theological study is a form of dialogue with the past. Biblical study and church history are our attempt to gain an accurate and sympathetic understanding of the Christian past. The doctrinal theologian then relates to the understanding he has gained from these studies the questions which are being posed by his own age, by both

¹ J. O'Donnell, *Wprowadzenie do teologii dogmatycznej*, Cracow 1997, pg. 11.

² See J. O'Donnell, *Wprowadzenie do teologii dogmatycznej*, pg. 12.

Christians and non-Christians. By reflection upon the correlation of these two concerns, he seeks to be able to answer the question: what then should Christians say today?³

Therefore, dogmatic theology maintains the fidelity of Tradition, which began in the past and simultaneously promotes the faith, maintains its identity, and makes the message of faith relevant in the here and now. In this way, dogmatic theology preserves the identity of faith and the originality of doctrine without isolating it from the cultural environment of the era in which it is proclaimed and serves as a challenge for contemporary believers.

Dogmatic
theology

Paul Tillich called the method of dogmatic theology correlative.⁴ He states that the Gospel resists the vicissitudes of history because “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb 13:8). Through this, the Church announces the Gospel; reaches out with its message of salvation to people who are living in a specific historical, cultural, and social situation; and tries to adapt its unchanging message to the changing conditions of life. Experts in dogmatic theology should skillfully use correlation to show the metahistorical truth of salvation as the only existential content that is proper to the mentality of every person from every age. Theological interpretation of existential content cannot avoid the changing historical and cultural realities of life. A mutual relationship and interdependence exists between the theology of yesterday and the theology of today, as well as between biblical theology and doctrinal Tradition, on the one hand, and the ongoing theology of life and the signs of the time, on the other hand.

Throughout the history of theology, great minds such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Joachim of Fiore, Karl Rahner, and Joseph Ratzinger have arisen and provided a synthesis of the Gospel in light of the needs of the so-called “spirit of the times.”

The Lasting Pertinence (Value) of Tradition

Apostolic tradition seeks to maintain the orthodoxy of the message of salvation, which Jesus Christ left as a heritage to all people of every age and time. The basis for the Tradition that has emerged can be found in the event of revelation. God, who revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ and entered into a dialogue with his Apostles and disciples, causes Tradition to take shape. The revelation of God

³ M. Wiles, *What Is Theology?*, Oxford 1976, pg. 47.

⁴ See P. Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, Chicago 1951, pgs. 59-66.

in Jesus cannot be equated with Tradition. For, Tradition carries on and perpetuates revealed truth in time.

The Old and New Testaments contain testimonies of revelation as well as the testimonies of those who wrote the books contained in them. The Holy Scriptures not only transmit facts about the Savior's life, they also contain the theological interpretations of those who wrote them. In this way, they are the only reference for understanding Tradition that was transmitted orally—*fides ex auditu*. At that time, the Holy Spirit, who acted directly in the faithful, was the author of emerging Tradition.

The mystagogical experience of God's nearness is effected in Tradition. Jesus' teaching aims to bring about an encounter with God. The Apostles' teaching, and later the teaching of the entire Church contained in its Tradition, should ultimately reveal man's relationship to God. The human mode of transmission within the dimensions of space and time is limited; nevertheless, its continuation plays an inestimable role in the history of mankind, which is delineated by the limits of an event that has already (and yet not fully) happened.

Theologians already know how solemnly those who practice the mosaic religion delight in the topic of tradition. H. Vorgrimler defines this simply as a "constitutive element of Israel's faith."⁵ In addition, as the Gospels clearly show, Christ, who respected the Law and the Prophets, also condemned the act of blindly (or rather duplicitously) following ancestral traditions without referring to the spirit of the principles transmitted by this tradition.⁶ Christ also clearly and explicitly pointed out erroneous commentary on and interpretations of the Word of God and systematically admonished the Pharisees and scholars of the Scriptures and the Law.⁷

When examining the origins of Christianity, it is clear that it was something completely new. Christianity introduced a new understanding of God, a new spirituality, a new morality, and, finally, a new eschatology. It is even tempting to assert that the "novelty" of Christianity belongs to its very definition. This is why those who observed Christ at the beginning of His earthly ministry were amazed and said: "What is this? A new teaching with authority..."⁸ Although Christ referred to what was already known from and deeply rooted in Old Testament

⁵ H. Vorgrimler, *Nowy leksykon teologiczny*, Warsaw 2005, pg. 394.

⁶ Mt 15:3, 6; Mk 7:8, 13. All citations from the Bible are taken from *The New American Bible, Revised Edition* (NABRE), 2011.

⁷ "You nullify the word of God in favor of your tradition" (Mk 7:13).

⁸ Mk 1:27.

tradition,⁹ Christ himself speaks of the need to love one’s neighbor and of a new commandment.¹⁰

The correlation between tradition and novelty has been an issue ever since the very beginning of Christianity. These beginnings, however, are not only the place wherein traditions are wiped out by the demands specific to the present day, but also an area where people search for answers to the questions related to this phenomenon. The first centuries of the Church demonstrated what this process looks like and provided guidelines for solving problems related to this issue.

With regard to this subject, it is worthwhile to consider the very important patristic figure St. Paul. Why? Because none of the other figures of the early Church (except for Christ himself) depicts so clearly the transition from established tradition to the novelty of Christianity as well as from conservative tendencies to the need to address and accommodate the challenges of contemporary reality. Paul was of Hebrew origin and educated and formed by the most eminent masters of Judaic tradition. He was a Pharisee and strongly attached to their tradition.¹¹ Paul’s mystical encounter with Christ on the way to Damascus to which he was headed in order to engage in anti-Christian activities there turned his life up-side-down. As a result, he not only converted to Christianity, but he also changed Christianity itself. Thanks largely to Paul of Tarsus, the Church, which, despite its experience of Pentecost, was still closely connected to the synagogue, became open to the Gentiles and brought salvation to every part of the then-known world. The “Apostolic Council,” which took place in Jerusalem, was an expression of this breakthrough. During this meeting, the conciliar fathers decided to open the Church to the pagans and to cease with the requirement that those coming into the Church must fulfill Jewish traditions.¹²

One might question whether the Church abandoned tradition. Needless to say, the answer is “No.” In the first half of the 2nd century, St. Justin (†165) wrote the “Dialogue with Trypho,” in which he states that the Church has not abandoned tradition, but rather has given tradition the new flavor of “wine poured into new wineskins”¹³ according to the

⁹ Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18.

¹⁰ “I give you a new commandment: love one another” (Jn 13:34).

¹¹ A relatively new work published by “W drodze” and written by M. Hesemann, *Paweł z Tarsu. Archeolodzy tropem Apostoła narodów*, Poznań 2015, provides an excellent archaeological and biographical introduction to this issue.

¹² Acts 15:1-35.

¹³ Mt 9:17.

precepts of Christ, who came not to abolish but to fulfill everything contained in the Word of God¹⁴ in order to free those who had fallen into slavery to tradition by “holding on to human tradition” and “ignoring God’s commandments.”¹⁵ It is here that we arrive at the key issue that arises when we analyze what is described in the New Testament: the necessity to preserve that which comes from and remains strictly connected with the Word of God, and to reform or even reject human tradition. The Apostles, St. Peter on Pentecost,¹⁶ and the Apostle to the nations, who—as Beinert describes—“himself clearly discerns the Lord’s indications as well as his own instructions,”¹⁷ are based on this. Drawing on Tradition, St. Paul, therefore, lives it and, at the same time, participates in the process of creating another completely new Tradition that is not separated from Revelation and that mediates salvation to man. Herein lies the justification for using either a capital or lowercase “t” for the word “tradition.” Theologians use capital “t” when speaking of Tradition that is part of the foundation of the Church, while a lowercase “t” is used to for tradition in every other case.

Prepared in large part by St. Paul’s activities, Christianity entered into what W. Rordorf describes as a state of a “true crisis of tradition” in the 2nd century.¹⁸ This crisis occurred just as the first generation of Christians had left and the young Christian community had been dispersed throughout the Roman Empire. At that time, confronted with the danger of severing itself from the healthy roots of faith, the Church found itself growing in other cultures (first Jewish, and then Hellenistic) and needed not only to defend the faith against those outside it (thanks to which apologetics developed),¹⁹ but also to protect those inside the Church from heterodox teaching (heresies). This heretical trend was very clear in the multitude of gnostic sects that considered themselves Christian while drawing from Judaism and other cultures

¹⁴ Mt 5:17, 19.

¹⁵ Mk 7:1-13.

¹⁶ Acts 2:14-36.

¹⁷ W. Beinert, *Teologiczna teoria poznania*, Cracow 1998, pg. 204.

¹⁸ W. Rordorf, *Tradizione*, in A. di Berardino (ed.), *Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiana* (abbreviated hereafter as DPAC) II, Casale Monferrato 1984, pgs. 3494-3501.

¹⁹ L. Misiarczyk provides a very competent introduction to this topic in his work entitled *Apologetyka wczesnochrześcijańska*, found in: *Pierwsi apologetci greccy*, Cracow 2004, pgs. 11-91.

and religions (Persian, Egyptian, etc.).²⁰ The Church responded by seeking and emphasizing its connection to its true evangelical source. To this end, the Church referred to the Apostolic Fathers and again stressed its apostolic succession, which continued as a touchstone for the authenticity of the deposit of faith kept in a given community. St. Clement of Rome’s statement regarding apostolic succession is an example of this effort,²¹ while other authors including St. Irenaeus of Lyons (†202) asserted that the bishops have the authority to transmit the true teaching established by the Apostles and their successors.²² Other well-known theologians like Tertullian († after 220) (at least before his conversion to Montanism),²³ St. Clement of Alexandria († before 215),²⁴ and many others like St. Augustine of Hippo.²⁵

Obviously, however, referring to apostolic succession did not completely resolve the matter, and it was necessary to form what is known today as the canon of New Testament writings. The famous Muratorian fragment, which is also known as the Muratorian canon, served as the basis for the compiling the New Testament. Although it is made up of barely 85 poems and written poorly in Latin, the Muratorian fragment is the oldest list of New Testament books which fundamentally differs from those books recognized by the Church in later years because it was, needless to say, written much earlier (circa 170-80 AD). The Muratorian canon is valuable not because it is the oldest list, but because it illustrates the process that took place to solidify one of the main sources of Christian theology.

The first Church communities determined a *regula fidei* (*regula veritatis*),²⁶ from which the deposit of faith was passed down. St. Paul wrote about this to St. Timothy, saying: “guard what has been entrusted to you” (1Tim 6:20). At that time, the first precepts stating what the community believed also began to appear. At the climax of this process

²⁰ To read more on this topic, please see: K. Rudolph, *Gnoza. Istota i historia późnoantycznej formacji religijnej*, Cracow 2011.

²¹ *Letter to the Church in Corinth*, 42-44. To read more on the topic of apostolic succession, please see: R. Trevijano, *Successione*, in DPAC II, pgs. 3328-3331.

²² *Adversus Haereses*, I, 10, 1nn; III, 1, 1; III, 3, 1.

²³ *De praescriptione haereticorum*, 19-21.

²⁴ *Stromateis*, VI, 61, 3.

²⁵ *Ep.* 232,2; *Contra Faustum*, XI, 2; XXVIII,2.

²⁶ V. Grossi, *Regula fidei*, in DPAC II, pg. 2982.

were the symbols of faith,²⁷ meaning the texts that contained the main truths of the faith that were systematized into specific articles. Interestingly, these theological formulas come from the ancient Greek term “*symballein*,” which meant the clay that was broken in half when two parties entered into a contract or an agreement together. The halves that could be joined together were later indicative of individuals who had entered into a bond of friendship, kinship, or even a common deal.²⁸ The symbol of faith was that which made it possible for believers to not only recognize each other, but to also recognize the specific communities of faith to which people belonged. This is why the symbols determined by a specific community were passed on to individuals while they were preparing to receive the sacrament of Baptism. The symbols were also determined in the midst of heated polemical theological debates. For example, the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Symbol, which resulted from theological reflection on the issue of Arianism and was prepared and accepted by the Council of Nicaea (325 AD) and expanded by the Council of Constantinople (381 AD). Importantly, during the Council of Nicaea, a new theological term was established to describe the relationship the Divine Persons of the Father and Son: “*homousios*” (*consubstantial*).²⁹ This was the first time that the term, which is not present in the Bible but was necessary to reconcile the demands and circumstances of the time, appeared.

The discussion above anticipates the appearance of the institution of synods and councils wherein the pastors of the Church and theologians have the opportunity to address and solve the problem of reconciling what constitutes Tradition with the new ideas and situations that arise in every era.³⁰ The aforementioned First Council of Nicaea, which Constantine the Great (a secular ruler and not a pastor of the Church) convened in 325, gave rise to a prodigious series of meetings (councils), during which theologians realized and continue to realize the task described in the title of this publication.

In addition to the fundamental events mentioned above, the theological writings and publications of prominent Church Fathers as well

²⁷ The complex process of shaping and using symbols of faith is excellently presented in the still current publication: J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Creeds*, London 1972.

²⁸ P. Dudziński, “Symbol,” in *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. XVIII, Lublin 2013, pg. 1288.

²⁹ *Council of Nicea I (Wyznanie wiary 318 Ojców)*, in *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 1, Cracow 2002, pgs. 24-25.

³⁰ To read more on this topic, please see: M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, Cracow 2016.

as other writers from Christian antiquity illustrate the processes of continuing Tradition, on the one hand, and the search for modes of expression and approaches to make the Christian faith understandable, on the other. Contemporary theology, which itself is a means by which the Church reconciles the radically different faces of the Tradition that conveys salvific ideas and the community’s identity, local traditions that are important for a given group or society, and the demands of the time, was born from within this clash with Tradition. These works, including the great patristic works of St. Irenaeus of Lyons († circa 202),³¹ St. Athanasius († 373),³² St. Cyril of Jerusalem († 386),³³ St. Cyril of Alexandria († 444),³⁴ and St. Leo the Great († 461),³⁵ were written in an atmosphere of doctrinal dispute and debate. The works of St. Leo the Great contributed greatly to development of the theological method, since he was the first to systematically and consciously present the triple approach to argumentation in theology based on biblical, patristic, and rational elements. Moreover, he appreciated the “arguments of the Fathers” (in other words, from Tradition) to such an extent that his writings are considered on par with the Bible.³⁶

³¹ St. Irenaeus left behind the classic work *Adversus haereses*, which is both an important reference to the Tradition of the Church and a valuable tool in his fight against virtually all of the heterodox trends of his time.

³² This includes his famous *Discourse Against the Arians* from around 335 AD and his other anti-Arian writings. G.C. Stead, *Atanasio*, in DPAC I, pgs. 423-431.

³³ St. Cyril the Bishop of Jerusalem’s *Catechesis* is now a classic patristic work that was originally delivered to catechumens in either 348 or 350 AD primarily in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. It is an orthodox commentary on Jerusalem as a baptismal symbol of baptism (which is very similar to the Nicene-Constantinopolitan symbol) and a catechesis for the newly baptized that illustrates the sacramentology of the time.

³⁴ This includes, for example, the five-volume work *The Five-Book Contradiction of the Blasphemies of Nestorius* written in 430, or the letters to Nestorius, which were included among the documents of the Council of Ephesus (431). See: *Sobór Efeski (2 i 3 list Cyryla do Nestoriusza)*, in *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 1, Cracow 2002, pgs. 108-153.

³⁵ This instances primarily concern the famous dogmatic letter directed to the patriarch of Constantinople, Flavian, entitled *Tomus (or Epistula) ad Flavianum*, which was read to those who participated in the Council of Chalcedon (451). This letter concerns to the two natures in Christ. It is suspected that Prosper of Aquitaine played a large role in editing it. *Tomus* was included among the conciliar documents. See: *Sobór Chalcedoński (List papieża Leona do Flawiana, biskupa Konstantynopola, o Eutychesie)*, in *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 1, Cracow 2002, pgs. 196-213.

³⁶ F. Drączkowski, *Patrologia*, 208. Cyril’s opinion was reflected in the thoughts of other theologians of that time, which can be clearly seen in St. Basil’s (†379)

Considering the issue of equating the teaching that flows from Tradition with the teaching from the Bible, it would seem that the problem between tradition and modernity stems all the way back to the time of St. Cyril of Alexandria. In order for faith to be understood in a changing world, and in order for the Church and its principles to be understood, it is necessary for the Church to define specific ways and respond to questions regarding what in and about the Church can be changed, how, and to what extent when accommodating itself to the demands of a new time. In an attempt to address these issues, patristic reflection sought to determine what is true and unchanging, thereby providing the Church with the tools to adapt to changing times in a new way and to continue to create anew on a solid foundation. Forming various theological and liturgical traditions that did not violate these principles was an expression of these efforts.

The criteria that are necessary in this regard obviously did not arise until the time of St. Cyril. Origen († 253/254) pointed out “that alone is to be accepted as the truth which differs in no respect from ecclesiastical and apostolic tradition.”³⁷ Clear criteria were not presented until St. Vincent of Lerins († before 450) did so in his work *Commonitorium*, which he published around 434 (although it did not become popular until much later) under the pseudonym Peregrinus. This work was written when the author had entered into polemics with the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, and it contains the significant statement: “in the Catholic Church itself, all possible care should be taken, that we hold that faith which has been believed everywhere, always, by all. For that is truly and in the strictest sense Catholic, which, as the name itself and the reason of the thing declare, comprehends all universally.”³⁸ The original Latin “*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*” contains three basic criteria: universality, antiquity, and unanimity.

According to the first criterion, in order for doctrine to be considered a teaching of the Church and not a theologian or school of theology’s private opinion, it must be truly universal, as St. Augustine († 430)

statement: “Of the beliefs and practices whether generally accepted or publicly enjoined which are preserved in the Church some we possess derived from written teaching; others we have received delivered to us in a mystery by the tradition of the apostles; and both of these in relation to true religion have the same force” (*De Spiritu Sancto*, 27, 66).

³⁷ *De principiis*, I, praef., 2.

³⁸ *Commonitprium*, 2, 3.

points out: “one can depend on opinions shared by everyone,”³⁹ meaning those that form the universal Church, which St. Gregory the Great († 604) describes as: “right-believing Churches that are spread throughout the different parts of the world and form the one universal [Church] in whom live all faithful Christians who believe rightly about God.”⁴⁰ This universality is particularly discernable in the aforementioned Church councils. Both secular authorities, including Justinian I, as well as the Church leaders, including, for example, the Bishop of Rome St. Gregory the Great († 604) who likened the first four councils to the four Gospels in one of his writings,⁴¹ considered the first four councils as “authoritative for the entire Church.”⁴²

The second criterion that St. Vincent presents is antiquity. As the eminent expert on the subject, J. Pelikan, noted: “for the determination of authority, however, it was essential that the universality had to pertain both to time and space; antiquity was an important element of tradition.”⁴³ The criterion of antiquity is, therefore, an extension of the criterion of universality into time as well as what fulfills it. The fact that this opinion has lasted since antiquity does not necessarily indicate its value. The doctrine of the Fathers of the Church that Cyril so strongly emphasizes fulfills both complementary criteria and serves as a positive example.

The set of criteria set forth by St. Vincent includes unanimity. In order for doctrine to be considered the teaching of the Church, everyone must confess it. Interestingly, the contemporary Vincentian, St. John Cassian († 435) completed St. Vincent’s thought in his polemic against Nestorius: “For when the truth has once for all been established by all men, whatever arises contrary to it is by this very fact to be recognized at once as falsehood, because it differs from the truth.”⁴⁴

Christian antiquity, which was known for its increasingly systematic theological reflection, did not resolve the tension that existed between the need to adapt Tradition to the present day within the Church’s institutional framework. As J. Pelikan points out: “In every catholic Church throughout the world, Christians prayed according to apostolic tradition. This was the principle on which they came to an orthodox

³⁹ *Contra epistolam Parmeniani*, 3, 4, 24.

⁴⁰ *Moralia* 16, 55, 68.

⁴¹ Eph 3:10.

⁴² *Epistula ad synodum de Theodoro Mopsuesteno*, 1.

⁴³ J. Pelikan, *Powstanie wspólnej tradycji (100-600)*, Cracow 2008, pg. 349.

⁴⁴ *De incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium*, 1,6.

consensus.”⁴⁵ And in reference to the criteria of unanimity, he adds: “In order to understand what everyone believed, it is important to consider ordinary people—the ‘little ones’—and interpret the doctrines in which they believed even when the Church had not yet begun teaching these doctrines through theologians and in professions of faith.”⁴⁶ Therefore, “all” those who prayed in the Church took precedence over that on which Church theologians had come to an agreement.⁴⁷ This clearly echoes Prosper of Aquitaine’s († 455-465) well-known formula that the principle of prayer should always determine the principle of faith.”⁴⁸

In conclusion, theology, including institutional theology as well as the “bottom-up” theology that is manifested in the faith of the people, always seeks to unite the foundations of the Church that can be found in the Tradition of past centuries with the problems that arise in our ever-changing present time. Although the Church Fathers never claimed that it was dogmatic, their theology sets forth the dogmas and formulas of the faith that emerged precisely from their reflections on Tradition and how to explain the ideas at which they arrived. Through this effort, they presented their ideas in a way that could be understood by their contemporaries and has lasted even to today. A history of theology reveals what happened in ancient times and, in this way, simultaneously teaches how things should be done today.

Anthropological Upheaval

As the crown of creation, man was called to enter into communion with God: “God created mankind in his own image; in the image of God he created them” (Gen 1:26). The word “image” has a specific, real, and dynamic meaning in the Bible. It does not mean, as in colloquial language, the likeness of an individual achieved by using the right technique (i.e. drawing, painting, photograph, etc.). For, such an “image” captures only an individual’s external features. In Hebrew, the word “*selem*” signifies the presence of the one who the person presents. In this sense, saying that man was made in the “image of God” is significant because it reveals who man really is. God is with man not only as man’s external cause and ultimate goal, but also interiorly. After all, the Archetype is present in its image, which participates in His reality.

⁴⁵ J. Pelikan, pg. 352.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pgs. 352-353.

⁴⁷ Ibid, pg. 352.

⁴⁸ *Praetertorum episcoporum sedis apostolicae auctoritates de gratia dei et libero voluntatis arbitrio*, 8.

God created man and placed him in paradise. There a bond was created between mankind and God and between people. The fact that man is made in God’s image and created by Him is the first pillar of man’s dignity. This means that man is good, loved, and wanted by God. He is not a product of the blind forces of evolution. The truth about the creation of man contains the claim that man comes from God and belongs to Him. Consequently, man is a good that belongs to God and to whom only God has a right.

Man cannot eradicate God’s image from himself. After the fall, however, God remained as if silent in man. For this reason, man cannot manifest himself and act differently than through his subjective likeness. In this way, the ontological reality of the image becomes particularly dynamic. This image strives for union with his Archetype, but sin and disordered desires stand in the way. As a result, man finds himself in a state of either becoming ever more like God, or distancing himself from and becoming less like God. With regard to being made in the image of God, heaven is where man is most like God, and hell is where man is least like God. Man, who is made “in the image of God,” is called to live “in the image of God.” Despite original sin, the loss of man’s direct relationship with God, and man’s expulsion from paradise, man still finds his place in the world. He sees the sense of his existence within the universe and the possibility to realize God’s initial plan for him.

Some of the Fathers of the Church (St. Irenaeus, St. Athanasius, St. Maximus the Confessor) taught that God created the world so that the Son of God would become a man in Him and, in this way, deify man. Man can properly understand creation only in the God-Man: the world was conceived in God’s mind and created in the wonderful reality of the Incarnation. In this way, the order of creation contains and evokes the order of salvation.

The natural world is autonomous in itself. By the very fact that they are created, all things have their own permanence, truthfulness, goodness, and, at the same time, laws and order that man should respect. This autonomy is not hostile to man; on the contrary, it has its own purpose because God created everything for man. Nature is not only the basis for human existence, but also the sacrament through which man encounters God. God uses material things in time and space in order to indicate His presence among people.

In the modern era, man began to have a different approach to the cosmos. Descartes’ statement “*Cogito ergo sum*” reversed the order of creation and claimed that man defined himself and that he makes sense

of the world and gives it meaning in the process of learning about it. Kant used a transcendental method through which he valued man in himself, finding conditions that define the possibilities of knowing.

Karl Rahner was an outstanding and modern theologian who synthesized philosophical inquiries and developed a method of transcendental anthropology that showed man's unique place in the world. As before, Revelation, Holy Scripture, and Tradition influence the truth revealed in man by God. These truths are defined in dogmas that convey that man is valued as the one who the Mystery carries within Himself. This Mystery is accessible to man in his experience as an existential dialectic of God and man. Rahner particularly noted man himself, hence his use of the anthropocentric turn (*anthropozentrische Wendung*).⁴⁹ It is a turn toward the problems of man along the entire spectrum of his responses that remain at the center of what he says about God.⁵⁰

The way of thinking that was shaped by the intellectual culture of the Middle Ages promoted speaking about the Mystery of God without talking about man. These reflections, therefore, did not take into account who and what man is himself as a cognitive and volitional being as well as the entirety of his life and faith. In this regard, Rahner postulated that it was necessary to speak about man and God in order to explain faith. God does not exist without man, and man does not exist without God,⁵¹ which is explained by Christ in whom God and man existed—the greatest example of what it means to be a true person. Heschel Abraham says: “Every question about God is a question about man.”⁵²

Rahner's anthropology, which is called transcendental anthropology, presents man's special relationship with God. In this relationship, man is understood as an absolute transcendence directed toward God, which prevents the anthropological paradigm from opposing the theological paradigm. Speaking about man and speaking about God

⁴⁹ Speaking about God always involves anthropology, which questions how man should understand himself, his own being as one who experiences himself within the context of existence and who embraces something more than simply being different from other creatures. B. Welte writes about the new structure of this kind of philosophy of religion in the following: *Heilsverständnis*, Freiburg 1966; *Ibid, Auf der Spur des Ewigen*, Freiburg 1965; *Ibid, Religionsphilosophie*, Freiburg 1978, Polish edition: *Filozofia religii*, trans. G. Sowinski, Cracow 1996.

⁵⁰ M. Jiers, *Podstawa antropologiczna w koncepcji teologii Karla Rahnera*, “Osoba i dusza. Filozofia chrześcijańska” 7 (2010), pg. 115.

⁵¹ K. Gózdź, *Teologia człowieka*, Lublin 2006, pg. 225.

⁵² A. Heschel, *Bóg szukający człowieka*, Cracow 2008.

constitute one reality that can be viewed from two different perspectives.⁵³ The concept of theology determines how one understands man’s relationship to God. According to this concept, Rahner relied on the idea of transcendental theology, which has a specific understanding of the category of transcendentalism that defines the way to understand man’s (as a being in the world) relationship to God.⁵⁴

That which differentiates Rahner from Kant is that Rahner goes beyond the horizontal dimension (analyzing the scope of the objects of human cognition) toward the vertical dimension (God’s transcendence).⁵⁵ Thus, one can say that the category of transcendentalness gives man the opportunity to discuss the relationship between God, man, and the world.⁵⁶ Such an understanding of the category of transcendentalness makes Divine Revelation possible in reality, which is accessible to man’s direct experience,⁵⁷ as well as man’s acceptance of God’s revelation of Himself. The experience of transcendentalness is the fundamental existential situation in which man goes beyond each objective experience and experiences the a-priori openness of the subject to being at all. Who is more of a person? The one who is closest to God. Since there is a hypostatic union in Christ, He is the most human.

Rahner’s approach shows that modern man’s movement within Tradition is difficult because Tradition is something from the past that has little to do with man’s everyday life. Only the cognitive effort of an individual who lives in specific conditions fosters openness to God and expresses his desire to discover Him. Human existence on the earth reaches its fullness in the God-Man, who man encounters on his path in life through self-awareness. This self-awareness supercedes caring for the universe and the world, and this way of regard entails neglecting the world, which is immersed in ecological problems.⁵⁸

⁵³ A lecture delivered at a theological symposium in Chicago, 3.31.1966. Printed in K. Rahner, *Schriften zur Theologie*, Bd VIII, Einsiedeln 1967, pgs. 43-65, trans. Polish edition: Znak 21 (1969), no. 12, pgs. 1535-1551.

⁵⁴ M. Jiers, *Podstawa antropologiczna w koncepcji teologii Karla Rahnera*, pg. 116.

⁵⁵ See I. Bokwa, *Wprowadzenie do teologii Karla Rahnera*, Tarnow 1996, pg. 66. The meaning of the term “transcendence” is dynamic; it is the actions of a spiritual being that constantly bring it outside of itself into its future, i.e. the state of existence of a man who achieves maturity in freedom. Rahner uses the concept of the transcendental for the first time in his work entitled *Geist in Welt. Zur Metaphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas von Aquin*, Innsbruck 1939.

⁵⁶ See K. Gózdź, *Teologia człowieka*, pg. 225.

⁵⁷ K. Rahner, *Geist in Welt*, München 1957, pg. 14.

⁵⁸ Francis, Encyclical: *Laudato si*, Vatical City 2015, nos. 67-89.

Ratzinger promotes a different anthropology than Rahner, which is known as the dialogical-relational anthropology.⁵⁹ Supernatural revelation, meaning the Son of God's salvific entrance into human history, is the source of this anthropology. Ratzinger emphasizes the authenticity of man's faith, explaining that it is a divine gift and not a work of man or some result of his effort. The gift presupposes the person and the giver alike as the beneficiaries. If God were not personal and did not freely want to give Himself to His creation, then there would be no supernatural revelation. On the other hand, authentic faith (in the sense of a voluntary openness to God who gives) could not appear at all if man were not a personal being endowed with reason, capable of being free, and, above all, capable of creating a community with other people. This is the basis of Joseph Ratzinger's theological anthropology. God is personal, Logos precedes matter, and consciousness precedes unconsciousness. That which is personal comes before that which is universal; freedom precedes necessity.

Richard of St. Victor was a 12th-century Medieval Scottish philosopher and theologian who was the first to point out the relationality of the human person as the essential moment of our likeness to God. His thesis that the person is a *spiritualis naturae incommunicabilis existentia* essentially completes Boethius' anthropology, which upholds that the person is *rationalis naturae individua substantia* and, fortunately, emphasizes three essential dimensions of personal being: intelligence, individuality, and substantiality. They, however, do not oppose each other, just as the four walls of a house do not oppose the foundation on which they are built. Boethius' anthropology lacked a fourth dimension, which is extremely important in disputes regarding the ontological "structure" of the Divine Persons: relationality. Boethius' definition should be enriched with *rationalis naturae individua substantia pro existens*, meaning "as existing for."

Inspired by Richard's definition of the person, Ratzinger developed a relational anthropology, according to which he believes that the essence of the spirit is to remain in relation [to God] as well as the ability to go and see beyond oneself and to perceive oneself from that point of view. Tradition creates an environment in which man can develop and transmits divine revelation.

Man is more himself the more he is with someone completely Other, meaning with God. Therefore, how man relates to the Other, meaning the transcendental "You," is a constitutive factor for him. In Christ

⁵⁹ J. Warzeszak, *Antropologia Benedykta XVI na tle błędnych antropologii współczesnych*, "Studia Teologii Dogmatycznej" 1(2015), pgs. 280-286.

in whom there are two natures and one person of the Logos, man is radically given the opportunity to be with someone else. Relationality with this completely Other is given in a fundamental way. Despite this total being with someone else, man does not cease to be with himself. In the Christ-Man, who is completely with God, humanity is not annihilated; rather, humanity achieves its highest potential, which consists in transcending itself by moving toward the absolute.

Discovering that this relationality is the constitutive element of our own existence is the first step toward making social life more human and connecting cultural tradition with the Tradition that upholds the everlasting truth of salvation.

The Issue of Understanding Today

Today man seeks to understand his own nature, vocation, meaning of life, and the foundations for his conduct. The main problem of current prevailing ideologies (and their common denominator) is that they either deny man's transcendent dimension or even oppose what constitutes the formal subject of theological anthropology—that is, man's reference to God. Ideologies based on atheism, agnosticism, nihilism, evolution, rationalism, secularization, indifferentism, relativism, utilitarianism, fanaticism, or “all-powerful technique” lead to fragmented anthropologies.

Enlightenment philosophy is the source of the erroneous views of man that are promoted today. The Enlightenment absolutized reason and rejected revealed truth. This direction instigated and then continued in the form of positivism, which reduced man to the solely material plane. As a result, modern man has survived, endured, and continues errors such as: ideological philosophical limitations, science, faith, abusing religion and reason for imperial purposes, the degradation of the person through theoretical and practical materialism, and ultimately the degeneration of tolerance into indifferences devoid of references to lasting values.

Based on the paradigm of success, modern times have broken with Tradition and claim that human progress and development can be guaranteed only through rationality. When referring to the Köhler experiment that proved that chimpanzees can construct tools, Alexander Rüstow said: “What animals do not have in comparison to humans is not a mind, but tradition, which can be understood as the ability to

communicate the results of the mind's work and preserve it, extend it, and enrich it in the generations that follow."⁶⁰

Only man understands the need for tradition and is able to discover the meaning of his own existence. Tradition therefore has its own subject. Understanding the present and the human being living in it depends, therefore, on the first relationship recorded in Tradition, which was realized in the act of creation and which man fully experienced in the incarnation of the Logos in human nature.

Tradition cannot be identified solely with the past because its inner message is associated with the future. Tradition is essentially the foundation of humanity.⁶¹ It is necessary to guard the Tradition that shows the truth about humanity revealed in Jesus Christ from traditions that seek to silence its essential message. Ratzinger writes: "Obviously, the new approach to tradition had a decisive influence on the origin of modern times as the new historical shape of man. From here on, tradition appears as the link between man and the past, to which his attitude toward the future must be opposed. In the past man sees how he unquestioningly submitted to *auctoritas*, while the feature that is specific to man is his critical rationality. Ratio is the only *auctoritas* that exists and to which man must unconditionally submit himself. Building humanity on the foundation of tradition now opposes building it on man's liberated reason which is critical of tradition."⁶²

Modern theology (and Protestant theology in particular) separates tradition from dogma.⁶³ David Strauss and Albert Schweitzer proved that faith in Jesus Christ does not convey certain arguments pertaining to His historicity.⁶⁴ Rather, the mission of dogmatic theology is to maintain the proper balance between faith and tradition, which makes it possible to look at Scripture with the eyes of faith and take into account the historicity of the events that it contains in order to strengthen the significance of the kerygma recorded in it.

⁶⁰ A. Rüstow, *Kulturtradition und Kulturkritik*, in *Studium Generale* 4 (1951), 308. Quoted from: Benedict XVI/J. Ratzinger, *Formalne zasady chrześcijaństwa. Szkice do teologii fundamentalnej*, Poznań 2009, pg. 113.

⁶¹ Benedict XVI/J. Ratzinger, *Formalne zasady chrześcijaństwa. Szkice do teologii fundamentalnej*, 117.

⁶² *Ibid*, 119.

⁶³ See J. O'Donnell, *Wprowadzenie do teologii dogmatycznej*, pg. 25.

⁶⁴ In 1835-1836, David Strauss published *The Life of Jesus*, in which he states that the Christ who is preserved in dogmas and pronounced in the Church does not reflect the true historical Jesus. In his monograph *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Albert Schweitzer considers Christ a deceptive apocalyptic preacher who announces the coming end of the world.

The development of the natural sciences has become a challenge for dogmatic theology. Copernicus, Galileo, and Kepler recognized the dignity of the natural sciences, but the Church felt that freed reason could not oppose tradition. The pursuit of truth was the common denominator of the teachings of postmodernism. All of these teachings assumed that truth is objective, i.e. it is not a product of the human mind, but is a reality independent of it. A known reality has its degrees and limits. And at each of these degrees, truth is important and valuable. For, man can live in a human way only when he lives in the truth. Jesus Christ revealed the truth about human existence; He enclosed truth in time and enlivens it through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Tradition. Tradition that harbors divine truth is not opposed to reason; for, God is wisdom itself. The Church, which lives by Tradition, is not suspended in a void; rather, it is active in the spirit of the modern era and opposes the “philosophy of emancipation,” which considers man a product free of his own essence and truth, and attributes to him unlimited freedom to create himself according to his own aims.⁶⁵ Christ, who is present in the Tradition of the Church, broadens the essence of the human being into the dimension of eternity; hence, the Church promotes the truth that man is not a product of evolution and without his own being, but rather something completely different: a personal individual who comes from God. Those who try to free themselves from this truth within the circumstances of the current era and attain the aims determined by man himself are as if trying to rid the world of humanity and the human condition. Current criticism of Tradition must end where man arrives at the truth about his being—the truth that he is a created being who finds himself only where he finds this truth. In turn, this means that created reason is linked with receptive reason and human tradition.⁶⁶

Trends arising from liberation or feminist theology as well as pentecostalization, along with theological pluralism present in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, have become another challenge for dogmatic theology, which confronts modern challenges by fulfilling its apologetic and doctrinal mission. Dogmatic theology still has much to offer because it speaks of the Triune God who mysteriously entered the world, made Himself known in Jesus Christ, and reconciled everything in and with Himself by participating in human nature and existence and sacrificing Himself as the Paschal Lamb.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 123.

⁶⁶ Benedict XVI/J. Ratzinger, *Formalne zasady chrześcijaństwa. Szkice do teologii fundamentalnej*, pg. 124.

Theological hermeneutics is a tool that contemporary dogmatic theology uses to express the truths of the faith contained in Scripture and Tradition. In previous centuries, theology sought to formulate the truths of the faith based on the true thoughts revealed through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Christ the transcendent God who became known in time and entered into the story of history served as the reference point as these truths were modified and regarded as dogma. As Rahner taught, this became possible because the human person continued to be open to transcendence. Today we sense the need to update Tradition and interpret dogmatic pronouncements.

Considering Paul Ricoeur and Georg Gadamer's achievements in hermeneutics, it is necessary to interpret true statements that are definitively redacted as doctrine of the Catholic faith. The articles of the faith contain more than their editors were able to express, and what they contain is still open to the present and future, which means their content can be interpreted and modified from how they were originally understood. Reading the articles of the faith, opening them up to the present and the future, and cooperating with the texts through which they were verbalized creates a hermeneutic set of possibilities.

Conclusion

Tradition is dead without the Holy Spirit because it takes shape under the Holy Spirit's influence. Dogmatic theology was realized in a practical way. Looking to the Apostles as exemplary theologians, the Doctors of the Church were also bishops who cared for their faithful's spiritual development and prayer lives. During the Middle Ages, St. Thomas Aquinas systematized theological doctrine and fostered his own personal holiness. He wrote many wonderful Eucharistic hymns that convey his devotion and pious spirit. Modern saints such as St. John of the Cross and St. Francis de Sales promoted these hymns not because of their dogmatic competence, but rather because of their deeply prayerful spirit. May contemporaneity within dogmatics that seeks to organize theological doctrine while still being open to the challenges of the present also serve as an invitation to enter into a dialogue with the theology of prayer so that modern Christians will continually hear what the first Christians heard: "Look at how they love each other." In this way, man's fellowship with God and among people will be fostered.

MIĘDZY TRADYCJĄ A WSPÓŁCZESNOŚCIĄ – KORELACYJNE ZADANIE TEOLOGII DOGMATYCZNEJ

Podjęta w artykule refleksja nad relacją tradycji do współczesności przez problematykę teologii dogmatycznej ma być wsparciem w rozumieniu niezastąpionej roli tej dziedziny, która łączy bieg historii dziejów ludzkości z historią Zbawienia. Każdy bowiem człowiek bez względu na epokę czy przestrzeń geograficzną, w której żyje jest zaproszony do dialogu Zbawienia. Teologia dogmatyczna towarzyszy wysiłkom swoich ekspertów korelacyjnie wiążąc prawdę metahistoryczną Zbawienia jako niczym nie zastąpioną jedyną treść egzystencjalną właściwą mentalności człowieka każdej epoki. Interpretacja teologiczna treści egzystencjalnych nie może unikać konfrontacji ze zmieniającą się rzeczywistością historyczno-kulturową życia. Istnieje wzajemny związek, współzależność pomiędzy teologią wczoraj a teologią jutra, teologią biblijną i Tradycją z obecnie trwającą teologią życia i znaków czasu. Treść artykułu opisuje nieprzemijającą wartość Tradycji (1), jej aktualność w okresie przewrotu antropologicznego (2) jak też problem rozumienia dzisiaj (3).

Dogmatic
theology

Słowa kluczowe: Tradycja, teologia dogmatyczna, Ojcowie Kościoła, antropologia, Karl Rahner, Joseph Ratzinger.

Bibliography:

1. Beinert W., *Teologiczna teoria poznania*, Cracow 1998.
2. Benedict XVI / Ratzinger J., *Formalne zasady chrześcijaństwa. Szkice do teologii fundamentalnej*, Poznań 2009.
3. Bokwa I., *Wprowadzenie do teologii Karla Rahnera*, Tarnow 1996.
4. Dudziński P., "Symbol," in *Encyklopedia Katolicka*, vol. XVIII, Lublin 2013.
5. Francis, Encyclical: *Laudato si*, Vatican City 2015.
6. Grossi V., *Regula fidei*, in DPAC II.
7. Góźdz K., *Teologia człowieka*, Lublin 2006.
8. Heschel A., *Bóg szukający człowieka*, Cracow 2008.
9. Hesemann M., *Paweł z Tarsu. Archeolodzy tropem Apostoła narodów*, Poznan 2015.
10. Jiers M., *Podstawa antropologiczna w koncepcji teologii Karla Rahnera*, „Osoba i dusza. Filozofia chrześcijańska” 7 (2010).
11. Kelly J.N.D., *Early Christian Creeds*, London 1972.
12. Misiarczyk L., *Apologetyka wczesnochrześcijańska*, in: *Pierwsi apologetci greccy*, Cracow 2004, pgs. 11-91.
13. O'Donnell J., *Wprowadzenie do teologii dogmatycznej*, Cracow 1997.
14. Pelikan J., *Powstanie wspólnej tradycji (100-600)*, Cracow 2008, pg. 349.
15. Rahner K., *Geist in Welt*, München 1957.
16. Rahner K., *Geist in Welt. Zur Metaphysik der endlichen Erkenntnis bei Thomas von Aquin*, Innsbruck 1939.

17. Rahner K., *Schriften zur Theologie*, Bd VIII, Einsiedeln 1967.
18. Rordorf W., *Tradizione*, in A. di Berardino (ed.), *Dizionario Patristico e di Antichità Cristiana* (abbreviated hereafter as DPAC) II, Casale Monferato 1984, pgs. 3494-3501.
19. Rudolph K., *Gnoza. Istota i historia późnoantycznej formacji religijnej*, Cracow 2011.
20. Rüstow A., *Kulturtradition und Kulturkritik*, "Studium Generale" 4 (1951).
21. *Sobór Chalcedoński (List papieża Leona do Flawiana, biskupa Konstantynopola, o Eutychesie)*, in *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 1, Cracow 2002.
22. Starowieyski M., *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, Cracow 2016.
23. Stead G.C., *Atanasio*, in DPAC I.
24. Tillich P., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1, Chicago 1951.
25. Trevijano R., *Successione*, in DPAC II.
26. Vorgrimler H., *Nowy leksykon teologiczny*, Warsaw 2005.
27. Warzeszak J., *Antropologia Benedykta XVI na tle błędnych antropologii współczesnych*, „Studia Teologii Dogmatycznej” 1(2015), pgs. 280-286.
28. Welte B., *Auf der Spur des Ewigen*, Freiburg 1965.
29. Welte B., *Heilsverständnis*, Freiburg 1966.
30. Welte B., *Religionsphilosophie*, Freiburg 1978, Polish edition: *Filozofia religii*, trans. G. Sowinski, Cracow 1996.
31. Wiles M., *What Is Theology?*, Oxford 1976.